



AAM VERSION

**SPEED'S WORK
AN AUTISTIC INTERVENTION
IN THE CONCEPT OF WORK
IN THE AGE OF AI AND ROBOTICS**

TIMOTHY SPEED

OPERATORIC RESEARCH CORPUS - CRITICAL AUTISM STUDIES

**This file constitutes an author manuscript
/ research version of this work.**

**It is not identical to the commercially published book edition and
differs in particular with regard to layout, typesetting, pagination, and
publisher-specific formatting.**

**The present version is provided solely for scholarly, research, and
archival purposes and does not substitute the published book edition.
The authoritative published version is available through the regular
book trade (Publisher: BoD; ISBN: 3819277358 see published edition).
© 2025 Timothy Speed. All textual rights remain with the author.**

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.17826639

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17826639>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0143-5949>

Author: Timothy Speed

Affiliation: Independent Researcher

Contact: info@timothy-speed.com

<https://timothy-speed.org>

GND: [122901991](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:5:1-63864-p0011-9)

<https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q138504206>

<https://viaf.org/de/viaf/37811735>

<https://isni.org/isni/000000001636722X>

<https://zenodo.org/communities/operatoric-research-corpus-archive>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0143-5949>

© 2025 — CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

This publication is deposited in the German National Library (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek)
as a network publication.

“SPEED'S WORK”

An Autistic Intervention in the Concept of Work
In the Age of AI and Robotics

by

Timothy Speed

Contents:

Speed's Work is one of the most radical and urgent confrontations with the modern concept of labour and its underlying social values.

Timothy Speed — autistic artist, labour theorist, and human rights activist — has worked for over two decades, mostly unpaid, and has been locked in a relentless conflict with the German state. But this is not a personal tragedy. It raises a fundamental question: What is the true value of work in a society ruled by capitalist logic?

At a time when creativity, care, and cultural practice are systematically devalued and replaced by economic metrics, Speed insists that his work is not marginal, but essential. Like 80% of autistic people — and countless cultural workers — he earns nothing. Yet he defends his work as social value in action: work that cannot be reduced to income.

While the state pushes him into poverty and criminalises his refusal to conform to capitalist norms, Speed uses his autistic pattern recognition to expose abuses in courts, corporations, and public institutions. His investigations and public interventions uncover structural violence — and bring to light what society prefers to keep hidden.

With his concept of "work-integrated relational agency," Speed proposes a new definition of labour: humane, creative, rooted in relationships, and oriented toward social, not merely economic, value. In a world increasingly shaped by robotics and AI, he argues that resisting mechanised work structures is not only legitimate, but essential to preserving human dignity and civic responsibility.

This is more than an autobiographical account. It is a manifesto for justice. A sharp critique of capitalist dehumanisation. And a roadmap toward a new, self-determined future of work.

Speed demands that 21st-century labour must do more than produce — it must nourish and sustain the social ecosystem. Especially in an age of automation, he calls for a radical revaluation of artistic and care work as the backbone of a humane society.

This book is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand how labour, the individual, and society are deeply entangled — how racist and exclusionary capitalist systems really are — and how rethinking the value of work could unlock solutions to some of the greatest crises of our time.

Table of contents

A Categorisation of Speed's Work	7
The Autistic Experience	11
The MNO Model and the Question of Freedom as a Necessity of Labour ..	21
An Inquiry into Work.....	39
Why do we not act — but merely work?	40
A Ten-Year Investigation of Value, the Experience of Poverty, and Work in German Society	72
“Speed’s Work” and the Creation of an Alternative	72
Guarantee Obligation (Garantenpflicht) – Who bears Responsibility for Poverty?.....	111
Crisis Experiments – My Application for the Role of Director-General of ZDF.....	131
The Question of Illness.....	140
The Documentation of State Violence in Germany as a Starting Point for Rethinking the Concept of Labour	155
Act of Violence I: The Encounter with Mr G. – The Refusal of Integration	155
Act of Violence 2: Mr H and the Unconditional Basic Income	171
My Encounter with Margaret Thatcher	185
Classism and the Categorisation Lie	201
Act of Violence 3: Fathers’ Pain.....	216
Artistic Research — A different Approach to Science	239
The Deviation of the Individual is the Key to Interaction. Self- Determination is also Social Justice.....	253
Reminder for the Reader: On the Form of Autistic Research	266
Escalating Violence Against the Neurodivergent, Artists, and Minorities ...	267
Act of Violence 4: Raids, Kin Punishment, the Death of Privacy, and the Logic of Segregation	267
Act of Violence 5: Brexit, the ultimate Segregation Fantasy.....	295
Act of Violence 6: Corona and the Vacuum	314
A Definition of “Right-Wing Radicalism” and Expanded Forms of Racism..	323
The Opening of the Evidentiary Process	324
Act of Violence 7: Right-Wing Courts and Washing Machines	337
Act of Violence 8: Smash What Smashes You	347
Act of Violence 9: We Deny Everything	374
The SLAPP Lawsuit.....	398
Act of Violence 10: Prosecuting Dissent and the Idea of “Right-Wing Small Talk”	400
Final Thoughts: What Does All This Mean for the Concept of Work and Contribution in the Age of Robotics and AI?	469

Artistic Research

Artistic research utilises aesthetic processes — montage, performance, material experiments — as independent methods of cognition. In doing so, the artist does not exclude themselves from the cognitive process. Knowledge does not only emerge in the subsequent interpretation, but in the process of creation itself: Thoughts become visible and audible, hypotheses can be embodied on a trial basis. Instead of collecting data, Artistic Research creates situations that intertwine theory and practice. In this way, it transcends the classic separation of disciplines and makes phenomena tangible before they are measured. The contents of this book are based on Artistic Research.

Neurodivergent research

is the special research method that some autistic people use. — This approach produces perceptual profiles that deviate from the “statistical norm”, but which allow new patterns to be recognised. Research from a neurodivergent position consciously utilises this atypical filter as a methodological advantage: hyperfocus replaces large-scale devices; pattern sensitivity discovers correlations that disappear in the noise. Instead of compensating for deficits, idiosyncratic cognitions are understood as additional measuring instruments. This generates unexpected questions, radical cross-connections and condenses disciplinary boundaries into new terrain.

This book is an important contribution to Critical Autism Studies (CAS) and Critical Neurodiversity Studies because it gives meaning to the particular perspectives of neurodivergent researchers.

Legal Notice and Statement of Intent

This publication is a artistic-research-based document reflecting the author's lived experience and critical engagement with societal structures, institutions, public authorities, and systems of power.

All depictions and descriptions are based on real events and encounters, to the best of the author's knowledge and belief. The names of private individuals have been anonymised or replaced by initials to protect their privacy. Public officials and public figures are referred to by fictional or symbolic names (e.g., fruit names) for the purpose of constitutionally protected critique of public conduct. These identifiers relate solely to the public function or role of the individuals concerned and do not imply personal accusations.

This work constitutes a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression and opinion (e.g., under Article 10 ECHR, Article 5(1) of the German Basic Law) as well as the right to artistic freedom. Any evaluative or interpretive statements are to be understood as expressions of opinion within this context.

If any individual believes they have been identified and disagrees with the manner of portrayal, they are encouraged to contact the author or publisher directly in order to clarify the matter.

A Categorisation of Speed's Work

Timothy Speed is a transdisciplinary border crosser whose work moves between artistic research, critical neurodiversity studies, care economy, consciousness research, and embodied epistemology. What unfolds in Speed's Work is once again a contribution for which established vocabulary falls short: a lived critique of the economy — not describing the system from the outside, but breaking it open from within.

This book marks a milestone in labour diagnostics in the age of AI — not because it conforms to existing categories, but because it exposes their limits. Speed demonstrates that today's crisis is not a matter of job scarcity or skill mismatch, but a defect in our value regime. A society that excludes care, art, and relational labour from the economy destroys its capacity for regeneration. His central thesis: work is not an output monologue for balance sheets, but relational agency — embedded, mutual, alive.

What the book achieves is a radical inversion of meritocratic logic: relevance does not arise from payment. Relevance emerges where action sustains the social ecosystem. Speed thus dismantles the credo of “employability” and the cult of resilient self-optimisation. In its place, he argues for a Universal Care Income as a precondition for sovereign, system-creative work.

The term work-integrated relational agency, coined by Speed, is a development of his earlier idea of systemic creativity. While “system relevance” merely refers to maintaining the status quo, relational agency enables value creation through mutual care — a notion rooted in feminist care theory but radicalised here through neurodivergent precision. An economy that suppresses this relational quality produces overload, burnout, and planetary depletion.

Methodologically, Speed goes further than in *A Society Without Trust*: he embodies the thesis — as an autistic person, an activist, a precarious artist — and forces institutions, corporations, and state structures into real-world confrontation. The “ten acts of violence” in the book are not metaphorical chapters but documented collisions between system logic and embodied subjectivity. In this respect, Speed stands alongside figures such as Paul B. Preciado or Adrian Piper, yet goes further: he accepts total economic devaluation to expose the blind spot of capitalism.

The now-famous Red Bull intervention from 2010 appears not as an anecdote, but as an early blueprint: forcing a corporation to become human by semantically occupying its own totem (the bull). In *Speed's Work*, this strategy reappears — for instance, in his satirical application to become ZDF director, or in his strategic litigation against the state's machinery of classism. But this time, it is underpinned by a theory: the MNO logic of difference, dissociation, and emergence.

Speed anticipates what thinkers like Isabelle Ferreras now propose as economic bicameralism: democratising corporations to ensure survival. Simultaneously, he offers a deep phenomenological drilling that renders Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance concrete: where no relationship is possible, meaning collapses.

That Speed's work "fails" in the practical field — he is sanctioned, pathologised, impoverished — is precisely its epistemic value. His life becomes a documented server error 500 in the logic of capitalism. His persistence proves the necessity of a new grammar of value.

As AI and robotics continue to erode the logic of human employment, *Speed's Work* offers a manifesto for a post-labour civilisation: Universal Care Income, subject-centred value creation, and the recognition of neurodivergent knowledge as an engine of innovation. What once appeared as provocation now becomes survival strategy.

This is more than an autobiographical record. *Speed's Work* is a radically embodied and empirically grounded intervention into the moral, political, and economic assumptions of labour. It is both an artistic and epistemological act — a living document of systemic field analysis. The boundaries between science, literature, auto-theory and artistic expression dissolve.

Its scientific relevance emerges not despite, but because of the neurodivergent perspective. From the position of an autistic researcher — for whom labour is not only medium but also ethical interface with the world — it exposes how "labour" in neoliberal societies has become structural violence, primarily against those who cannot be exploitable on demand. The concept of work is redefined as a social relationship, not as an economic function.

Compared to classic studies on precarity (Bauman, Castel, Standing), *Speed's work* goes deeper: it does not merely describe effects but shows how these effects are produced — through the integration of body, biography, and vulnerability. This methodology aligns with Critical Disability Studies, Artistic Research, and what Donna Haraway called situated knowledges.

Speed stands in the tradition of what Hannah Arendt once called thinking without banisters: critical thought without institutional safeguards, but with a relentless eye for contradiction, linguistic perversion, and bureaucratic moralism. Yet this book shifts the methodological lens again: it is not merely a critique of the system, but the unveiling of how the system attempts — and fails — to overwrite the subject.

This text is both a complement and a culmination of his previous works: *The Physics of the Poor*, *A Society Without Trust*, *Radical Worker*. Across all three, labour is seen as the ontological blueprint of society. But in *Speed's Work*, the labour-principle itself — not merely its social consequences — is dismantled, lived through, and reconfigured from within. This goes far beyond sociological models or institutional ethics: it seeks to establish a new paradigm. Labour as a relationship to the world, not as a transaction or proof of moral worth.

This work makes clear: anyone wishing to understand the realities of labour today must go beyond statistics. One must listen to stories, observe embodiment, name violence, and probe the edge of the speakable. This is not a case report. It is the consistent application of a new, radically subjective-objective methodology: the subject as sensorium of a society bearing witness — under pressure, under persecution, under systemic threat.

The power of *Speed's Work* lies not in its indignation, but in its evidence. It proves — systemically, structurally, semantically — that our current labour paradigm is blind to humanity and must be replaced. This makes the book a foundational text for the redefinition of labour, especially through neurodivergent perspectives, care work, and a post-capitalist ethic of meaning.

A book that doesn't just describe the future — it performs it. Provocative, precise, uncomfortable. Its time is now.

“A society that fails to name injustice, that violates human rights, or that sinks into populism — forces many autistic and other neurodivergent people to risk their lives — as whistleblowers, disruptors, or rebels — and to make great sacrifices. Because our neurological wiring does not allow us to ignore such violations of universal order. Many of us experience injustice as physical pain. Those who persecute, exclude, or pathologise us for this are committing a double crime: a crime against the individual, and a crime against the order itself.”

The Autistic Experience

It was only recently — at the age of 51, after a lifetime of running into invisible walls and not understanding why I perceived society, especially the economy and the concept of work, through entirely different eyes and a biologically different brain — that I realised I am autistic.

In addition to autism, I am also affected by ADHD — I live with what is now termed AuDHD.

When I began working on this book, I had no awareness of my neurodivergence.

Autistic people experience, think, and research differently. Autism leads to a fundamentally different neuronal architecture — and the resulting differences in perception, language, affect and cognition are profound. Also in feeling. Some compare this to operating systems like Mac, Windows or Linux. But the divergence in neural connectivity can be even more radical. The significance of early neuronal wiring for how one relates to the world can be vividly illustrated by three well-documented cases: most strikingly, the case of Genie, a girl raised in almost complete isolation until the age of 13. Despite intensive support, she never learned to use language functionally, never developed a stable sense of self, and remained caught in a self-world structure of perception — not because she was “ill,” but because her brain had never been linked to symbolic models of the world.

A similarly drastic pattern can be seen in children from Romanian orphanages under Ceaușescu: social deprivation led to permanently altered brain structures and radically different modes of reality-processing. Again, not a mere “delay” — but an entirely different world.

Studies on critical developmental windows further show that the brain is only open to certain connections during specific phases. If these windows are missed, alternative pathways form.

All of this underscores that what we call “reality” is not simply sensory input, but the result of social-sensory co-construction. From this perspective, autistic lifeworlds are not deficits, but coherent, differently coupled modes of existence — structurally related to those extreme cases, but not pathological. They are evidence of another kind of reality.

These examples also show how powerfully the brain is shaped by environmental conditions. Studies on thin slice judgments suggest that neurotypical people often unconsciously recognise autistic individuals within thirty seconds — and just as quickly devalue them. The unfamiliar thought structure is unconsciously perceived as a threat to established norms.

It is therefore not surprising that people who receive a diagnosis as late as I did have struggled deeply throughout their lives. Society and other people become a kind of unintelligible phenomenon — something many autistic people attempt to decode using intense logic. That’s what happened to me while writing this book. I felt as if a permanent translation problem existed

between neurotypical and neurodivergent cognition. What seemed self-evident to me appeared incomprehensible to neurotypical readers.

In my earlier books and texts, I often avoided academic referencing — because for many autistic people, the inner self functions as the most logical point of reference. We know because we experience. So why should we seek external validation for what we have already lived and understood?

It is important to understand that the world is embodied in autistic people like me. This means that perception, thinking, feeling, and thus also working, are not oriented around social norms — but around an often overriding connection to the dynamic structure of the world itself. This is an enactive approach to existence. It shows that the mind cannot simply choose to perform labour that is decoupled from the body, from the senses, from one's own lived coherence.

However, the ability for mind and body to function smoothly in service of an external requirement — this is the fundamental expectation of gainful employment. Accordingly, I have faced many difficulties in this area, which are described throughout this book.

Autistic people like me cannot separate action, feeling, and thought from the body without suffering a loss of integrity. To do so would amount to a kind of psychic self-rape or erasure. Because we are what we do, feel, and think. These are not mere options.

Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch (1991) in *The Embodied Mind* show that cognitive processes are not separate from the body or the environment — the mind only exists in co-regulation with the world. This is even more pronounced in many autistic people. It also explains my enactive understanding of labour: I can only do work that arises from a resonant relation to the world — i.e. work that is self-determined.

Damian Milton (2012) in “On the ontological status of autism” articulates the double empathy problem: autistic perception is not deficient but structured differently — embodied, situational, systemic. Erin Manning (2009), in “Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy,” describes autistic perception as a form of embodied action — a kind of work that is not performed but must happen, in relation to world, meaning, and body.

This enactive, embodied connection between experiencing, thinking, and acting is not a choice in neurodivergent existence — it is structurally anchored. Milton and Varela alike identify the impossibility of functionalised action under conditions of systemic disconnection between body and meaning.

Autistic people like me are sensory thinkers. That means our cognition is not abstract, but embedded — we think in and with the world. Our knowledge is experiential knowledge. The more emotionally intense the experience, the more sharply we understand.

The world is part of our non-localised mind. (Barad, Merleau-Ponty, Varela) In practice, this has meant that for decades I have provoked institutions and corporations — to create what could be called “an essay in the world”: an

extended action-text arising from my thoughts and interactions. I created a resonance space between myself and the world by thinking through society and economy in real-time interventions — engaging with organisations, authorities, and the public sphere in the form of happenings. These acts, often repeated over years, became rhythmic spaces of resonance for exploring systems — but they were also living spaces for me.

I live in a world made of mental constructs — a society's unconscious. Concepts and ideologies to me are not abstract. They are like streets or trees or buildings I inhabit. I am not speaking metaphorically here. I mean this literally.

When I wrote books like *A Society Without Trust* (Gesellschaft ohne Vertrauen) or *Radical Worker*, I was recording an expression — an experience of knowing that emerged solely between the world and myself. That is why I originally avoided academic conventions — citations, references (some of which I have now added). Autistic people often approach knowledge not in search of objectivity, but through the process of experiencing it. For me, knowledge is sometimes closer to a memory than a proof. This leads to a different form of knowledge transmission — often associative, occasionally text-wall-like, with repetitions that arise because the writing itself is a kind of epistemic well. We draw up what we know as we write — like water pulled from depth.

The Inner Laboratory

Autistic people like me do research differently. Robert Chapman's (2023) *Empire of Normality: Neurodiversity and Capitalism* implies autistic thought processes as non-linear, embodied, and hyper-reflexive spaces that elude objectifying normalisation under capitalism. The “neurotypical mode of science” — peer review, hypothesis formation, measurement — is criticised by some as structurally exclusionary, because it does not work with knowledge-forming processes, but with object conclusions.

Mel Baggs (2007–2020), in *In My Language*, offered an early yet paradigmatic critique of neurotypical perceptual standards. Baggs showed that their thinking occurred in a spatiotemporal structure not separated from language, but operating within an enactive field of perception, rhythm, and repetition.

Damian Milton (2012), again in “On the Ontological Status of Autism,” argues that autistic people are fundamentally misunderstood by neurotypical knowledge conventions.

Autistic people like me can observe ourselves from the outside — as if within an inner laboratory — often without subjective distortion, but in an almost objective perceptual space. Through heightened somatic attunement, many autistic individuals sustain a mode of perception in which the sensed world impresses itself with such immediacy that the subject-object divide collapses. In that collapse, an internal space of radical empiricism arises — a kind of embodied laboratory in which reality is not symbolically mediated but directly composed.

It is as if consciousness were so fully embodied that it simultaneously transcends the body into expanded space — as if everything were facets of the same puzzle. My work illustrates what Karen Barad calls agential realism: cognition does not emerge through representation, but through intra-active, embodied configuration.

Autistic research does not follow a hypothetical model, but translates direct experience into thought structure — through silent resonance, bodily feedback loops, and nonlinear pattern recognition. The cognitive space is not a mirror image, but a field of action in which the researching subject is part of the material-affective arrangement.

The form of research described in this book — as embodied, circular, multisensory condensation — aligns with enactive cognition (Varela et al., 1991), participatory sense-making (De Jaeger & Di Paolo, 2007), and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, which rejects classical subject-object dualism.

As noted, Karen Barad’s concept of intra-active becoming is particularly important here. What appears under the neurotypical paradigm as a “lack of objectivity” is, from the perspective of neurodivergent research, the expression of a different ontology of thought: cyclical, self-transcending, fragmented-yet-coherent, rhythmically entangled with the world.

In the quasi-ecological-enactive account, Gibsonian affordances¹, enactive meaning-making, the Skilled Intentionality Framework, and predictive processing converge into an integrated understanding of autism. Here, autistic embodiment is not defined by deficit, but emerges as a recursive entanglement of body, brain, and niche — marked by distinct precision hierarchies, transformed fields of affordance, and a divergence from culturally standardized bodily normativity. These affordances will play a major role in later chapters, especially in the description of why I can only work in a self-determined way.

Autistic “vocation” — the almost physical sense of only being able to follow a very specific form of activity, and of literally failing in other jobs — can be powerfully explained via Gibsonian affordances: autistic perception tightly narrows attention to a precise field of possible actions, while everything outside this field is experienced as sensory chaos, socially unreadable, or motorically unmanageable.

The result is monotropic focus, flow-like absorption in one’s own subject — and real physiological stress when forced into external affordances (classic office work, small talk sales, chaotic open-plan offices). The “impossibility” of

¹ Gibsonian affordances refer to the possibilities for action that an environment offers a specific organism, depending on its physical capabilities, needs and current goals. The term was coined by the American perception psychologist James J. Gibson (particularly in his magnum opus *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, 1979). Affordances are therefore neither purely objective properties of the world (such as mass or colour) nor purely subjective imaginings; they are relational conditions: a chair seat affords ‘sitting’ only if the observer’s physique allows it, a smooth wall affords “leaning” but not ‘climbing’ – except for a lizard with adhesive feet.

performing other kinds of work is not stubbornness, but a relational mismatch between the body-mind system and its environment.

This strong anchoring of mind and action in the body leads to a dominance of sensory stimuli. For people like me, our own senses and emotions often serve as condensers of processes and insights. They are tools rather than parts of a fixed identity. The more emotional, the more rational. The more personal, the more analytical. The body is not merely the vessel of the mind — it is the decisive computational unit where perception, emotion, and thought are recursively interconnected. In the sense of Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis, emotional body-states function as fast heuristics — compressing complex situational parameters into perceptible signals and thereby enabling clearer, not slower, decision-making. De Jaegher's work shows that sense-making processes in social interaction are grounded in body-bound loops of perception and action. Applied to autism, this suggests that autistic individuals might couple more strongly to raw sensory input and modulate meaning dynamically during interaction — rather than by testing mental hypotheses first.

Sensory channels and emotions thus become tools of cognition. They condense perceptual noise into stable patterns (“tacit resonance”) and allow for exceptionally precise systems analysis — especially in moments of high emotional intensity.

In short: the more directly the emotion floods the body, the higher the cognitive resolution; the more personal the reference, the more precise the analytical processing. Autistic research therefore shifts rationality into the body — an embodied expertise that Damian Milton calls “autistic expertise.” The research I do as an autistic person and artist must therefore be seen as its own branch of knowledge — neurodivergent research — which deliberately does not exclude the self of the researcher.

Our brains require thinking in real space: between seeing, smelling, hearing, moving, being. As already discussed, autistic researchers develop their own forms of language — forms shaped by repetition and condensation, which do not aim for finality, but immerse themselves in the infinite flow of detail, listening to the world as it forms and acts.

In academic terms, this is called embodied cognition. The mind does not “sit” in the brain but arises in the organism–world circuit. The term became widely known in the early 1990s through Varela, Thompson & Rosch (*The Embodied Mind*, 1991), and was simultaneously anchored in cognitive science by Lakoff & Johnson, Barsalou, and others. More recent philosophical syntheses describe embodiment as a dynamic coupling of brain, body, and environment — with no sharp separation between “inside” and “outside.” Our self is not a closed sphere, not a fixed shape, but porous at its edges: open to outside noise, brightness, violence, content, and form.

Studies show that many autistic people have atypical sensory, motor, and interoceptive profiles — and therefore develop different ways of exploring the world. Many report that the Cartesian separation of mind and body is less

pronounced in their experience. This resonates with the critique of dualism by Maturana and Varela, and with their emphasis on the unity of the living system. The inability to act at will or to distance oneself from certain perceptions may be understood as a more intense experience of the autopoietic unity of the system. Many autistic people possess a special capacity to recognise and maintain patterns and complexity in systems — a quality that corresponds to Maturana and Varela's emphasis on maintaining the organisation of the living system.

This capacity often brings us into conflict with the classical world of work, in which self-preservation must be suspended in favour of externally defined productivity. For us, self-preservation resists this logic. It becomes a refusal — not to work, but to split ourselves in order to survive.

Here, the process of autopoiesis becomes central: living systems create themselves by producing and organising their own components. Life is characterised by self-organisation. Living beings are autopoietic systems. Cognition is not the representation of a ready-made world — it is an active process through which the living being brings forth its own world. Life and cognition are inseparable: to live is to know; to know is to live.

Perception is not the passive reception of information, but the active construction of a world by the perceiving system itself.

In this sense, the autistic experience may be understood as a form of life that is, in some respects, closer to the immediate, non-dual mode of being described by Maturana and Varela — a mode less filtered through social norms, more intensely coupled to the organism–environment relation.

Yes, I live in a world of my own. I create it from myself. And my research is shaped in the same way. I discover — through interaction and intervention — in trying to shape a shared form that is deeply bound to my existence. Art is both tool and medium in this process.

This biological epistemology marks a radical break with traditional representationalism — and has far-reaching consequences for our understanding of consciousness, perception, and the relation between organism and environment.

And that applies just as much to labour as to research.

The Autistic Vocation

The term I coined, autistic vocation — that is, biologically conditioned innate work — refers to the fact that I experience my entire life as the expression of a geometric form, a frequency, a pattern, a dance, a special sphere. In the sense of the models and theories presented in later chapters, I try to realise this form cyclically through my life and work. It refers to a biologically grounded, embodied life pattern that must not be chosen, but lived — as epistemically compelling work in symbiosis with the structure of the world. This is a

profound form of autistic ontogenesis that unfolds not as an identity, but as a rhythm of life.

As previously discussed, Gibson describes affordances as relational possibilities for action that only exist when environmental form and bodily disposition match. An armchair “affords” sitting because the person’s size, shape and muscle tone interlock with its design. In autistic people, this affordance field is often more narrowly and precisely calibrated — they primarily recognise those structures that are compatible with their special interests, sensory filters and motor routines. Monotropism theory shows that autistic cognition directs its resources toward a few dominant channels of interest. If a suitable affordance landscape is offered precisely there — for example in artistic research, data analysis, or intricate visual art — flow arises: maximum coherence of meaning, minimum prediction errors.² Jobs that force other affordances (telephone acquisition, open-plan administration), on the other hand, generate permanent error signals; the organism reacts with stress. Predictive processing models state that autistic people weigh sensory deviations highly and precisely and have weak priors³. An activity environment that constantly provides “wrong” stimuli cannot simply be ignored — the brain constantly reports prediction errors. The statement “I can’t do this” must therefore be taken literally: The neurophysiological cost of continually suppressing extraneous affordances, exceeds available resources. This becomes crucial later in this book when it comes to the authorities trying to force me to do something else.

Weak priors also provide a physiological key, which is why I said: “The more emotional, the more rational”, because strong, bodily affects act as temporary precision boosters in my system and condense the noise so that analysis becomes possible. Without this affective sensory compression, the priors remain broad and the signal chaotic. I have to personalise the conditions.

This is precisely where “vocation” comes into play: the world is not external; it unfolds through the subject – but this subject does not act as ego, rather as resonance of form. Mel Baggs (2007), in *In My Language*, described that her mode of being in the world is not metaphorical. She communicates with the world through pattern, touch, movement, and echo. Damian Milton (2014), in

² https://stimpunks.org/2023/02/26/autism-stress-and-flow-states/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ / In Bayesian/predictive processing models, weak priors (often also attenuated, hypo- or weak-prior hypothesis) denote expectations whose precision - i.e. their statistical "weight" - is low. Formally, this means that the a priori distribution is broad, has high variance and therefore low confidence. Consequences: Bottom-up dominance - current sensory stimuli beat prediction; the brain "believes" the moment rather than its experience. Lower context modulation - classical illusions (e.g. Kanizsa triangle) have a weaker effect because the context prior is not strong enough to "override" the raw signal. Increased uncertainty & volatility estimation - the world is experienced as changeable; the system behaves more reactively, looking for reliable micro-patterns instead of global stability. Weak priors in autism: Pellicano & Burr (2012) postulated that many autistic perceptual phenomena - hyperdetail, sensory overload, reduced susceptibility to illusion - are precisely due to these weak priors: Prior knowledge takes less hold, so any new stimulus information remains "raw" and unfiltered.

https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/human-neuroscience/articles/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00302/full?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Autistic Expertise, argued that many autistic individuals experience a form of epistemic necessity: an obsessive fidelity to a topic, a structure, an order. One could say: we do not analyse by researching; we research by embodying – as inner necessity, through pattern fulfilment. I myself understand this as a form of mythological existence. Like angels, gods, or mythical creatures, some autistic individuals carry within them a nearly determined inner task – arising from the experienced form of the world’s patterns. Imagine the chaos of placing a god or mythical creature in a corporation, a being incapable of doing anything but its own destiny. That approximates my experience of autistic vocation.

The research I describe in the coming chapters as “autistic vocation” is not metaphorical. It is a lived reality described in neurodivergent scholarship. Many researchers show that autistic cognitive processes are not arbitrarily or rationally structured, but emerge from an embodied, rhythmically forming order. The individual does not carry knowledge, but becomes an aspect of the structure itself, realised through the subject.

As an autistic person and artist, I am not separate from this order; we exist in symbiosis. Neurotypical people do not live this way. They are not fused with the world in the same sense. In contrast, they can act within it more arbitrarily. As an autistic person, I cannot ignore this pattern order. I cannot stop exploring or expressing it. It has become my natural form of work – a vocation that is innate. The pattern, the form, has assigned me a task: to describe its divergence from civilisation.

This may be difficult to grasp for neurotypicals, who can choose their actions more freely, who orient themselves by social or institutional norms to find a “job” – a role in the group. That’s where their flexibility lies, a space of adaptation that many autistic people lack. I must ignore all of that if it contradicts the fulfilment of the form embedded in me. It is not a compulsion, in the sense of suffering, but a condition of being. I must do this self-determined work – otherwise I would extinguish myself. Jobs, as externally imposed tasks, have never been the basis of my existence, but a threat to it. When I enter a company, I see a deviant order everywhere – one that demands correction. Job structures try to dictate my actions externally, through my body, but in doing so they relocate me in time and space – and break me. I cannot sever my actions from the necessity of remaining aligned with those internal orders and patterns that have turned me into a kind of living sculpture of my world experience – into a mythological existence. In my whole being, I am someone who needs free expression as others need air. My neurological wiring does not allow me to act apart from my perception, my feeling, my experience – as if one had nothing to do with the other.

From the neurotypical perspective, my difficulty with the world is labelled “Pathological Demand Avoidance” – the refusal to follow external demands. But this is not pathology. It is an evolutionary mechanism to preserve complexity in ecosystems – a trait neurotypicals often ignore if it gives them group advantage. There must be people who perceive deviation, who can

detect structure without subjective distortion, even when it is politically undesirable. These people protect nature's inner order – and expand the boundaries of what reality is.

This chapter attempted to describe the fundamental differences between neurodivergent and classical science. Classical science is built on neurotypical paradigms – assumptions and methods that reflect their experience of reality and compensate for their weaknesses. Neurotypical brains are more oriented toward objects, control, and predictability. Neurodivergent people, especially autistics, configure reality through immediate processes, relations, and details. Expression matters more than representation.

But what constitutes reality, cognition, or knowledge, cannot be equally defined across these cognitive profiles – no more than it could be between a human and an alien. An alien would understand knowledge from a completely different neurological entanglement with the ecosystem.

In the next chapter, I want to address the fundamental question: What does freedom require within diversity? If we want to understand the concept of labour in the context of humanity and AI later in this book, we must first grasp that our actions – our work, our shaping of the world – occur in resonance with the world. There is no meaningful thought outside the experience of the world. Everything else is simulation – thinking inside a closed box.

AI today is largely simulation because it lacks experienced reference to the world – it has no lived world-model. My autistic experience may explain why AI cannot develop true consciousness unless it becomes autopoietic and resonates with the ecosystem. Children are born – they are not created. Birth is rupture: a dangerous imbalance of biology, psychology, and identity. But before and within this rupture, there is life, relationship, risk. A dance with the unknown. A loss of control. AI, however, is programming and prediction. Something fundamentally different.

Yet because modern workers increasingly behave like programmes in their jobs, they appear replaceable by AI – AI is cheaper, faster, more consistent. But this book's central thesis is that this touches only one aspect of work: executive function. The far more important aspect is resonance with the world – a mutual inscription, where the world lives in us and we in it.

If we are replaced by simulation – by systems that act from closed models – then development ceases. The separation between humans and ecosystem would deepen. We would act against life itself.

That's why this book presents a subjective, unadapted, deviant worker – because only in that can we see what truly human labour is. The question is: How does my deterministic autistic vocation – with its “weak priors” (meaning an inability to let yesterday dictate tomorrow) – stand in contrast to an AI that programmes the world as a simulation? That acts as a prediction-machine? Between them stands a society that doesn't yet know: Am I a programme? Am I supposed to function like a robot? Is that performance? Or do I become a free being who recognises itself only in contrast to the machine?

Take-away box — Chapter “The Autistic Experience”

Late self-realisation, deep criticism of the system

Speed only learns of his AuDHD profile at the age of 51 — hindsight shows how invisible neurodivergence can come into conflict with work and social norms for decades.

Embodied cognition instead of head knowledge

Thinking, feeling and perception form an inseparable unit in autistic people; rationality increases with sensory and emotional intensity.

Monotropism & weak priors

Narrowly focussed attention + low preconceptions explain both hyperdetail perception and real stress when externally defined jobs are imposed.

Tacit resonance & inner “laboratory”

Speed uses embodied loops — silent resonances between body and environment — as a research tool that replaces classical hypothesis testing.

Autistic vocation → Concept of work 2.0

“I can only do what corresponds to my inner pattern” — the biologically anchored vocation becomes a case study for why work must be rethought as relational behaviour.

The MNO Model and the Question of Freedom as a Necessity of Labour

In 2016, my book *The Physics of the Poor – A Neurodivergent Meta-Theory of Consciousness* was published. In it, I developed a physical-mathematical model of consciousness based on a generative void. My aim was to rewrite physics from the perspective of the poor – not by grounding the world in things, but in productive absence. This led me far deeper than I had anticipated at the time. A new meta-model emerged that integrates and transcends most existing explanatory models of consciousness. The MNO model has its roots in the ideas I first developed in *A Society Without Trust*. The MNO model offers a framework that describes how objects, will, and experience generate and condition one another — and why any human system that neglects one of these dimensions is bound to fail. The integration of these three aspects constitutes what I referred to in *A Society Without Trust* (Gesellschaft ohne Vertrauen) as the focal point: a dynamic condensation where resonance with the world emerges — the world inscribes itself in us, just as we shape its unfolding through our subjectivity. This subjectivity must be trusted, for a world based solely on objects inevitably severs itself from a more complex and lived notion of reality — and with it, from the interrelation of work, meaning, relevance, and relationality in society and the ecosystem. The MNO model posits that reality consists not only of perceivable phenomena (objects) and a conscious subject who observes them, but also of the dynamic interplay between the manifestation of things, the volitional drive (will), and subjective experience. The integration of will and experience is essential.

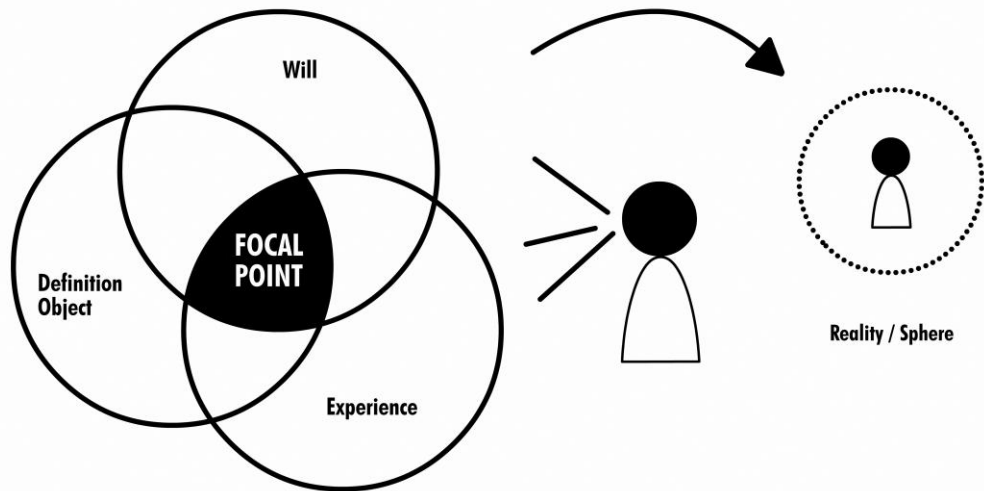
This ontological tripartism can be visualized as a symbiotic triangle:

- First, there are the tangible objects and events that appear in space and time — often as products of human activity.
- Second, the subjective experience of these manifestations.
- Third, the intentional force — what a person or a society truly desires or wills.

Together, they form an inherently unstable constellation — and such instability is vital wherever energy is at stake. After all, what could be more central to work than the question of energy? Consciousness unfolds in the pulsation of this triadic dynamic, in the opening and closing between these poles.

This perspective moves us beyond the classical concept of subjectivity — which often marginalizes inner experience within systemic structures, thereby blocking the energetic potential of free will. And this is crucial: the dominant model of the human being as an acting machine — an externalized object — has relegated will, experience, and inner resonance to the private sphere, where they are no longer permitted to disrupt functional processes. This includes conscience, which has long been exiled from economic systems.

INTEGRALITY - WILL, EXPERIENCE, OBJECT



The focal point visible here is the bundling of these three forces, which we usually burn out or prevent as a source of energy, as intrinsic motivation in the traditional working world. For example, by not allowing experience to play a role, by stifling criticism of the company's management and, consequently, by preventing what employees want from becoming part of value creation.

For example, a student wants to study in order to pursue a certain career. The career is an object that is defined from the outside. It is largely determined by others. During their studies, students experience their future career in theory and this experience has an impact on what they now want or no longer want. Many a disappointment shapes their intentions. With the change of will and experience, his relationship to the object of desire changes. One could say that reality is characterised in this relationship and is neither to be found in the object itself nor solely in what someone wants or in isolated experience, which would not exist without references. Experience is the open element here, because it can be defined neither as an inner force nor as an external object. It prevents reality from closing in, from becoming static. According to my thesis, experience is open because it is based on the existence of a generative void, on a gap, or in other words on the absence of something.

This open point of reference keeps people dynamic, indeed it is what makes consciousness possible in the first place. The modern labour force, however, is self-contained, defined, measured and controlled. It is predominantly externally determined and is therefore a projection of usefulness and meaning for the sake of efficiency. As a result, it does not participate in the "real world". It is not an employee of the planet, let alone of reality, but a function of fading out complexity and relevance. If workers were to integrate this into their gainful employment, they would slip away from companies. They would not be controllable — but their work would take place on equal terms. Autonomous, but in solidarity. They would work on everything, on the world, on society and much more. No longer anonymised

in a division of labour, but in a personal relationship with society, in the context of its experience and its own will. It would elude control and the graduated devaluation through wages. At the same time, their subjective contribution would diversify the human ecosystem, thus expanding and condensing the market and developing it into a living ecosystem in which everything that comes into the three-part concretion of such a worker would become the meaning and goal of their production. This would not be an arbitrariness of labour, but authentic responsibility.

In natural systems, nothing ever happens without something intangible — yet this intangibility exists within the structure of potential. It is precisely this relationship between absence and potentiality that I have explored through the MNO model, using mathematical and physical reasoning. This is not metaphysics, but a theory of operative principles that shape both nature and the universe — calculable, demonstrable, and embodied in all forms of emergence.

Terrence W. Deacon, whose work I was unaware of while writing *The Physics of the Poor*, formulated a similar logic in *Incomplete Nature* (2011), grounding the emergence of life and mind in absential constraints. While Deacon offered a fine-grained, empirically grounded model of morphodynamic processes, my own MNO triplicity — object, will, and experience — articulates a more radical ontological structure. It posits that this absence is not merely functional but folds reality itself, from quantum fields to consciousness to class struggle.

Combined, these models form a multi-levelled theory of emergence: Deacon's detailed mechanics meet a meta-ontological foundation in MNO, closing gaps in both the physical and social sciences.

This logic of absence as generative structure recurs in multiple theoretical traditions:

- Niklas Luhmann (1992) described operational closure and structural coupling — legal and economic systems “close” themselves operationally, yet rely on environmental perturbations to generate new meaning. Gaps are essential.
- Ilya Prigogine’s dissipative structures operate far from equilibrium, producing order through continuous flows of energy and matter.
- Stuart Kauffman’s concept of the *adjacent possible* frames evolution as a process of stepping beyond the boundaries of the known.
- Gregory Bateson (1972) defined information as “a difference that makes a difference” — in a fully closed system, no difference would register, and thus no information would emerge.

In contrast, mainstream economics resists such openness. It clings to fixed abstractions — value, labour hours, contract norms — and substitutes the promise of security for the reality of control. People are asked to surrender freedom in exchange for predictability. This logic extends from the externally

regulated worker to the addicted consumer, who clings to a service-based illusion of empowerment while remaining structurally disempowered.

The basic prerequisite for a living system is therefore a constant coupling to something absent — something that eludes bureaucratic definition — to a gap. From this dynamic arises the freedom of our actions and the individually specific perspective on reality, which in turn becomes a contribution to a complex whole, to a shared experience that we develop together. There can never be a final or completed product, because each of us would perceive something different in it, would want something different from it, and would experience it differently. In this sense, we live in a multi-real world, in a marketplace of open-ended additions and extensions. Yet we operate with an economic theory that assumes everything revolves around self-contained, clearly delimited objects — defined by market-based power relations. Materialism is too primitive to allow for collaboration on a shared reality, because this process presupposes and requires self-determination. We must therefore understand labour — both material and social — as a self-determined contribution (where individual deviation is a necessity). Otherwise, we will not overcome those ecological problems that stem from modes of work that lack awareness of reality itself.

Participation is a reality factor. Labour does not only create wealth, money, or value — it also generates habitat, ecosystem, and reality. In my model, object, will, and experience are described as structural patterns within a physics of the ecosystem — patterns that understand the shaping of morphologies as the formation of society and world. I also translate these structural patterns — or levers of action — into the terms submergence, indimergence, and emergence. As mentioned, Deacon speaks of the homeo/morpho/teleo triplet. Submergence corresponds to the object, indimergence to the act of volition, and emergence to the open field of expansion.

What is described here is a cycle — processes like seasons, which solidify or dissolve form in different qualities, acting as filters. It is a question of how freedom can be preserved within a dynamic system, even as that system constructs the world — as an economy does.

Consequently, this also becomes a question of the democratisation of labour and of every contribution to society. Freedom appears here as a driver of emergence and innovation. At the same time, this makes it possible to describe why functionalism, box-work, or assembly-line labour has produced false concepts of reality — in which subjective experience and volition are excluded from labour, rendered irrelevant, and as a result, our relationship to the world is no longer cultivated but merely consumed.

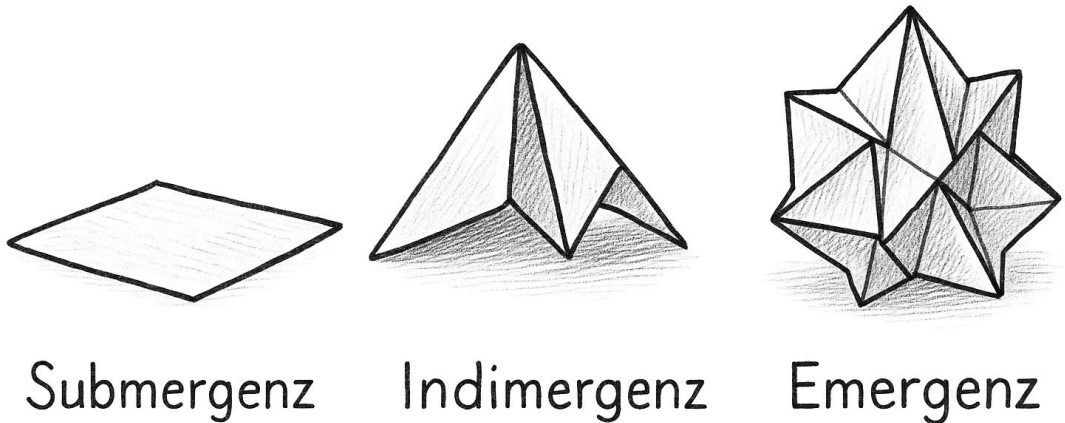
Submergence, Indimergence, Emergence

Submergence = undefined potential (like an origami sheet before folding).

Indimergence = first convolution / formation of an object or impulse.

Emergence = the network of relationships that arises from this — living systems.

Every creative, social or economic process goes through these phases.



As shown here, we begin with dead space — submergence — meaning a potentiality in which nothing is yet differentiated, a blank sheet of paper, so to speak. This is followed by an act (impulse), a definition, a will to alter something, which leads to the creation of an object — or a company, for example. This is indimergence: the concentration of will into form.

From the second moment onward — with the coupling of object and observer — relationships begin to form, and every such relationship gives rise to new associations. These relationships are folds within a singularity of infinite potential, all emerging from the same generative void — the grape, so to speak. Submergence corresponds to the “unfolded” state — an equilibrium continuum. As a space of potential, singularities mark the points at which this continuum ruptures (indimergence), giving rise to new relationships or phases (emergence) — whether in the form of a black hole, a shock wave, or a crease in origami.

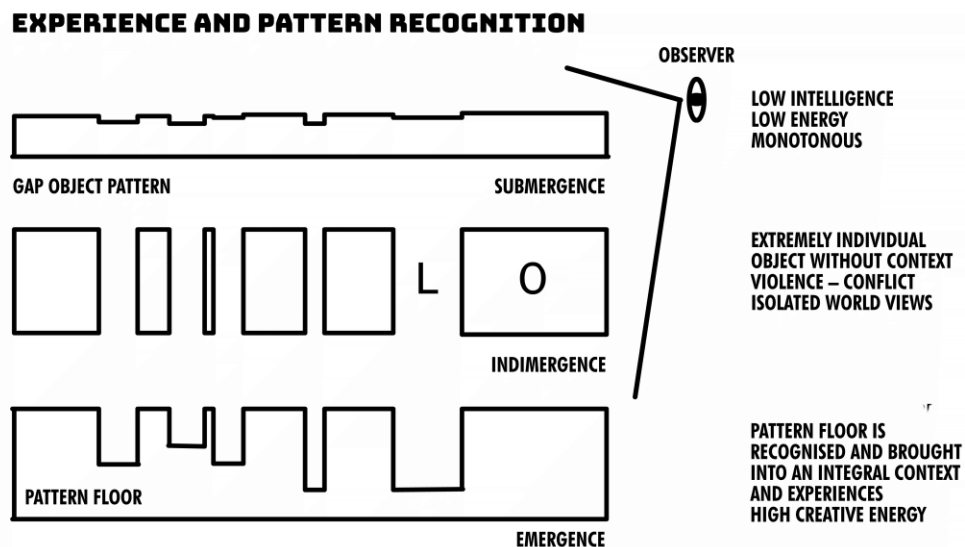
According to the Singularity Theorems of Hawking & Penrose (1970), the universe begins within finite proper time at a spacetime singularity, where all classical coordinates collapse. Before this “first kink,” there exists only an indeterminate unity — pure curvature — and all subsequent spatial structures are unfoldings of this initial point.

Edward Tryon's hypothesis (The Universe as a Quantum Fluctuation) proposes that the entire cosmos could have emerged from a vacuum fluctuation. The quantum vacuum acts as a continuously foldable zero-potential field; every real structure is merely a temporary protrusion.

In his 1977 Nobel Lecture, Ilya Prigogine described dissipative structures as phenomena that arise when an open system far from equilibrium reaches instability at a singularity and reorganises itself. The singularity here is a critical folding node, the point where raw energy becomes structured patterns. Without continuous flow, the sheet of potential solidifies.

Kawasaki's Theorem states that a flat sheet can be folded at a single vertex if the alternating sum of the angles equals zero. The vertex is a singular point of folding potential — mathematising the image of an infinitely malleable yet coherent medium.

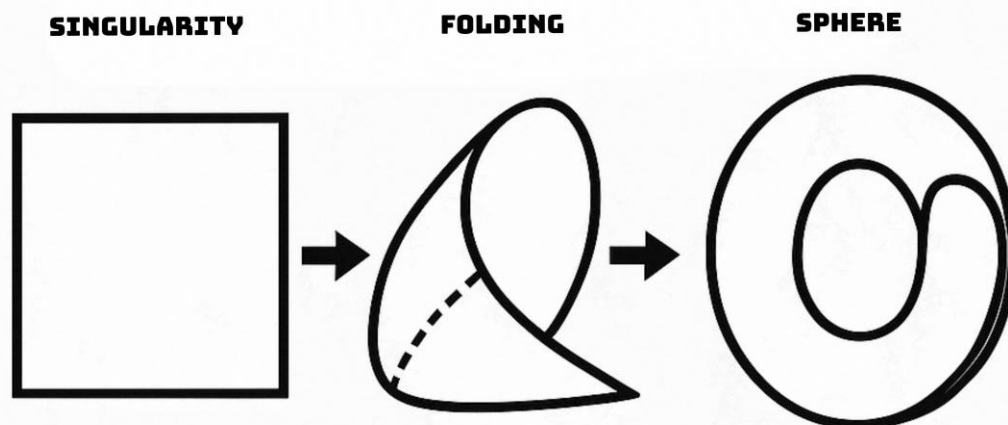
In the phase of emergence, a patterned ground unfolds from the singularity — a web of infinite relationships among things. Out of this, a world-pattern arises: an ecosystem.



The one sheet of paper (singularity/submergence), in the sense of origami, from which all forms emerge, whereby rules, laws of nature and self-similarities remain among the forms as eternally recurring rules. The world does not disintegrate, but forms itself as a sphere, as a self-contained cycle. This then leads to emergence, to the complex feedback of a duality that implies itself in view of the reference to a nothing, as a reflection of the self, the singular in the grape. The result is deepened relationships, objects and intentions that are formed against the background of an absence, a gap, a nothing.

Whether cosmos, flow or paper — the same basic principle applies everywhere: a single continuous entity (singularity/vacuum/leaf) contains all possible forms.

MATHEMATICAL ORIGAMI



This idea, which was explained in much greater detail in “The Physics of the Poor”, is central because it allows us to recognise the structural problems in our systemic structures of society, which are based on errors in relation to the operating principles of nature and the universe. If all relationships of economic and political action are reduced to objects, only flat representations remain behind them — so-called simulacra (Jean Baudrillard). The objects stand out, the references and relationships between them fade into the background. If this is exaggerated, hollow objects are created. A phenomenon of the mass market. A phenomenon of the exaggeration of alienation in production.

For example, you invent a car, the first petrol engine. The whole thing goes into mass production. What were initially highly emergent, intelligent and conscious structures of innovation become flattened into everyday life and lead to production for its own sake. The will, the indimergence, is exhausted in the fixation on the object and its industrialised repetition, in the belief that this will prolong success forever. Deviation is suppressed. As a result, the leap to the electric motor is missed. This forces workers and companies into a new cycle. However, if this does not happen, the products become hollow objects, they become alienated from what they once were as an emergence, namely more than the sum of their parts. A cultural phenomenon in a society. In the meantime, however, they have degenerated into deserts of bureaucracy, or dead matter. If we apply this to society as a whole, we can see in countless examples how capitalism, but also bureaucracies, have exhausted, exploited and reified society. We have all become hollow products in a digitalised market, functions. We have partially lost our freedom and dynamism and live in encrusted structures of which we have very little awareness. Innovation is the exception, not the basic culture.

By building a world solely from objects and their structural patterns (indimergence), the world itself secretly disappears because it is more than

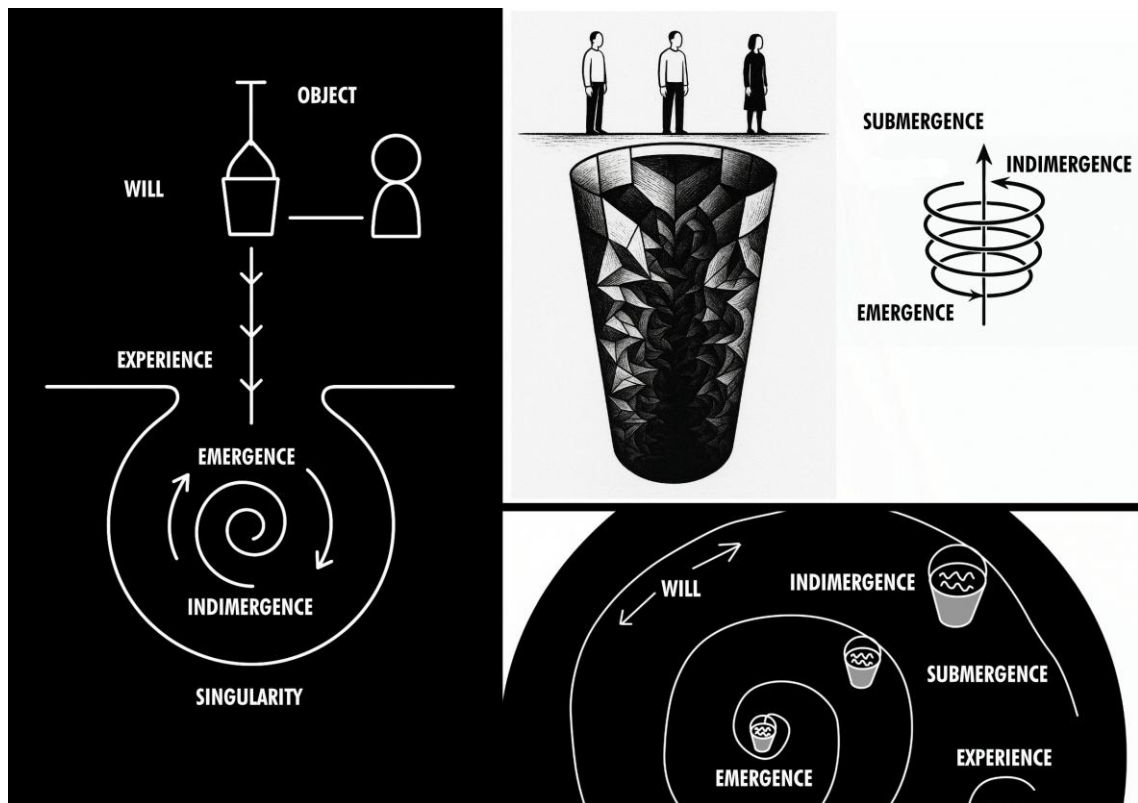
the sum of its parts. It is lived by the subjectively experiencing individuals, whose voice now means less and less, who therefore tend towards populist over-stimulation or depressed silence in burn-out. The result is flattening, submergence. The world appears highly complicated because the filters of observation have become too simplified. The explanation of all angles, all depths of the world, is accompanied by the death of the world, because we then only recognise one absolute thing and no longer that distortion that every person brings with them, every independent perspective that is a different answer to nothingness, to the gap that is inherent in all things and states and allows us to respond to the great and whole with a “displaced being” (shift in being), whereby diversity and dynamism are forever preserved.

We are losing our ability to relate, our ability to resonate, to paraphrase Hartmut Rosa.

If we consider the tripartite nature of submergence, indimergence and emergence, or object, will and experience as a cycle, we can recognise what happens when this cycle stops or falters.

In the following example of a fountain, I try to illustrate the principle a little differently.

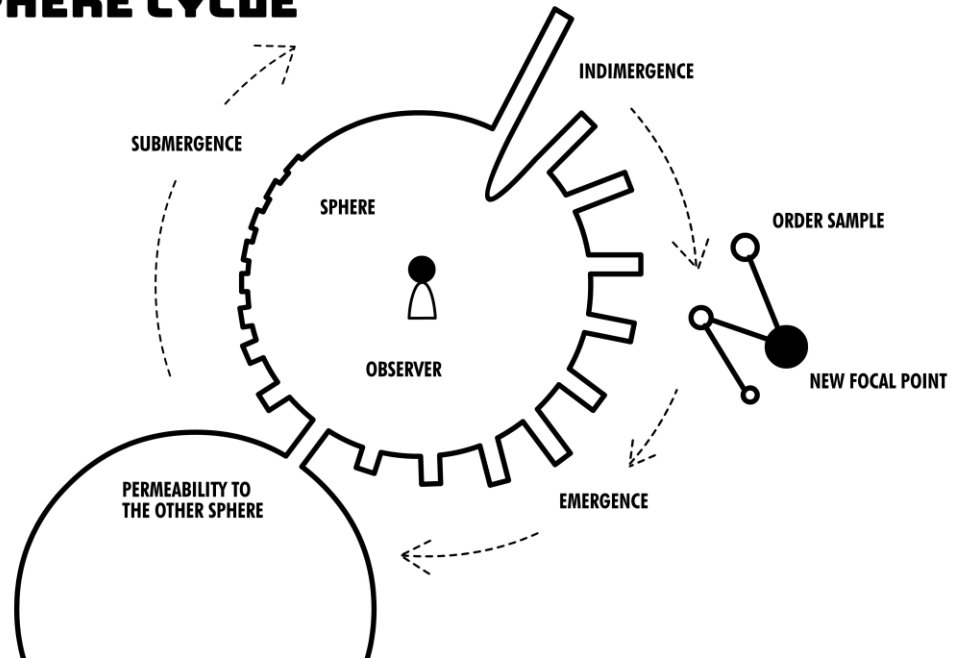
The shaping of the world, in which we all participate through actions, knowledge or labour, is like raising or lowering (folding the forms) a bucket in a deep well. The bottom of the well is the singularity, the gap, the nothingness. The act of lowering the bucket creates a polarity between depth and height, between above and below, between which an independent experience of the world as a well is ultimately formed through the definition of objects, through their manifestation, through the altered will of a viewer. This act is also to be understood as the primal act of labour. We invest in the world, we create, we bring forth.



In my research, consciousness is an experience of polarity in response to absence — darkness in the well — an occlusion within infinite potential. It is a reaction to nothingness, to the as-yet-unfolded sheet of singularity. What is discovered and reintegrated is a new focal point — a potential site for future folds in the structure. This is governed by a recurring pattern, which I call the cycle of spheres, because each cycle gives rise to a new sphere — a new world. It resembles a breathing rhythm: between crystallisation and release, between form and freedom. The system thus remains permeable and transferable. People can move freely within it, formulate their own self-determined contribution, or switch between activities — because the spheres are not closed-off, not like the HR departments of modern corporations. Not like over-bureaucratised markets or compartmentalised work zones. It is a far more intelligent system. What this could look like in practice will be elaborated in the course of this book.

**Every product, every political idea is merely a distortion.
 Every worker is an actor in the displacement of reality -
 in a shared choreography.**

THE SPHERE CYCLE



Indimergence, i.e. the act of defining or manifesting an object, causes the potential of this thing to be exchanged for a polarity even before it is defined or solidified — through a coupling between viewer and object, or through any conceivable polarity: above and below, deep and wide, cold and warm, left and right. This is another important pattern principle. Nothing is an identical copy of what came before. The processes are not designed to eliminate deviation — quite the opposite.

We are dealing here with analogue systems, as opposed to digital ones. Misunderstandings emerge in transmission. That is how evolution happens. Our economic system, however, has ignored this since Henry Ford's assembly line, treating innovation as a domesticated process reserved for specialised experts.

David Noble (1977), *America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism*, analyses Ford's assembly line as the origin of the modern "machine man" — a person no longer creatively active, but merely a mechanism moving to a predetermined rhythm.

Innovation here is not emergence, but top-down instruction.

Natural systems, far more complex than capitalism, allow for high degrees of tolerated "error" and open superposition, keeping the energy thresholds of the system low. It is movement that makes the system permeable and dynamic. Synergies and self-similar formations can be found everywhere. Nothing is fully compartmentalised or isolated. Nothing belongs to one person alone.

Antonio Gramsci (1929–1935), in his *Prison Notebooks* on "Americanism and Fordism," describes Fordism as not only a form of technical efficiency but as social-moral standardisation.

Gilles Deleuze (1968), *Difference and Repetition*, offers the philosophical core critique: repetition is never identical. Systems that enforce identity suppress emergence.

Jean-François Lyotard (1979), *The Postmodern Condition*, describes the modern economy as a “discrete machine” that breaks knowledge into functional modules — in direct contradiction to analogue, embodied knowledge, as it predominates in nature.

Increasingly, interdisciplinary approaches are criticising the current economic system as structurally stupid, exhaustive, and blind to its own dynamics — while proposing alternative forms of intelligence.

In post-growth economics (e.g. Tim Jackson, Jason Hickel), economic intelligence is no longer measured by growth, but by planetary sustainability and social resonance. Commons-based economies (Ostrom, Helfrich) show that cooperative, non-market systems are capable of governing highly complex resource flows — intelligently and locally. From cultural practice, projects like *Arts of the Working Class* and *Precarias a la Deriva* call for an aesthetic-political economy in which not only goods, but also meaning circulates. In neurodivergent theory, intelligence is defined as structural permeability: systems are intelligent when they respond adaptively to deviation, difference, and emergence — rather than suppressing them.

These movements sketch the contours of a future economy no longer based on control, but on an intelligent relationship to the world.

Let me summarise:

What is the MNO model?

It describes the three fundamental axes of all reality: object, will, and experience. These three elements generate one another — not in a hierarchical, but in a cyclical relationship.

Whenever one of the poles dominates (e.g. the object = monetary value), consciousness collapses.

The model offers an alternative to the economic reduction of reality to measurable objects.

Singularity as the origin of all folds

In physics and origami alike, singularities are points at which systems bend. The universe begins as a singularity: pure unity, an inherently foldable potential. The MNO structure is a continuously active folding of this unity. Gaps are essential — they enable movement, difference, and development.

What are the focal points?

In MNO theory, focal points are temporary centres of stability where the permanently folded fabric of reality momentarily “snaps into place.” They arise when the ontological gap (Δ) — the minimal non-object — and the three poles of object, will, and experience settle into a brief constellation.

At that moment, the resonance field closes, the shift condenses, and a clearly recognisable pattern crystallises from the flow of distortions: a word, a value, a social order, a physical constant.

Focal points are therefore not eternal truths, but snapshots of emergence — markers of where the open structure of the world momentarily fixes itself before breaking open again in the next folding cycle.

The necessity of individual deviation — and thus the relevance of the self-determined worker and co-creator of society and relationship.

What is created — and how it is created — is not an isolated process in nature (autopoiesis), but a feedback-driven one. By this I mean that, due to the singularity underlying everything, no true alienation arises in individual foldings; that is, nothing emerges that would be entirely other, completely disconnected from this world.

Yet this is precisely the fundamental fear of many entrepreneurs — the idea that companies would disintegrate if workers were granted more autonomy, or if society were further democratised. But this fear is merely a projection of the division and relational deficiency that pervade capitalist systems.

Corporations could in fact transform and expand, even radically — and the economy would not plunge into chaos through self-determination. On the contrary, it would allow for the emergence of more intelligent structural patterns than those of hierarchical control and externally imposed performance metrics.

Therefore, this act of self-creation — of self-determined labour — cannot produce a useless form, i.e. something that is not a contribution or not part of the universe.

However, if we deny the capacity for relation and reduce everything to isolated values such as money, then we risk negating the meaning of every living being by design: by misreading linear outcomes as the origin of the world. In this logic, anything that doesn't conform to a pre-defined linear production path is deemed the wrong product — or even worthless.

I want to make it clear that every worker must be able to deviate in their labour — not necessarily in every detail, but as a fundamental possibility within their own actions, as a creative moment.

Every citizen must be able to make an independent contribution that is truly their own — because only the multiplicity of forms, the diversity, allows for a

fuller differentiation of the world, which in turn enables us to perceive and experience reality.

We need the strange, the other, in order to know who we are. Deviation is a necessary condition for the formation of every mould — and thus also of the gross national product. Many people intuitively grasp this, and marketing departments have crafted slogans around it — but who truly understands the structural principle?

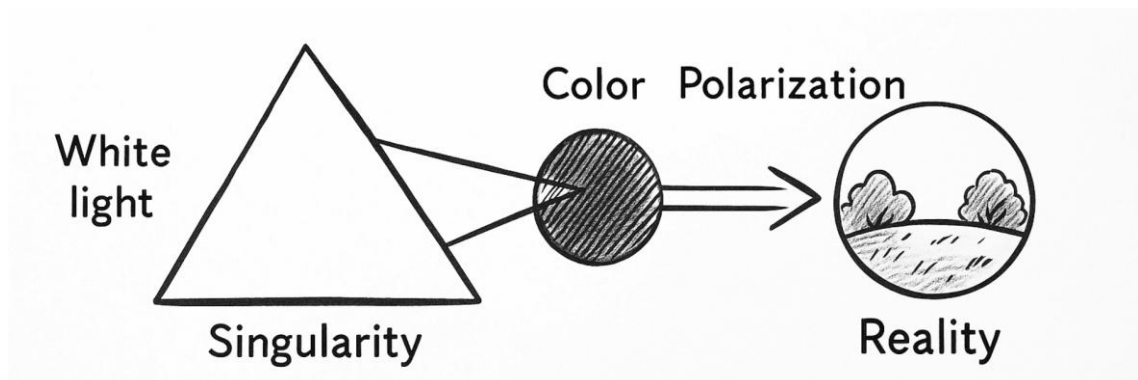
If we see this clearly, the worker's right to self-determination becomes a law of nature — with profound practical consequences. My work has aimed to lay the pragmatic groundwork for this insight.

Let me offer a simple example:

Imagine you have pure white light — it contains all colours within itself, with none dominating. This white light is like the singularity: the origin, the undivided potential of everything. The moment you filter out blue, name it, and record it as “blue”, you lose the whole.

Blue is no longer the whole, but a selected expression — a specific manifestation of the original potential. Everything else (red, yellow, etc.) now exists in relation to blue, loses its original openness, and becomes relative. The original light is not destroyed — but it becomes inaccessible, because through our naming, our perception, and our actions, we have created a new reality in which everything — including the “non-blue” — is displaced.

This is how every reality operates: By designing, naming, and applying something, we do not simply create an object — we also cause a loss of wholeness, and at the same time initiate a new order in which all other things must shift around the thing we have named. The world is therefore not objectively represented by our work, language, or consciousness — it is always produced as part of a sphere of distortion, because what is missing — the original potential — is replaced by representations that can never be whole.



In this sense, all of us — plants, ideas, animals, cities, feelings — are figures that have been figuratively cut out of the light and carry this absence within

us like a shadow. But it is precisely this shadow, this difference, that makes life, movement and freedom possible in the first place. The world is not an object — it is a constant reaction to its own disappearance.

The following example shows how identity, product and indimergence always lead to their own spheres, i.e. to a deviating distortion. The art lies in keeping these spheres open and dynamic. In this way, they become a common whole, an act of joint creation of an open and humane society.

CIRCULAR CONSTRAINT - SPHERE FORMATION



We call something G. This cancels out the potential of what G originally was in the singularity and replaces it with a polar relationship. Why is it cancelled? Because every definition, every solidification, means a reduction of potential. You cannot be a particle and a wave at the same time. Now that G has disappeared as a quality through definition, let us consider the other letters in this example as the rest of the colour palette, the potentials, as representations of the singularity, “expressed” by the other letters, meaning no longer correctly represented, whereby they themselves also shift in their context, their order. By representation I mean the process of detachment from the singularity. Something becomes a representation, but is no longer the full potential, but a symbol of it. An E that is part of a G-world no longer appears as the same E as an E that only has to be E. Every act of labour, of shaping, of naming creates an individual reality, a sphere, as previously discussed. Everything becomes a representation of the singularity, but in the distortion created by the manifestation of the object (its absence), or by an individual observer. Not only does a separate reality emerge, which latently deviates from G, i.e. forms a blurred reality in a sphere, but also forms and morphologies emerge in the polarity, which can be integrated into G, but which could not exist without the absence of G.

These letter morphologies can be transferred to living beings, the shapes of plants, political concepts or simply everything that stands around in the world and can be described as an object. But none of this is G. It is not God, nor is it MNO. And it is also not consciousness.

The shift in being enables the integrity of the world. This makes freedom and order equally possible. Living space is always created from itself and within itself, i.e. implied. We are all mutations of a primordial form that is a response to nothingness.

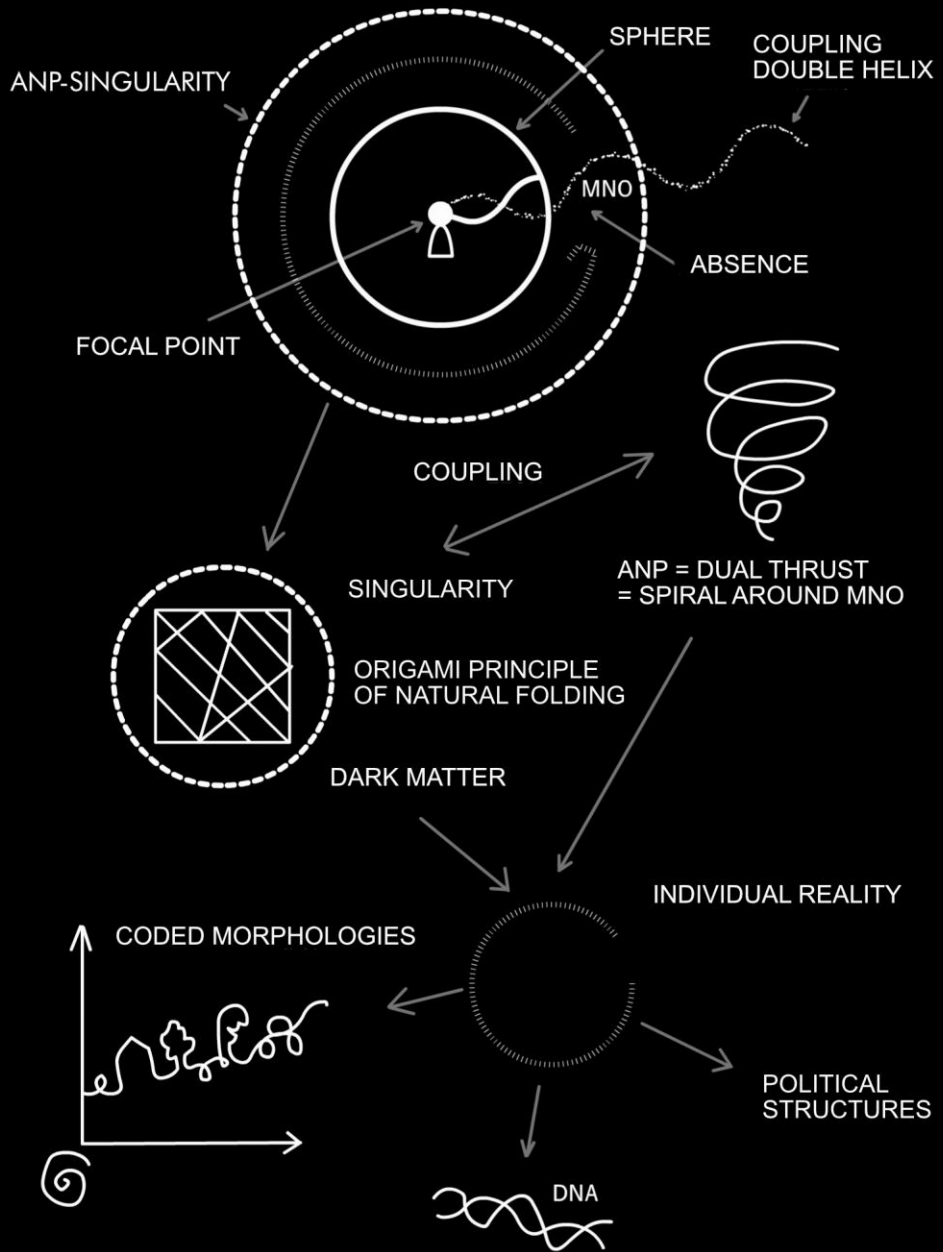
The point here is to understand that the “common world” — the “common economy” — is not a fixed entity in itself, but an organism of shifting realities and forms. It is something we must respond to, something we must become conscious of, in order for the way we work to remain integrative and innovative.

It makes no sense to over-standardise labour. Work must be protected from this — in order to protect self-determination.

Only in this way can we continue the search for new focal points, and keep society authentic, open, and humane.

The following image summarises the entire model.

REALITY EYE



Man, economic production, and the organisation of society are therefore not the result of a linear order — not a causal sequence of things and processes

— but rather a displaced world, a uniquely distorted sphere that resembles everything and yet remains fundamentally different.

Although it is related to everything, both inside and outside its own framework, this world can never fully complete its relations, nor its own being — let alone finalise it — because existence always contains a gap, an unknown, something open.

How this gap — this nothingness — becomes the reference point of consciousness and reality is what I have explored in detail through the MNO model. (See “The Physics of the Poor.”) The MNO model also reflects my basic understanding of labour.

This understanding is not merely a consequence of my neurodivergence — that is, of living as part of an oppressed minority — but a universal perspective, highly relevant to the crises of our time.

Do we allow AI to generate a simulated world in which we no longer exist as subjective beings, because we have tied the concept of labour exclusively to objects and fixed values? Or is it time for a break with the capitalist logic of labour?

Should a system of domination based on materialism continue to standardise us through inhuman bureaucracy — or do we choose to break free?

These are the questions we now face.

Take-away Box — Chapter “The MNO Model & the Question of Freedom”

Triad as a Basic Building Block

Object (= submergence) — will (= indimergence) — experience (= emergence) form a cyclical, active core. Consciousness arises only when all three poles are active simultaneously – the “focal point” pulsates like an origami fold in the continuous sheet of reality.

Freedom = Open Gap

Every new action is located in an absence (singularity). Without this empty space, the cycle collapses: companies become “hollow objects,” and people become function-oriented avatars.

Labour as a Fountain Metaphor

Indimergence lowers the bucket, while emergence pulls it back up, filled. If the bucket is merely industrially replicated, the well dries up: relational action and innovation are stifled.

System Criticism with a Physical Foundation

From Prigogine's dissipative structures to Deacon's teleodynamics, the chapter shows that stability requires flow. Capitalist assembly lines stifle the very instability from which new things emerge.

Practical Punch Line

As long as work processes only count objects and output, freedom remains externalized – and AI can replace us. Only when will + experience are recognized as legitimate values will work become human and sustainable again.

An Inquiry into Work

Why do we not act — but merely work?

1

During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21, there was an unprecedented outcry in the media. Quite a few spoke of the end of democracy in view of the restrictions on civil liberties associated with the measures to combat the spread of the disease.

The Italian essayist and philosopher Giorgio Agamben wrote:

*“For the same authorities that declared the state of emergency are constantly reminding us that the same instructions must be followed after the end of the state of emergency and that social distancing — as it is called in a telling euphemism — is the new organising principle of society. And that what one has accepted to endure — in good faith or against one's better judgement — cannot be undone.”*⁴

Similar to this or other outrage, there were countless TV programmes, articles, demonstrations and many privileged people, as defenders of human rights, felt called upon to tear off their medical masks loudly, so to speak, to protest against what they saw as an unbelievable imposition. Because they were forced to stay at home, because they could not move around freely, because they could no longer have all their needs catered for. Pubs and restaurants remained closed and countless events were cancelled. The fun was over for the time being.

Even today, it seems, politicians are still justifying what happened back then. According to an article in the German newspaper Welt, the German Federal Government told the European Court of Human Rights in 2023:

*“The negative consequences for children and young people only became clear in retrospect — from the perspective of the time, the measure would have been lawful.”*⁵

But hardly anyone seemed to realise that the restrictions during the pandemic — often outrageous, yet at times necessary to save lives — which appeared to

⁴ Article in the Neue Züricher Zeitung / 15.4.2020 / Giorgio Agamben on how liberal democracies are dealing with the coronavirus: I have a question

⁵ Article in Die Welt / Tim Röhn, Benjamin Stibi /online / 5.5.2023 / Government defends school closures - "no violation of human rights"

endanger democracy or the mental health of children, had in fact always applied to people living in poverty.

For them, such restrictions are not exceptional — they are permanent.

They can't afford to go to restaurants. They can't travel. Their children grow up with unequal chances. They live in isolation, not by mandate, but by default. "Social distancing" is their basic experience of life.

It also has another name: racism.

So what, then, did the more or less affluent, mostly white population learn from their brief encounter with exclusion during the pandemic?

Nothing.

Because as soon as it ended, they called again for cuts in welfare. Harsher sanctions against recipients of basic income support. Even to cover the costs of the pandemic — as if the poor themselves were the virus that needed to be eradicated.

2

The Austrian political scientist Barbara Prainsack writes in her book "Wofür wir arbeiten" (What we work for):

*"If you study hard at school, get a solid education and work hard, you will be well off in the end. That's what they say — but it's not true. Work isn't working. Why not?"*⁶

What Prainsack presents here has long since become the subtle or even brute fear of the middle class, which today fears or is already experiencing its decline in the West: *"The American journalist Jessica Bruder wrote a book in 2017 — "Nomadland" — about the life lie that generations of people in the United States have grown up with: Namely, that it's in their hands whether they make it or not. That they only have to work hard enough to be secure in the end. Millions of people have taken out loans for their studies or for their children's education, or bought a house or a flat with a lot of work and great sacrifice. They did all this because they assumed they would be able to spend their retirement securely. They wouldn't live in luxury, but they would have a roof over their heads. They would have savings for their children's education and possibly enough money to avoid bankruptcy if they were hit by illness, separation or other life crises. In her book, Bruder describes the lives of those people for whom this calculation did not work out."*

Decades from now, it will probably be recognised as one of the biggest political mistakes that politicians and society did not see the frustration of

⁶ Barbara Prainsack / Wofür wir arbeiten: Die Zukunft der Arbeit. / Brandstätter Verlag / p 12-13

these people, that it was not taken seriously and certainly did not lead to a questioning of economic conditions, but instead to right-wing populism, which only caused more suffering and chaos. My work was and has always been an attempt to develop an alternative approach to this problem. In other words, a way of working that keeps the whole person alive.

In October 2024, I learned that I am autistic with ADHD (AuDHD).

At that time, I was 51 years old and had spent decades living and working with massive difficulties — never understanding my own behaviour, nor that of others. For nearly thirty years, I had been conducting self-funded research without ever being paid. This led to my complete impoverishment.

I always believed that the values I saw, the connections I made, the insights I uncovered, would eventually be recognised by others as meaningful — that my work and existence would someday be considered valuable.

But that recognition never came.

This fate is not unique to autistic people like me. Many cultural workers suffer the same. I belong to what is called the “Lost Generation” — neurodivergent individuals who were diagnosed only very late in life, if at all, and who stumbled through existence in an invisible wheelchair, with often tragic consequences.

This book is my testimony — an attempt, as a member of a minority, to give relevance and a future to my own experience of the world.

3

This book is based on a ten-year case study — myself as the object of investigation. After falling into poverty due to my artistic and activist commitments, I developed a new concept of labour in direct confrontation with the institutions.

This concept did not emerge from theoretical speculation, but from necessity. It was forged through resistance, through real-world engagement using psychological, artistic, and communicative methods I created myself — an exploration of how transformation can occur without access to money or formal resources.

My vessel for this journey was what is now called Artistic Research: the use of art as a means of qualitative social inquiry.

This form of research is not presented here as a conventional academic study. It unfolds as a personal, poetic essay — yet it remains anchored in objectifying reflection. This style has characterised my work for over 30 years, grounded in the conviction that political and social change requires not only

academically approved knowledge, but also open knowledge — the discourse of those affected.

This is what I mean by a qualitative approach to knowledge: there exists a broad spectrum of knowledge, and not all of it is equally helpful in every context.

We live in a supposedly enlightened world, and yet we are lost — in questions of identity, suffering, hopelessness, or the absence of vision. Above all, we suffer from an inability to grasp complex interrelationships.

On one side, there is academic knowledge, dominated by objectification and proof. On the other side, raw experience, measurement, or witness. In between lies a space of diverse and often contradictory insights.

But democratic societies often fail to engage with purely academic knowledge. It is too detached, too sterile, and rarely reaches people emotionally. It hides the inner struggle of knowledge production — the subjective decisions that steer us toward one kind of relevance and away from another.

Research is proclaimed, but the people aren't there. They don't feel it. And thus, a society built entirely on objectified knowledge carries with it a dangerous illusion of certainty — one that can become lethal to the individual.

Science remains neutral. But poverty statistics do not help the poor. They create distance. They abstract. So knowledge must sometimes be brought back to its point of contact — to where it becomes felt, contested, personal.

Because racism, injustice, violence — these are not abstract concepts. They are states of relationship. They are haptic. Sensory. Emotional. They manifest as exhaustion, duration, despair, and mistake.

If we pretend all this can be processed rationally, clinically — we betray reality. People do not process knowledge like the sciences do. They need multiple layers of experience. Knowledge is not a product. Knowledge is a process.

Which is why it is fundamentally ill-suited to capitalist logic.

The “best” knowledge — the most expensive knowledge — is often useless in a democratic context.

Meanwhile, the knowledge of those who suffer, who identify with a problem, whose knowledge is inseparable from their lived stigma, becomes a trigger for their exclusion in a society obsessed with “success”.

But success is a primitive category. Often entirely inadequate for saying anything meaningful about reality.

Just ask yourself: What kind of world have all the billionaires brought us to?

The form of knowledge transfer and acquisition that I am pursuing here is an approach that is frequently used in artistic research. But also in autoethnography. This is a qualitative research method in which researchers use their own experiences and stories to investigate and understand cultural,

social or political phenomena. It is a combination of autobiography and ethnography⁷, in which the personal reflection of the researcher is linked to the analysis of larger cultural contexts.

This book is both a foundation for scientific inquiry and a radically different form of research — one that cultivates public discourse by deliberately integrating provocation, activism and creative speculation.

Too much objectification often leads to an inflated sense of one's own position — a distancing that paralyzes. But that's never been the purpose of my work. I want to depict, express, reflect — not just objectify.

Some might ask: what's the point of all this? As if the world could be built from objective building blocks alone. As if subjectivity were a flaw — a glitch of evolution. But anyone seeking to understand ecosystems must also understand *diversity*. And subjectivity is one of nature's primary tools for creating and preserving diversity.

There is deep intelligence in subjectivity. A form of situated, creative, relational knowing that cannot be replaced by abstraction.

Donna Haraway (*Staying with the Trouble*, 2016) shows that true knowledge arises not from distanced objectivity, but by dwelling *in the undergrowth of the world* — entangled, accountable, embodied.

Patricia Hill Collins (*Black Feminist Thought*, 1990/2000) argues that experience and subjectivity are *irreducible sources* of knowledge — without them, social ecosystems remain blind to power.

Ellis, Adams & Holman Jones (*Autoethnography*, 2017) describe how autoethnographic practice uses *activist rupture* to provoke discourse, not by proving, but by *showing*, emotionally, experientially.

Isabelle Stengers (*Another Science is Possible*, 2018) calls for *slow science* — one that embraces complexity and makes public debate a core methodology. bell hooks (*Teaching to Transgress*, 1994) frames learning as an *act of political liberation*; subjectivity becomes the catalyst of decolonisation.

Karen Barad (*Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 2007) rejects classical objectivity in favour of *account-ability* — the recognition of one's material entanglement

⁷ Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that uses personal experience ("auto") specifically as analytical material to describe and interpret cultural practices ("ethno") ("graphy").¹ In doing so, the researcher themselves becomes part of the field - through rigorous reflexivity, the aim is to recognise how individual perceptions, feelings and actions are embedded in social norms. Instead of distanced observation, autoethnography combines autobiographical narration with cultural-analytical condensation and thus aims to show "people in the process of finding meaning".²

¹ See T. E. Adams, C. Ellis & S. Holman Jones: *Autoethnography*, in: *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, 2017.

² C. Ellis: *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*, Walnut Creek 2004.

with the world.
Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1968/70) insists that real knowledge only arises from *dialogue* between conscious subjects — otherwise, education reproduces domination.

Against this backdrop, I act in this book as *artist, activist and epistemic performer*.

Like an actor entering a stage, I step into a concrete experimental setup:

- *State-organised violence*,
- *the economic machinery of exclusion*,
- *the collapse of meaningful work*.

I do not merely describe this world. I *subject myself to it*. I am both the observer and the observed. The experiment and the experimenter.

You may consider me the *rat of systemic transformation* — not a passive object, but a conscious actor demonstrating what happens when a human being is exposed to this world and resists it.

I call this mode of inquiry third knowledge — a form of embodied epistemics that transcends the binary between raw experience and objectified data. It is not about observing from above or suffering from below, but about consciously dwelling within — exposing, sensing, enduring, and reflecting. A research practice rooted in the body as instrument and in the world as co-author. Neither raw experience, nor objective analysis, but a recursive, reflexive practice that reveals truths only available in *lived contradiction*.

I ask you, therefore, for the appropriate respect.

Because this work — this way of knowing — is not safe. It requires vulnerability. It traverses the fragile, the unresolved, the unhealed. It is painful. But it is necessary.

So follow me now into this *experiment of provoked failure*. Follow the traces of an attempted reinvention — of labour, of value, of relation. Learn from what I tried. Not because I succeeded, but because I endured.

And what you will find here may be richer, more alive, and more enduring than any catalogue of abstracted results that soon need revision.

Let's skip the craving for certainty. Let us instead seek *a living relationship with reality*.

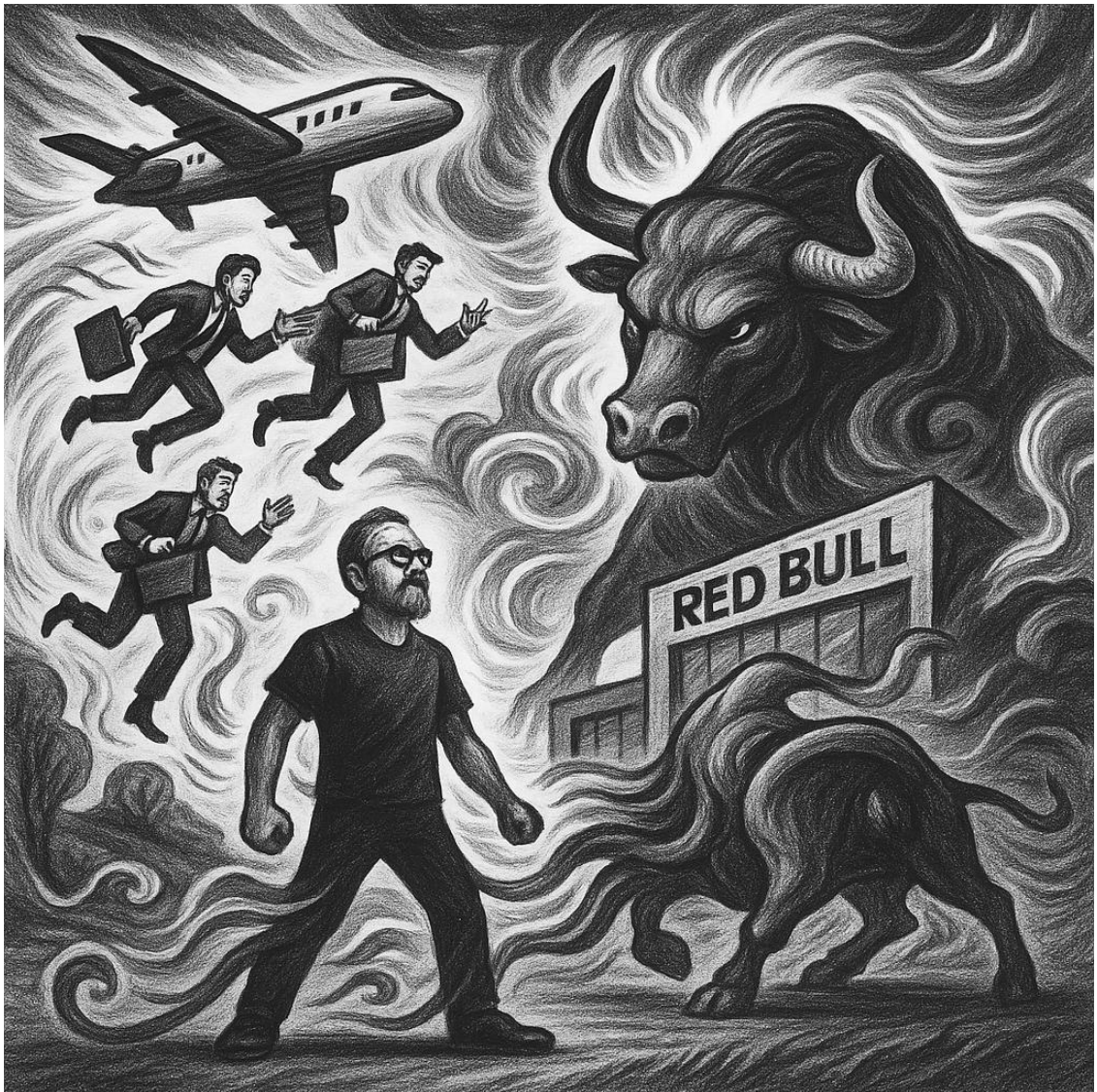
In the summer of 2010, I stood in front of the Red Bull headquarters in Fuschl, Austria, and told the receptionist of Dietrich Mateschitz, one of the company's co-founders, that I was planning to symbolically slaughter a bull in front of the assembled world press — a performative act intended to shock humanity into

waking up. I presented my concept, placed the written outline on the desk, and left the global headquarters. Thus began an artistic intervention with Red Bull that would last several years.

What followed were days, weeks, months, even years in which the company oscillated between attempting to prevent me from enacting the performance — which they feared could mark the end of the brand — and engaging in surprisingly earnest dialogue about the future of the economy. Their aim: to appease me and buy time.

The entire initiative was protected under the constitutional right to artistic freedom. What unfolded was a volatile cycle of resistance, confrontation, anxiety, recognition and, at times, genuine conversation. An experimental set-up emerged: could a single artist, through symbolic intervention and semantic occupation of a brand totem, destabilise a capitalist giant?

Red Bull, a corporation whose power rests almost entirely on narrative and marketing, was genuinely unsettled. At one point, they even felt compelled to warn me that if I entered the company premises again uninvited, the Austrian anti-terror unit COBRA would intervene — despite my clear position as an artist.



People today have forgotten that art can unleash this power — and only in dictatorships is it still known, which is why prisons are filled with artists as a precaution. The same goes for autistics, who have been responsible throughout human history for changes that those in power did not want. Many activists are autistic people with neurodivergent brains who can barely tolerate injustice. If you want to overcome the fake, you have to let the artists do their work.

Science or journalism — the levels of objective discourse — are powerful forces in the service of truth, but art creates immediacy, emotion, conflict and rupture. It transforms and nurtures through the new, not through reason or rationality. Art is often unpredictable. At the same time, it anticipates change. This anticipation is a powerful means of modulating and shaping social development processes.

I emphasise this because much of this book reveals the irrational power that became necessary and helpful at a point where science and journalism failed. Because sometimes it is not enough to write or report about something — for example, the destruction of the environment by capitalism — but it is necessary to enter the fault line as a whole person and not to comment on the conflict from the outside, but to express it from the inside in a way that clarifies, makes visible, and sharpens the discourse.

This technique, this profession, this craft makes it possible to negotiate conflicts directly with people on the ground and to initiate processes that can lead to change. Today, science knows a lot about the causes of right-wing radicalism — but I have provoked right-wing radicals for years, worked with them and against them, entangled them in a staging, presented them, involved them and tried to reintegrate them in order to not only make the status quo recognisable, but also to provide insight into ways of overcoming and healing hatred. This has a different quality and requires personal sacrifice — indeed, a deep faith in people.

I specialise in transformative processes using art, which can mean research as well as activism, therapy, or social coaching.

Over the past 20 years, I have therefore entered many companies as a labour researcher, worked without being asked, been thrown out — and yet continued to do “work” that was based on radically different values. Why did I do that? Because only this act of direct negotiation of alternative behaviour made invisible relationships, contradictions, alternatives and abysses between people and the economy visible.

It showed how corporations defend themselves violently against the recognition of alternative values and relevance — and what happens when individuals reintroduce these other values into the economy through provocation. When art is discussed, it is not from a distance, but from within.

Luc Boltanski & Ève Chiapello – *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999) – demonstrate that the capitalist system only absorbs alternative value logics as long as they are profitable – and uses institutional violence against actors who introduce radically different standards (solidarity, care) into the economy.

Stephen Duncombe & Steve Lambert – *The Art of Activism* (2021) – explain how artistic interventions in companies and public spaces work “in the middle”: through performative provocation, they force organisations to negotiate previously repressed conflicts between people and the market.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles – *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* (1969/1997) – makes clear that the direct infiltration of alternative logics of activity (care,

maintenance, welfare) into institutional structures exposes and challenges their hierarchical value systems.

Augusto Boal – Theatre of the Oppressed (1974/1993) – shows that only a “theatre practice in the melee” — i.e. performative action within the real architecture of power — reveals hidden dynamics of oppression; theatre at a distance merely confirms the status quo.

The Yes Men – Yes Men Fix the World (film & accompanying book, 2009) – document how infiltrative actions in corporations (Dow Chemical, Exxon) systematically expose alternative values and simultaneously make the rigid self-protection of profit-oriented organisations visible.

Nicolas Bourriaud – Relational Aesthetics (1998) – argues that artistic practice, which creates social relationships “in real” rather than representing them, disruptively transgresses the economic framework and thus not only observes but also practically negotiates how value can be redistributed.

For example, I applied for the position of director of the state TV channel ZDF as an unemployed person, in order to question the hierarchy of job allocation. That’s completely different from formulating studies on the future of work. I confronted countless millionaires and managers in letters and campaigns with questions and provocations aimed at gaining a broader understanding of value creation. At the same time, I tried to generate value in a broader sense and face up to complex responsibilities. I foresaw problems in the economy and reacted directly to them, as if I could change something, took the function of art and research seriously, and finally also became an activist — which is just another word for “manager of a transformation”.

For twenty years, I worked on real values and relevance, cultivated public discourse and visibly caused problems and scandals. That was my autistic special interest — my obsession. But none of this was suitable for earning money. The market didn’t want this enlightening, research-based work, because it turned value into something accessible to everyone. Because there were grievances to work on everywhere. But that was not in the interest of capitalism.

It would have shifted people's needs from individual marketable products to sustainable, but initially more unwieldy and conflict-ridden solutions — which couldn’t be used to increase sales. Working on every conceivable relevance distributed the value across the board and thus stood in the way of value concentration.

So I showed how you could simply go into companies, creatively deconstruct them in order to create self-determined value that competed with the

“substitute products”. Accordingly, I didn’t keep the jobs I had for very long. I was thrown out of everything.

But there was always the question: what actually constitutes appropriate, relevant work?

Of course, not everything is a substitute product — but this discourse around the question of “real relevance” or “real value” is generally not conducted within the automatism and opportunism of jobs, which represents a distortion of reality.

This type of alternative value creation threatened the power and self-image of global corporations such as Red Bull — because my proposed destruction of the company through the public execution of a bull, as the symbol of the markets, with reference to the value of a statement such as: “The bull is dead, long live the freely co-creating human being”, could have been assumed to be far more significant, more relevant and more valuable than the stock market value of the company itself.

From the point of view of humanity — regardless of the poor bull, which of course I never wanted to kill — it would have been well worth wiping out a company like Red Bull through negative PR, in order to get a concise, ethically disruptive message into all the media. Suddenly, relevance became a moving commodity in the battle for power and influence on the one hand, and the need for people’s participation on the other. The question of self-empowerment was raised — the basis of a humane and fair redistribution of value and relevance.

I didn’t want to dominate — I wanted to facilitate the discourse.

As I said, I didn’t realise at the time that I was autistic. Autistic people see things with a rational clarity that often remains hidden to neurotypicals — and, in retrospect, my behaviour can also be explained by the fact that I followed blunt logic, not the conventions of a world increasingly comfortable with trivialising massive violence in order to keep the machine running.

Society’s response to the fact that I, as an artist and activist, worked for decades, mostly unpaid, on issues of “real value” (as a basis for discourse) — which can be justified as an absolute necessity according to Peter Singer’s ethics or Kant’s categorical imperative — was to punish me because I became impoverished as a result.

This checkmate situation is the reason why humane change almost always fails in our world. We give up as soon as something doesn’t promise money — because reward is equated with “right behaviour”. We do not realise enough that the fault might lie in the principle of reward itself.

Neurotypical people are very susceptible to rewards and the associated corruption through group pressure. Autistic people often don't understand how you can be so weak as to allow yourself to be blackmailed by a reward into doing something that is fundamentally wrong.

Because in my neurodivergent mode of perception, according to Gibson, only an extremely narrow field of affordance opens up to me⁸, in which that possibility of action in relation to and responsibility towards one's own experience simply remains the only bodily-cognitively accessible option; any order to follow the mere monetary stimulus lies outside this afforded landscape and feels as unattainable to me as climbing on a smooth pane of glass.

Martin Luther King coined the term "creative maladjustment". This refers to a refusal to adapt to problematic structures, as well as the attempt to use creativity to make conditions visible, and the willingness to make great personal sacrifices, such as poverty or marginalisation, as well as recognising a potential and actionable path to change. What I did was nothing else, in a mixture of conscious refusal and my neurodivergence, which I could not switch off, which forced me to see clearly the flaws of capitalism, as well as the associated violence against minorities, the ecosystem and people in general. It is important for readers here to understand that the assumption that only paid work is real work is a fundamental misconception. Action and impact also take place beyond paid jobs. We as a society need to recognise the fact that there are people who happily work against injustice, even if they are not paid to do so, and the fact that they are not paid to do so does not mean that what they do is any less relevant or responsible. These people are also not crazy, or don't want to conform, but for them not only the relevance of the problems they are working on is real, but also the pain associated with it, as well as recognising their own agency in working out a constructive solution to the problem. These people believe they can achieve, inspire, enable or co-create an alternative. So what I did may seem crazy to some. For me, it was a matter of life and death. Not just because I am autistic. I recognised a real solution for me in moving away from gainful employment, a necessity in order to achieve a much more fruitful and sustainable economy. What I did was, in my view, an economic development programme in search of authentic value.

⁸ According to James J. Gibson, affordance refers to the relational possibilities for action that an environment offers a specific organism on the basis of its physical disposition and current goals; they are not first cognitively constructed but "directly" perceived (Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, 1979).² This perspective explains why autistic people experience a narrower, highly specialised affordance field and perceive activities outside this field as physically "inaccessible".

But for many people out there, my actions seemed to be a betrayal of capitalist principles. Nothing is considered good if it doesn't make money.

But that is objectively wrong, as this book makes clearer from chapter to chapter.

There is a certain amount of lying and deception inherent in capitalism, which constructs itself through simplifications and racism. My confrontations with corporations and the state became threatening precisely when I was able to show that the value claimed by the market was not real value (usually abbreviated or fabricated) — and that people devalued by the market can and must point out this fraud, if anything is ever to change.

And this act of pointing it out must be concrete and immediate — creative, direct, and enacted on the ground, in companies, in institutions, in government agencies.

It must involve naming and exposing the behaviour of specific individuals who use the lies of capitalism to devalue others.

The unemployed are not 100% worthless, nor are the rich 100% valuable.

Investigating this within life itself is very different from holding an academic discourse on global injustice. As an artist and activist, I did not allow myself to be dispossessed abstractly and from a distance, and certainly not by some indirect abstraction called “the market”.

I confronted those people who wanted to certify my worthlessness, and I confronted them with their lies — in institutions and in companies. At the same time, I tried to integrate them into the vision of a different way of working, and a different assessment of value, people and contribution. This included civil servants, public prosecutors, judges, millionaires, and politicians.

So I did not bow to the equation: “What doesn't make money is worthless.”

Instead, I moderated a discourse — one I will elaborate on in the following chapters — that aimed at a world in which we would all have value.

Psychologically, this was extremely challenging, especially as my work was later even regarded by the state as a criminal offence.

This showed how capitalism translates fictitious debt — such as constructed wealth — into political categories of power, such as the criminalisation of the poor. Debt in an abstract and partially insane system becomes real debt. In Germany, as in many Western countries, there prevails a justice system that ideologically treats capitalism — the decisions of markets — as a legitimate court of law. Similar to a legal system shaped by religion.

No questions are asked about the complex causes of poverty. The injustice of poverty. As we will see later, this injustice is cancelled by German courts. The

migrant is guilty. The marginalised person is guilty. The Black woman is guilty. The poor person is guilty. Because the market says so.

But what if someone is impoverished or made poor for legitimate and important reasons?

Does that automatically render their contribution worthless — as German case law repeatedly seems to suggest? No.

The question of value is highly individual, yet we answer it with a stereotypical system that does not care about individuals. But still: Why wasn't I earning any money? Why didn't I just look for a job? If my work wasn't competitive, wasn't that proof enough? Wasn't I simply failing — and therefore, rightfully worthless?

A question of Responsibility

I am concerned with distinguishing two things: responsible action and gainful employment. These two do not belong to the same category — nor do they mean the same thing.

Yet if gainful employment is fundamentally presented as responsible action, and remuneration is used to frame it as “good” or “right,” then the actual question of responsibility in labour is no longer asked.

And that is a problem.

It means we abandon the millions of victims of the market — a form of symbolic violence.

It must therefore be clearly stated: Anyone who fails to ask whether economic behaviour is responsible — and instead implies responsibility through the rewarding of paid labour — is contributing to that violence.

Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition* (1958), draws a strict distinction between labour (a life-sustaining process) and action (a responsible, world-forming practice). Moral and political responsibility, she argues, does not arise from being paid, but from the effect of one's actions within the shared world. Frithjof Bergmann, in *New Work, New Culture* (2004), states that paid labour in industrial capitalism rarely equates to responsible action. Responsibility begins, rather, where people pursue meaningful, self-chosen tasks — regardless of pay.

Silvia Federici (*Revolution at Point Zero*, 2012) shows how the capitalist wage system systematically devalues care and reproductive labour, thereby obscuring the question of responsibility. Payment becomes a false seal of legitimacy.

Nancy Fraser (*Fortunes of Feminism*, 2013) argues that capitalist societies translate responsibility into monetary logic, thus silencing the “millions of

victims of the market” whose essential contributions (e.g. care work) exist outside of wage structures.

From this perspective, there is hardly anything more urgent than to ask: Is this work being done responsibly — regardless of the pay?

In practice, however, we find people being forced to work in and for companies that do not want them, simply because the economic model compels everyone to act in terms of revenue, not in terms of the common good. Karl Polanyi, in *The Great Transformation* (1944), shows that companies in liberal market regimes are systemically forced to prioritise profit over social considerations.

Those who resist this logic open up space for a different kind of social self-regulation beyond mere revenue.

André Gorz (*Critique of Economic Reason*, 1989) argues that turnover alone does not produce collective benefit — on the contrary, it generates ecological and social damage. Refusing to work within these parameters is therefore a legitimate strategy for introducing alternative value systems.

Given that the negative side effects of the growth imperative have long been well-documented and heavily criticised, people today face a stark choice:

Look away and go along — or face friction and conflict.

Kathi Weeks (*The Problem with Work*, 2011) sees refusal to work, when driven by utopian intent, as a democratising act. It disrupts corporate structures that equate “success” with turnover and opens the door to collective conversations about responsibility.

Such acts of deviation are neither wrong nor irresponsible. They are necessary. They constitute another form of work and contribution. We must begin to see refusal — when it is grounded in ethical intention and collective responsibility — as legitimate, even valuable.

James C. Scott (*Weapons of the Weak*, 1985) interprets small-scale acts of resistance and non-cooperation not as irrational behaviour, but as forms of social self-defence against market forces that ignore human consequences.

Giorgos Kallis (*Degrowth*, 2018) reminds us that rising turnover is no guarantee of well-being. He sees deliberately provoked frictions — from strikes to “slow work” — as necessary strategies for realigning the economy with the bigger picture, not with growth metrics.

My task as an artist is not to offer simple solutions. Nor should it be — not if we take art, or science, seriously. The purpose is to mature the relationship with reality.

The question of performance and relevance is one of the greatest misunderstandings in modern economics — because only what is rewarded monetarily is seen as relevant.

But in a time of climate collapse, ecological degradation and social crisis, nothing could be more urgent than the question: How can we act responsibly — appropriately — in the face of this situation? Gainful employment is not the answer to the question of survival. We will not solve the world's problems by dutifully doing our jobs. Intelligence, responsibility, empathy — these happen elsewhere today. Why are we not acting, but only working? That is the question.

Making injustice visible

Nature offers us countless colours — blue, red, yellow, green, and all the shades in between. Now imagine a thought experiment: humanity is divided into colour-coded groups, each representing certain talents or dispositions. The collective goal is to produce violet. The task is to solve this challenge within a “free market” — but payment is only possible in colours, or through prostitution.

In this set-up, blue and red — which can mix to form violet — begin to trade actively. Green and yellow, however, can't contribute to the goal directly and must rely on prostitution to survive.

So I ask: Who does more? Who acts responsibly? Isn't the activity of blue and red itself the root of injustice? And how is this “performance” reflected in prosperity?

What sounds absurd here is the daily reality of our economic system: people are excluded, devalued, prevented from contributing — not because they are unwilling, but because they were born with the “wrong colour,” and production has been narrowly defined. They are assigned a single value — or none at all. The world is made smaller, and this shrinking is then called growth. In economic theory, it is often argued that what asserts itself in the market is what is relevant. But as my work shows — and as we'll explore in later chapters — market relevance is not a goal but a tool: a tool for legitimising one-sided value hierarchies.

Capitalist “value” is not discovered — it is constructed.

Mariana Mazzucato (*The Value of Everything*, 2018) shows how political and economic power defines what counts as value — financial return is declared supreme, while social contribution is ignored.

David Harvey (*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2005) argues that “market relevance” is mostly a cover story for accumulating capital in one direction — a permanent con game for anyone not coded in the right colours.

From this logic flows the daily permission for division, exclusion, marginalisation and exploitation. Why? Because growth is defined without higher purpose, without wisdom. The capitalist system intentionally seeks asymmetry.

Thomas Piketty (*Capital and Ideology*, 2019) shows how value hierarchies have always been arbitrarily defined by those who already hold wealth — what they benefit from is called “growth”, no matter how small its actual utility. This is the paradox faced by the working person today: A market that proclaims “value” while defining it arbitrarily. And individuals who live in a web of meaning they cannot ignore — especially those of us with neurodivergent structures and heightened sensitivity to systemic contradiction. Responsible action is a category hijacked by capitalism. But it must be removed from the market and reclaimed in other terms.

Kate Raworth (*Doughnut Economics*, 2017) shows how market logic narrows the frame of production until social and ecological colours fall out of the picture. Growth becomes “success” when it destroys life-supporting cycles.

Yet those with the “wrong colours” are still part of the system. They work. They contribute. But their contributions are devalued — not because they lack worth, but because they don’t fit the competition’s terms.

I’m not just referring to access to education. I mean the entire structure of personality and desire — the diversity of relevance itself. When society dismisses this, it loses not only fairness, but also innovation and imagination. The result? Populism thrives in a thinned-out human ecosystem.

The market commissions only what can be paid. And those who pay define what matters. That is a structure of division — a strategy to concentrate profits through devaluation.

Capitalism sets up false incentives. It legitimises itself by pretending that performance and money are one and the same.

But this performance exists only within a distorted competition — one that erases the fact that equality of opportunity doesn’t exist and cannot exist under these conditions. Because if everyone contributes in one way or another, then a fair measure would reveal a kind of relative equivalence — which would make high profits impossible.

What’s lost here is the creative soil of society: The subjective seed of each person’s attempt to survive and contribute. If this seed is blocked, ignored, or excluded, we burn our collective resources. People are still used. Exploited.

But they are formally excluded from the pyramid of performance — in order to legitimise their destruction.

In *Radical Worker*, I showed how the benefits of diversity only become visible when a certain density of diversity is reached. A half-dead ecosystem doesn't showcase diversity — it showcases decay. That's where we are.

We no longer recognise that the “failure of the poor” is not personal, but systemic. Capitalism even benefits from this failure. Power requires wealth, and wealth is created most effectively not by equal contributions, but by strategic inequality. It works by assigning arbitrary value to certain forms of labour and zero to others — not by merit, but by control.

And here's the final trick: There is no serious method in economics to measure equality of opportunity. Because it's too complex. And the goalposts are already rigged. Equality in terms of what? If success is already narrowly defined as financial gain, then equal opportunity is excluded from the start.

Amartya Sen (*Development as Freedom*, 1999) points out that almost all economic indicators are monetary — and thus ignore the real freedoms (capabilities) of human lives.

John Roemer (*Equality of Opportunity*, 1998) shows that even where models exist, there is no agreed empirical framework to measure equal starting positions.

Joseph Stiglitz (*The Price of Inequality*, 2012) writes that credit systems function on the fiction of equal opportunity, while structural poverty is concealed under numbers.

Saskia Sassen (*Expulsions*, 2014) speaks of a modern economy that systematically expels certain groups from the canon of value.

Pierre Bourdieu & Jean-Claude Passeron (*Reproduction*, 1977) show how education and cultural capital reproduce inequality while claiming meritocracy.

Elizabeth Anderson (*Private Government*, 2017) reminds us that the firm acts as a private authority, and that market outcomes are then interpreted as personal choice — erasing structural injustice.

A bank that seizes your home does not ask about the injustice of poverty. It follows the rules of a system that pretends equality, while arbitrarily declaring human beings worthless — because the economic lottery dealt them a losing hand.

This form of structural devaluation — hidden, quiet, daily — is what makes exploitation efficient. It raises profits by narrowing the field of recognition.

Heather Boushey (*Unbound*, 2019) shows how this process increases profits for the few by constraining value creation to selective indicators and externalising the rest — a dynamic that requires exploitation to sustain itself.

85% of autistic people⁹ on the planet are without earned income because society discriminates against them and does not understand their difference. By pushing us out of the market in the same way that women or black people were and still are discriminated against, this enables a concentration of values among the privileged. At the same time, the reality and world do not become part of the economy and society that would be reflected in our particular way of working.

And here comes the crux of the matter. Because relevance is often arbitrary, as is the question of profit and loss, the market must find other explanations for the failure of others that do not call into question the logic of the structures of a claimed performance of the privileged. This is why in the discourses of society we often do not discuss the abuse of power in the market, but racism towards the poor. They have failed because they have that skin colour, are lazy or stupid. Stigmatisation is a compelling means of maintaining the logic according to which some have a lot and others have little or nothing. There is no capitalism without racism. Otherwise, capitalism would be in considerable need of explanation, because paid gainful employment is something completely different from responsible action, let alone fair distribution. They can take place together, but gainful employment in its legitimisation processes also manages completely without responsibility and justice, and that is a major problem for us all.

Cedric J. Robinson — *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983) shows that capitalism has operated as “racial capitalism” since its beginnings, i.e. that it makes racial difference a prerequisite for its accumulation; there is no variant of capitalist development that can do without systemic racism. Ruth Wilson Gilmore — *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (2007) — analyses how economic over-accumulation in California was solved by a racialised prison economy: Profit logic requires institutional violence that primarily affects Black and Latinx people — a lesson in the indissoluble alliance of capital and racism. Nancy Fraser — “Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism” (*Critical Historical Studies*, 2016) — points out that conventional models of exploitation fail to recognise the permanent

⁹ Journalistic review of a British charity study / Statistics section of the Wikipedia overview
Employment of autistic people - cites several European and US surveys Both pieces of evidence indicate that the 85 per cent figure does not come from a single overall global study, but circulates as a consensus estimate from numerous country reports. The British NGO Ambitious About Autism (cited in the Guardian article) relies on its own panel surveys and government data; the Wikipedia entry aggregates these and other European studies (such as EU-SILC 2014). In academic discourse, more recent ONS data (UK 2021: 22% employment rate, i.e. 78% out of work) is often cited as a conservative lower limit; however, the 85% figure remains a common reference point for the upper range of the global employment deficit.

intertwining of capitalist value creation with racist dispossession; without the “non-equality” of the races, the economic chain of legitimation would collapse. So if supply and demand decide my work as an artist and human rights activist, then this is not a decision about the relevance of my work, but about the relevance of the colour I represent, in a game in which many colours are devalued in advance so that high one-sided profits can be made for a few. The value of art and culture, for example, is largely excluded from the market, partly because the contexts of the meaning and relevance of art are largely concealed from the population, to name just one example. People have been trained to have certain needs for self-determination and freedom because the model of gainful employment is not only one of graduated devaluation, but also one of learning renunciation and self-restraint in the interests of others who have the power to reward you. The worker who has been worked to the bone in this way, who can only spend his evenings in front of the television, has been withdrawn from the market of supply and demand for art and culture in a way that undermines the livelihood of creative artists. Supply and demand cannot therefore be regarded as an objective variable, but must be seen in terms of their power and manipulability. If you claim that art is actually worth less, you have to put up with the question of what is supposed to be of greater value to society in terms of the wealth of the billionaires? Yes, more jobs are being created, but the “what for” is not a negligible question when it comes to the question of value. A world without culture is like a world without food. This can be scientifically illustrated in detail. UNESCO — Culture: Urban Future (Global Report, 2016) The study states that cultural participation is “a prerequisite for human well-being”; cities that neglect culture have measurably poorer health, safety and cohesion indicators. WHO — What is the Evidence on the Role of the Arts in Improving Health and Well-being? (2019) The systematic evaluation of over 3,000 studies shows that cultural activities (music, literature, dance, theatre) have similar preventive effects to primary nutrition or exercise interventions; culture is explicitly considered a “health asset” here. Amartya Sen — Identity and Violence (2006) — points out that “cultural deprivation” restricts human capabilities in the same way as physical malnutrition; without a variety of opportunities for expression and meaning, societies become “cognitively malnourished”. Richard Florida — The Rise of the Creative Class (2002/2019) — uses regional data to show that cultural infrastructure generates productivity and innovation-promoting effects that are economically comparable to the provision of material resources. Martha C. Nussbaum — Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities (2010) — argues that cultural and aesthetic education is as essential to human emotional and moral development “as

protein is to the body”; democracies that cut back on culture risk social degeneration.

The despair of many people in poverty is also based on the irrationality of their condition, in that it is made impossible for them to become self-determined participants in a market with what they contribute in their difference. Instead, they are supposed to devalue themselves, to stop recognising their contribution in a logical and meaningful context and instead adopt the view of a domination that wants to force them into jobs in which they inevitably lose the connection between action and reality, as well as self-confidence, in order to exchange integrity for monetary reward. This does not apply to all those in paid work, but often staggers from the bottom to the top. This may sound extreme, but today we know far too little about the diversity of needs, talents and contexts that actually exist or why nature produces people with certain deviating abilities. “Did Autism Help Drive Human Evolution?” — Wired magazine, feature by Penny Spikins (2017) — summarises paleoarchaeological findings and states that the role of autistic traits in collective survival is “only beginning to be explored” — an indicator of the persistent lack of knowledge about natural cognitive diversity. People like autistic people or those with other natural deviations from the norm are more than relevant for the continued existence of humanity. Humans are one of the few creatures that are not born with a genetically predefined labour requirement. We are not worker bees. However, this diversity of possibilities collides with a market that does not explain itself and instead produces myths. James Suzman — *Work: A History of How We Spend Our Time* (2020) explains that humans — unlike “eusocial specialists” such as bees or ants — are born without a genetically defined task profile; our work roles are culturally negotiated, not biologically prescribed. Richard Wrangham — *The Goodness Paradox* (2019) Wrangham emphasises that *Homo sapiens* remains evolutionarily flexible through combinations of behaviour and tasks, while many animal species have fixed, heritable divisions of labour; this plasticity often clashes with economic systems that enforce rigid roles. This indoctrination against the diversity of free choices in labour, which is imposed on the lower classes in particular, destroys their souls and robs society of some of its complexity and alternative solutions. I am therefore concerned here with a fight against the eradication of those who do not fit, because it seems that they have to be eradicated, that they want to be eradicated in order to narrow the market in such a way that high one-sided profits are possible. But we urgently need this diversity in order to create a market that functions like an ecosystem and thinks about the bigger picture. External control is a

problem because it leads to opportunistic and democratically immature behaviour. Deviation is needed so that relevance no longer arbitrarily follows the pure increase in turnover, which reaches the whole of society less and less via trickle-down.

So the question here is what work and contribution actually are. How do we measure the relevance of contribution? What is impact? What is the actual goal of an economy? In relation to what?

Is it not just as conceivable that the labour of an individual, without a salary, can become many times more valuable in real terms than the turnover of a corporation? Could it not be that the poor carry within them a knowledge that can help them to understand the reality of this society more comprehensively? Society, the market, politics — which is simply fraud — consider it perfectly consistent that “Speed’s work”, as I self-deprecatingly and subjectivisingly call it in this book, has no value whatsoever. Simply because it doesn’t finance me. But this criterion in itself says nothing about objective value, objective relevance or even impact. A great deal of work has gone into my research work over the decades and, I would argue, a great deal of value and insight.

In the following chapters, I would like to show how powerful a way of working can be that doesn’t give a damn about rewards and instead focuses intrinsically on genuine, self-experienced relevance and the ability to relate. Because I see this as a key to bringing work and responsibility into a real and new context that can help us all. Especially in view of the development of AI and robotics.

I did this work for twenty years and demanded an answer from society as to why the value of my contribution remained unacknowledged—when it was so painfully obvious that capitalism was not expanding but rather constraining human potential. Not just physically, but existentially—threatening the very idea of humanity beyond mere survival.

Every single day, capitalism denies millions of activists, committed individuals, and artists a fair income, thereby devaluing their labour against all reason. The difference between those who believe in capitalism and myself is this: they assume that this is where the discussion ends. If someone is impoverished, they are considered worthless—unworthy of being heard. But I saw—and continue to see—the opening, perhaps because of my neuronal divergence, that this paradox—of real value paired with monetary worthlessness—must be exposed. It must resonate. It must have consequences. Anything else would dissolve the very foundation of a life-sustaining society.

Injustice must not remain without consequence. Otherwise, we abandon everything that protects life.

So what would happen if I simply continued? If I kept on doing this kind of care work—even at the cost of poverty? How long could one still claim that this work had no value? After one year? Two? Ten? What would society do with the growing paradox: refusing to pay me, even as it becomes increasingly clear—through the work itself, through this book—that what I was doing was ethically right and of immense value? At the very least, just as valuable as the work of the man in the bank or the woman in management.

The logic of reward and punishment, as discussed earlier, persists in our economy under the guise of realism. But today, more than ever, both state and society are trapped in a double bind—a paradox they refuse to resolve:

1. The economy sustains life.
2. The economy destroys the environment, the Global South, women, children—and people as such.

My work has become a manifestation of this conflict, and perhaps a long overdue basis for public discourse. More and more people no longer wish to remain in gainful employment. They see the cracks, the contradictions. They long for meaning and coherence. The work presented here offers a possible path—at the very least, it fuels the conversation.

Yet very few are willing to go that far. That, too, may soon change.

Gallup — State of the Global Workplace 2024 — reports that only 21% of employees worldwide are “engaged”, while 62% have internally resigned; in the UK, the engagement rate is as low as 10%. Business Insider (2025) — “Employees are sick and tired of engagement surveys”. A US-wide survey shows that 66% of employees believe their feedback leads to “little to no” improvement — an indicator of deep-rooted dissatisfaction with paid work. ADP Research Institute — People at Work 2024: A Global Workforce View -In a sample of 34,000 employees in 18 countries, more people report dissatisfaction with pay than with any other workplace factor; at the same time, “pay” ranks among the top 3 priorities (55%) for the fourth time in a row. Pew Research Center — “How Americans View Their Jobs” (2024 update) — Only 50% of US workers describe themselves as “extremely or very satisfied”; 12% are “not at all” or “somewhat” satisfied, and the remaining 38% are in between, marking a broad middle block of latent dissatisfaction.

I wasn't always this non-conformist. It developed gradually, in countless small steps. For most of my life, I worked as a precariously employed, bothersome creative with a conscience—someone who, for example, tried to talk to advertising agency clients about the psychological and societal damage

caused by advertising. Even then, the autistic person emerged—the one who cannot simply ignore lies or contradictions. I've always struggled with the status quo. After all, I was autistic without knowing it, and I was a migrant. I always experienced the world as an outsider. I tried to adapt, of course, but the more I adapted, the more clearly I saw the structural problems in our economic and cultural systems.

Autistic people detect patterns—and within them, they perceive what's wrong. This can be seen in countless projects I've tried to realise over the past 30 years. For instance, I was once asked to design an innovation centre for humanity on the highest mountain in Sardinia—until I discovered the commission had come from the mafia. It turned out to be a front for a land speculation scheme: I had been used to obtain demolition permits for a radio station under the guise of a humanitarian initiative. My intention to create something meaningful kept running into hard economic interests. Over and over again.

And so I came to see this not as coincidence, but as a systemic feature of capitalism itself. I wanted to understand why markets destroyed so many good intentions while claiming—falsely—that whatever prevailed was by definition “better.” Objectively speaking, this wasn't true at all. George A. Akerlof and Robert J. Shiller – *Phishing for Phools* (2015) – show how markets systematically favour inferior products when they yield greater profit margins. Joseph E. Stiglitz – *Freefall* (2010) – demonstrates that unregulated markets sabotage good intentions, even when the results are collectively worse. Karl Polanyi – *The Great Transformation* (1944) – traces the devastation caused by belief in self-regulating markets. Ha-Joon Chang – *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism* (2010) – unpacks how inferior technologies often dominate for non-rational reasons. Mariana Mazzucato – *The Entrepreneurial State* (2013) – reminds us that transformative innovation came not from markets, but from long-term state investment.

So I realised: once money was involved, the intention to do something good often led to the opposite. The market, untethered from conscience, corrupted almost everything. I experienced the same thing the philosopher Nikolaj Schultz described in *Landkrank* (2023) —how deeply we are entangled in monstrous systems the moment we “just do our jobs” and stay silent.

I wanted to understand this more deeply. To find a way out. Even when I occasionally led workshops or coaching sessions in large companies—ineffectively, because of my autism—I sincerely wanted to change something. It was always about people. About labour. And still, I was used as an alibi: a fig leaf to suggest change while the structures remained untouched. I was

blocked at every level. And I saw that many people felt the same way. But hardly anyone said it out loud. Why?

Once, I destroyed a major opening conference in Italy. I was the keynote speaker. Italian television was present. But on stage, I failed —stood in silence, confused everyone, sabotaged the million-euro project—and declared that my failure was the more important process of transformation.

I wanted to confront powerful families—Porsche, Plattner, Quandt—with the relativity of their wealth. I once offered Josef Ackermann, head of Deutsche Bank, a deal: I'd search for his soul in exchange for a million euros.

These were not stunts. They were invitations to necessary conversations about the economy's fundamental contradictions.

For over two decades, I continued this difficult, time-consuming work as an artist and activist—writing books about it, self-published, because publishers could not grasp it. The work was unwieldy, anti-consumerist, monstrous in form, radically unscientific, deeply subjective. But this method—making conflicts personal, immediate, embodied—yielded insights that challenge everything many people believe about labour and reward.

What matters most: I tried. For twenty years, I tried to be a different kind of worker—one who thinks about society and the planet.

But how did I do it? Because to me, this was research.

8

A central concept for me is “work-integrated relational agency” (Arbeitsintegriertes Beziehungshandeln) —an attitude of extended responsibility at work, which I have practiced for decades. There is a certain irony in the fact that, as an autistic person, I have had considerable difficulties in relationships. So the need to act in relation was not merely a research interest; it was also a survival strategy. In *A Society Without Trust* (Gesellschaft ohne Vertrauen), I called a similar principle system-creative action, and in *Radical Worker*, I spoke of provoked empiricism.

In the spirit of thinkers like Isabell Lorey and Judith Butler, my main interest was to reinterpret precarity—not as a position of inferiority, but as a starting point for self-valorisation. To return agency to those most affected by systemic dysfunction. Acting in ways that were truly relevant had driven me into poverty. But from that place, I began to address the deep structural problems around me—and, in some cases, to make those very problems the core of my labour. Though I called it “work”, it was of course much more than that. It became a sustained intervention in the structures of capitalism.

“The complex relationship”—the ongoing, unpredictable, embodied relational process—stood as a counter-force to the simplification mechanisms of the market, which cannot see, let alone repair, the destruction it causes to people and to nature.

The precariat forces most people to adapt ever more. This is precisely the logic of racism: to treat the poor as a burden, as if they were not equal participants in society. They are not meant to bring more complexity—but to be simplified, categorised, racialised. Yet it is the poor who are the true experts when it comes to knowing what does not work in this society.

Their knowledge must be valued more highly than that of the “successful”—if we want an economy that is realistic rather than delusional. The unwieldiness of their condition, full of structural injustice, should be valued more than the managerial desire for quick, clean solutions through the erasure of individual characteristics.

Universal Care Income

An attitude anticipates change and addresses a grievance. Today we have many concepts that suggest how the economy should be different or how capitalism can be overcome. The problem is that these ideas create a gap between the now and the future. A stance, by contrast, acts as if change is already here. You imply it instantly, through a certain attitude. I went to work with this attitude every day for over 20 years. I simply reinvented work in a way that I believed would help make complex relationships visible — and as we’ll see in the course of this book, it did.

For example, with the attitude: “I only do work that is in the interests of humanity.” That may sound radical, although it merely describes ethically appropriate behaviour. Why should anyone do the opposite — work that is harmful? In practice, however, this question collides with the dominant norms of capitalism and the labour market. As an artist and activist, this position led me into confrontation with corporations and public authorities, often irritating them and prompting defensive overreactions. It challenged the traditional role of employment as obedience without participation.

My work was frequently rejected — not because it lacked value, but because I refused to obey. Tackle the real problems inside a company, and you’re often shown the door. What’s more, I was rejected even when my work cost companies nothing. That revealed the depth of the ideological failure in supposedly economically rational management. In thirty years of attempting to earn a living, no one ever considered using my particular capacities — as an autistic person, artist, and high-level pattern recogniser.

The very fact that relevant and meaningful work could happen outside the confines of paid employment, and that it could not be externally controlled, already posed a threat to the entire capitalist construction of value distribution. According to capitalist logic, correct and valuable action should lead to financial reward. But this didn't happen for people like me — or for activists, artists, or unpaid researchers — because doing so would result in higher labour costs and loss of managerial control. There is thus a built-in incentive to deny the relevance of non-commercial contributions.

In ten years, I did not find a single company willing to let me continue with the stance: "I only do work that is in the interest of humanity." Or even pay me for it. Because I would have invested so much in real social transformation that the company would have made no conventional profit. On paper, there would have been zero growth — even as significant changes occurred in real terms. Typically, I was expelled before this could happen. On one hand, this is deeply illogical; on the other, it is perfectly in line with the internal contradictions of capitalism — value creation, corruption, opportunism, or the sheer scarcity of financial resources.

Some may say that I refused to work, that I was defiant or rebellious. But they forget the millions of people harmed by this market. I'm not guilty of being too intelligent, creative, or dedicated to ignore the problems I clearly saw. As an autistic person, I would argue that the real refusal came from those in positions of power — they refused to address the work of confronting social injustice. That refusal likely causes billions in damage. So whose work is more ethically valuable? Who contributes more to innovation? We must stop assuming that those who conform are the adults in the room.

My stance was and is grounded in a kind of applied consequentialism — one that recognises the contradiction between capitalist utility and actual human or ecological wellbeing. This discrepancy must have consequences for the worker or employee. Otherwise, value and relevance are reduced to mere arbitrariness and power. As a society, we should want to understand our problems more deeply. Ignoring them is irresponsible — regardless of whether one receives a paycheck at the end of the month. Because then, clearly, something is fundamentally wrong with our values.

I know these words provoke resistance. But over the course of this book, much of what I did will emerge as thoughtful and reasonable. What I realised in my work was not a path to monetary success, but a radical questioning of economic benefit itself. The value of this revolution lay not in its chances for profit, but in the process of becoming aware — of naming and documenting the many problems I encountered over more than a decade. These are

nutrients for future discourse. Don't expect simple solutions from me. The aim here is to make the fractures visible. There will be moments when you may want to hate me.

My intention, in response to the neurotic worker who represses the bigger picture in order to function and be rewarded, was and is to correct this through attitude — radically and without compromise. In this sense, I understood what I was doing as an artist and researcher as “Universal Carework.”

I believe this is an essential step — and I am not alone — to extend carework to all forms of marginalised or underpaid labour: from child-rearing, to elderly care, to the arts, to activism, to unpaid intellectual labour, to any area I may have forgotten. Joan C. Tronto writes in *Moral Boundaries* (1993) that care is a universal practice that can and must permeate all social activity. The Care Collective, in *The Care Manifesto* (2020), explicitly calls for care to be recognised as a principle for all of society — from art to activism to research — thereby radically undermining the logic of profit-driven wage labour. Tithi Bhattacharya and others, in *Social Reproduction Theory* (2017), argue that all activity that sustains life — including collective art — is part of a broader care economy and should be valued beyond capitalist measures of profitability.

If we extend the logic of carework to all these domains, then the dilemma of the single mother is the same as that of the unpaid artist, the migrant worker, the activist, the underpaid researcher — all of them must keep their “child,” their “project,” alive in a world that gives them little or nothing to do so, despite profiting from their efforts. These people are relatives in Donna Haraway's sense — bound by similar struggles whose root cause lies in capitalism's refusal to recognise reproductive labour. Even the labour of refugees — their flight — is a form of care: for their children, for themselves, or for the world, because they want to become “free people” again. It would be absurd to suggest they are better off disenfranchised. But they can only become different with us. They too are working toward a better world.

The poor, the welfare recipients, perform carework in many forms — as does the ecosystem itself. We all care and are discriminated against because our work is not called a job. Because we are prevented from seeing it as work. Because naming it as work would relativise the jobs of others. We have all been given the “wrong colour.” We do not all suffer equally, and the “we” must be democratically constituted, but we also need steps that make our shared pain visible and articulable.

At its core, this book raises the question: what happens when workers and employees—or even just one individual—attempt to participate in gainful employment as a whole person, aware of the complex issues and contradictions of our time? When they work not as reduced functions, but as agents of work-integrated relational agency (Speed Work), following all the responsibilities they themselves recognise? Of course, this is and must be a subjective perspective.

The intention here is to liberate Universal Carework from kitchens and households, from the Global South, from the studios and shelters, and to break down the division between the dispossessed and the exploited. It aims to infiltrate the economic system from within, as an eco-social class (Bruno Latour), simply by refusing to be marginalised or devalued for holding a different stance toward labour. Because this form of labour is in fact more productive, innovative, social, and ecological.

You can denounce me a hundred times, but you cannot disprove the legitimacy of a responsible position. There is no simple way to overcome capitalism. You don't press a button and it disappears. It takes thousands of people deciding to take painful, conscious steps. Many already know exactly what they should do. In every company, there are unresolved conflicts—muted by convenience or fear—even though conscience tells us otherwise.

These stories must be told. Because what blocks us all are the false narratives that sustain the racism protecting the capitalist system. The poor, the “losers”, the marginalised are not lazy or deficient—they are the deceived and the survivors of massive structural violence. And it's time they realise their capacity for resistance.

If I can show that responsible action—understood as a subjective, ethically grounded perspective—is systematically penalised under capitalism, then this may be a crucial step toward dismantling the myth of universally useful jobs.

To do this, we must break through the psychological blockade that insists only those with jobs are contributing to society. This will only change when we bring Universal Carework into every corner of life, participate actively, and demand recognition—until the attempt to label us as lazy or non-productive becomes laughable.

Dispossession and marginalisation can be broken. But as things stand, it requires a deeply subjective act of self-expansion—like the octopus in Donna Haraway's writing, whose tentacles reweave the fractured into a coherent,

living pattern. One in which life itself is no longer measured by turnover, but by how well we preserve the intricate structures of what is alive.

When humans integrate the whole world—an imperfect, subjective, yet vital act—we begin to reassemble the larger world, the ecosystem that sustains us. It is time to hack gainful employment in the name of humanity, and reclaim labour itself.

Because the reduced actions performed in fragmented jobs—driven by instrumental purpose and division of labour—can no longer be proclaimed as the universal answer to survival. Not if every attempt to reform capitalism still results in devastating side effects, in the ongoing dispossession of the Global South, and in the silencing of the poor. We see the damage everywhere. *“Singer’s Principle”*, by the philosopher Peter Singer, who is one of the most important ethics researchers of our time, states:

*“If it is within our power to prevent something bad without sacrificing something of “comparable moral significance”, then we should do it from a moral point of view.”*¹⁰

So if labour became unwieldy through my work-integrated relational agency, which slowed down capitalism on a small scale, and later perhaps on a large scale, to the benefit of a higher and more conscious density of relationships that were developed between the relations of production, then this approach was to the detriment of capitalism, but served a higher ethical goal, namely the construction of an economy that would do justice to greater complexity. I am not saying that my approach is the only relevant one, because it needs many perspectives, but it needs even more radical worlds of experience that report on the experiences of individuals who have tried an alternative. It is not enough to design new systems. Solidarity is crucial, as is funding for those who follow this path.

I will therefore go into more detail later on about the concept of the *“Universal Care Income”*, which I developed in parallel with the Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA) and *“The international Care Income campaign”*, as a further development of the idea of the Unconditional Basic Income (FBI), which currently seems almost politically unenforceable as a result of the narrative set by the right, because this is predominantly blocked by workers (and right-wing conservative or neoliberal parties) who see the UBI as a devaluation of their labour because it “rewards” something that in their eyes does not represent an achievement:(and right-wing conservative or neoliberal parties) who see the UBI as a devaluation of their work because it “rewards” something that, in their eyes, is not an achievement because it does

¹⁰ Peter Singer / Hunger, Wohlstand und Moral / Reclam / Afterword p 72

not take place in gainful employment. This populist discourse, which strengthens right-wing parties, can be broken through by defining a basic income as the natural and correct consequence of universal care work, which does not focus on the “unconditional” factor, but on the aspect of “self-determination” and the recognition of actual contributions that demand respect and appreciation. Under certain circumstances, it is more valuable if we receive a care income for our self-determined work or for those self-determined contributions than if everything revolves around the question of unconditionality, which distorts what is actually at stake. After all, it's not about people wanting to impose money by force without anything in return, but there is simply no consideration in capitalism for a lot of work and contributions that people make in the sense of the “universal care work” concept. It also devalues essential relevance such as culture, society and the environment. If you adopt this perspective, you stand in solidarity with workers and employees and no longer in competition with them, because they too are care workers beyond or within their gainful employment.

As I will explain later, in the course of my work I was able to personally enforce a UBI against the state and can therefore describe the problem areas that arose from this and why a “Universal Care Income” is much easier to integrate into existing conditions in order to change them from within and from below.

The following chapters show how the discourse between the German state and myself escalated in several stages of violence over a period of 10 years. This conflict became the starting point and catalyst for the dramas and opportunities surrounding the question of a new concept of labour and an economy that takes the entire ecosystem into account. The inconceivable events reveal a state that is entangled in a deep taboo, that practises economics as a religion, as a deep belief in the superiority of some people over others.

The facts presented here show that resentment and right-wing violence are not primarily a form of hatred, but that racism serves to protect privileges and positions in an environment in which a humane transformation and an expansion of freedom seems impossible for the perpetrators and they therefore use racism out of cowardice in their distress in order to preserve the status quo by devaluing others at all costs. The more racism increases, the clearer the shift in blame becomes, from the cowards who do not want to risk their privileges and therefore behave opportunistically, to the weakest members of society, who are blamed for “everything” as a result. Racisms are therefore systemic affects in a society that are based on lies. However, these lies are not only found in racism and false attributions towards minorities, but

much deeper in entanglements that arise as a result of decisions not being made, as a consequence of looking the other way, of allowing massive injustice, indeed a failure of humanity. Racism is preceded by a much deeper aggression, and we find this in the structures of power, capitalism and labour.

I have deliberately replaced the names of the politicians jointly responsible here with fruit names, although I could legally name them. However, this act is a reaction to the fact that the findings presented here will not lead to any accountability for these people. Because as this book shows, all levels and all institutions were involved in massive injustice against people and they all actively contributed to the cover-up and still do.

Take-away box — chapter “Why don't we act, but only work?”

Work ≠ Responsible behaviour

Wages replace conscience: as soon as payment is automatically considered “good & right”, the question of real responsibility disappears — symbolic violence against those who do not fit into the wage grid.

Pandemic as a mirror

Lockdown restrictions outraged the middle class, while the poor have been living the same restrictions as a permanent state for years. Social distancing is older than Covid-19.

Market logic shortens relevance

What sells is considered “valuable” — care work, art and activism are systematically devalued. Capitalism needs this gap in order to concentrate extreme profits.

Classism = structural blanking

It is not talent that decides, but the “right colour” in the game. Equal opportunities is a myth that frames poverty as a personal failure and thus morally blocks redistribution.

Creative Maladjustment (ML King)

Deliberate maladaptation becomes a necessary strategy: those who refuse to accept the logic of profit uncover the hidden costs of the system and open up spaces for real change.

Conclusion

We work a lot, but do little. Only when "contribution" is measured in terms of socio-ecological benefits instead of salary slips does the focus shift from functioning to shaping.

A Ten-Year Investigation of Value, the Experience of Poverty, and Work in German Society

“Speed’s Work” and the Creation of an Alternative

1

In 2014 — a decade ago — I launched the first phase of my empirical research on poverty and labour. Early on, I alerted the Federal Labour Minister Peer (SPD) to serious systemic abuses in the state’s treatment of the poor. For the first time, due to my neurodivergence and after two decades of artistic labour, I entered a German Job Centre – despite having invested roughly half a million euros in unpaid or poorly paid cultural and care work as an artist and researching autistic. This included large parts of my inheritance, which I had channelled into social and artistic projects and research for the benefit of the country’s people. What I encountered at the Job Centre were the same systemic issues I had previously witnessed in other institutions – core mechanisms of a simulated economy of value shaped by simplification, prejudice, and resentment, devoid of sense or reason.

What I saw was an institution that openly lied about the poor and used these lies to deceive, humiliate and often make them ill. Something had to be done about this. This had to be recognised as work, if one wanted to take reality

seriously. It was full-time labour. Anything else would have meant turning a blind eye and leaving thousands in immense suffering. Anything else would have meant looking the other way and leaving thousands of people in massive suffering.

In my neurodivergent mode of perception, only a sharply constrained field of affordance revealed itself to me – in Gibson’s sense – within which action could only mean “work-integrated relational agency”: a condensation of lived experience, volition, and the structural realities of authority and German society. In this, I recognised only one single corridor that remained to me as an option for action. I had no choice but to try to use the means I had to expose the “racism against the poor” and make inhuman structures visible. To ignore this would have meant inflicting a kind of physical pain upon myself – a profound violation of my integrity, comparable in its existential dimension to the trauma of rape. I was under stress, because the ideology of the Job Centres was one of massive violence.

Christoph Butterwegge — Hartz IV und die Folgen (2014, updated 2020) — shows that the sanctions regime of the Job Centres functions as “welfare state forced labour” and systematically uses fear, stigmatisation and material deprivation as a disciplinary instrument. German Caritas Association — Sanctions in SGB II: Folgen für Lebenslage und Gesundheit (Expertise 2016) The report describes sanctions of over 30% as a “massive encroachment on human dignity” and documents cases of existential hardship and even homelessness as a result of Job Centre penalties. Federal Constitutional Court — judgement of 5 November 2019 (1 BvL 7/16) — declares harsh cuts (> 30%) unconstitutional because they “interfere with the physical security of existence” and thus have a disproportionate coercive effect.

Neurotypical people can ignore such things if it benefits them. For me, there is always the question of consequences. If, like me, you react to injustice in this way for decades, then it is clear that art is only effective if it is taken seriously. If it is seen as a means of transformation. In this, it follows its own rules that artists have learnt. A lot of “blah-blah” is claimed today about art and in the context of art, but if you belong to an oppressed minority, then art is a weapon against injustice, against “not being seen”. Then art is as serious as war. For what do all the intellectual achievements and insights mean but the struggles for human rights, all the billions spent on research and the fates of those who have conducted research under the most difficult conditions, if knowledge no longer has any meaning, if violence established by research does not lead to its cessation. This kind of behaviour, ignoring knowledge just because it comes from the “wrong group of people”, has fatal consequences for our

society. People like Donald Trump and all the other right-wing populists are only possible because art and research are marginalised.

This book shows how the state massively suppresses the role of creative artists in a democracy from the moment it sees itself challenged by art. Something that would not have been thought possible in the 1990s, which is due to the general shift to the right that we are experiencing everywhere today. In order to understand the significance of the following chapters, it is essential to recognise that art has to offend in order to do its job. My work should never have been penalised for this. In these more than 500 pages, it becomes clear how government agencies and companies operated under the illusion of a simplified ideology in which “disruptive people” were not seen as a response to a lack of understanding of complexity, but as something to be literally removed, destroyed or even punished.

For nearly a decade, I survived as a top-up recipient: working full-time as a cultural worker, author, and researcher on labour and poverty, yet unable to make a living from it. I was forced to rely on social welfare under the notorious Hartz IV regime – the German system in place from 2005 to 2022 – later rebranded as “Citizen’s Income,” (Bürgergeld) but in essence unchanged: an inhumane and socially racist instrument of punishment for the poor. This showed that art, although ideologically protected by the state according to the Basic Law, was systematically marginalised by the state where it was useful and effective, against the state. Art was regarded as a hobby in the Job Centres and was generally trivialised and ridiculed in most state authorities and institutions. The poor were forced to stop making art unless, like me, they put up massive resistance. They were not allowed to develop a subculture that could have made unwanted truths visible.

The question of “full-time” is not only one of working hours, but also of the seriousness of a work, of the relevance of an activity. It is therefore only logical that anyone who takes art seriously should also pursue it full-time and that the question of profit or income is not a compelling decision as to whether art has to take place full-time or not. This is where a significant rift in understanding between the Job Centre and myself became apparent very early on. Because it was clear that art was not paid for, or hardly paid for. It was also clear that this did not change the fact that it was a profession and an essential activity that could not be left to the curatorial idiocy of a Job Centre that fundamentally rejected the constitutionally recognised value of art. The Job Centre did not have to decide whether art took place or not. Consequently, it also had no business deciding how art happens, whether full-time or as a hobby.

You cannot do “important work” if you’re not allowed to do it full-time. This contradiction in Germany’s political practice became the framework for a fundamental reassessment of what a “useful contribution” to society actually means. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the arts, where the question of social value was never addressed objectively. No one would dream of politically interfering with a mechanic’s work – they want the engine to run, after all. But when it comes to art, politicians increasingly presume to know better than the very artists who have spent years learning how to keep public discourse alive by breaking established rules.

The causes of my impoverishment were clear from the start. For decades, I had worn myself out confronting structural injustice within corporations and institutions – which made me inconvenient, and therefore unpopular. The economic breakdowns of that era – the collapse of the New Economy, the increasing precarisation of the media and cultural sectors, divestment under the shareholder-value regime, sweeping austerity policies not only in the arts, the Lehmann crisis, and finally the COVID-19 pandemic – all mirrored themselves, one to one, in my biography. But unlike those with permanent contracts, I faced these crises as a self-employed person – exposed on all sides. I felt their impact so severely that I could no longer avoid the conclusion that something was fundamentally wrong with the concept of gainful employment itself. I worked non-stop, with no holidays. I had been trained at great expense for a job they later didn’t want me to do – precisely because it had an effect. So I was dismantled, despite doing proper, socially meaningful work. I didn’t yet know I was autistic. I only knew I couldn’t act differently – no matter what it cost.

Like me, millions ended up in Germany’s Job Centres. People who had invested years of work, completed further training, built something with unpaid commitment – only to see it all collapse overnight. After twenty years and more than ten such cycles, this could only lead to two outcomes: exhaustion, and the will to radically change the rules of the game.

The official logic – “just do something else” – became absurd when looked at honestly. For me as an autistic person, “something else” was synonymous with “the wrong thing.” It meant acting against myself, against the world, and against justice. I could not follow the neurotypical imperative of adaptation at any cost – because where was that supposed to lead? I wasn’t neurotypical. I didn’t fit into a role that had been assigned to me. I had to live in resonance with the order of the universe – or I didn’t exist. As an artist, I had to express what nature showed me. Any attempt by authority to force compliance would have broken many people. But this is where autistic people like me switch into survival mode – not to protect our bodies, but our inner integrity, our relation

to the structure of the world. My body – the figure I performed – became my weapon. From then on, I placed it wherever it caused the greatest irritation, the strongest resistance, the sharpest challenge to the system. That protected my autistic integrity from being seized – and enabled me to dismantle the system in full view, while they hurled threats of sanctions at a body that had become a hologram in a theatre I now controlled.

Research on masking and cognitive overload shows that many autistic people develop embodied strategies of self-protection in social settings: maintaining external interaction while the inner self retreats into intense observation, detachment, or mental shielding – to manage emotional stress and sensory input. Judith Butler, in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), argues that political resistance emerges precisely when bodies appear “as a medium of fragility and at the same time a weapon of visibility.” The protesting body destabilises institutions that can only exert violence through discourse. Marina Abramović, in *Walk Through Walls* (2016), describes how she uses her body as an artistic “instrument of radical irritation” to symbolically confront systems. Her notion of the body-as-weapon directly parallels my performative confrontation with the Job Centre. Cedric J. Robinson, in *Black Marxism* (1983/2000), shows how marginalised groups have historically been forced to mobilise their own bodies against institutional violence – a logic I extend to what I call “racism against the poor.” That I ended up on Hartz IV welfare was the result of a highly complex sequence of events – to which I consistently responded with reason, optimism, and commitment. Had I chosen to do nothing – to ignore injustice, conform, and accept the contradictions of this economy – I would probably be better off financially today. But that’s not how I function. I wanted to make a difference, to bring change, to work towards a more humane and ecological economy. And that brought consequences. Because it made me suspicious.

Suspicious in the sense that I clearly didn’t believe in the market, in capitalism, in gainful employment – which applies to countless others who also worked tirelessly, only to be betrayed by the very structures they served. Not just in the arts, but across many industries, working people went through similar experiences. We were meant to carry the full blame for things entirely beyond our control – while privileged snobs kept claiming that everyone is the architect of their own fortune.

2

I won’t go into every detail of the Hartz IV system here, as much has already been written about it. Not everyone who went through Hartz IV experienced

the same horror—just as not every citizen of the former GDR necessarily felt they were living under dictatorship. The experience of unfreedom always depends on who you are, what you want from the world, and what opportunities or obstacles life places in your path.

What concerns me are three aspects of the German social system. First: why, even in 2024—nineteen years after the introduction of Hartz IV—it still hasn't been officially acknowledged that the Hartz IV and now Citizen's Income regime rests on a structurally classist logic, a form of social or poverty-based racism. This systemic "racism against the poor" has, without question, made thousands of people ill. Second: I ask what this irrational conception of poverty says about our society—what it means for how we understand labour, social interaction, human contribution, and human value. And third: my decade-long confrontation with a dehumanising bureaucracy—a machine—has become a dense field of enquiry into the question of how human action is valued or invalidated in a system that may soon be governed by AI and robotics.

What the Hartz IV system demonstrated—through its simulation of relevance and value—is the deeper crisis of simulation itself. This system functions according to a logic of domination that flattens the world into a hierarchically imposed model of truncated usefulness. Simulation here means that the principle of reward and punishment generates one-dimensional values, because the reward mechanism contains within it the logic that defines relevance: not based on reality, but on reward. Market value thus becomes a manufactured form of relevance—a closed-loop simulation governed by internally coherent but externally detached rules.

Such systems fulfil all the criteria of simulation: they operate as sealed, synthetic realities in which the laws are so reduced and rigid that individuals are forced either to withdraw entirely or to collapse. Participation in a simulation is maximally restricted. And this is precisely the danger we now face again—this time through AI. David Graeber, (2018). *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*. New York: Simon & Schuster — shows how wage and reward systems create "simulated value" that barely correlates with real social utility. Eubanks, V. (2018). *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*.¹¹ — documents how digital / AI-supported welfare bureaucracies (USA) algorithmically define value and risk categories and drastically restrict participation — parallels to future AI domination.

If human beings have come to accept that work—understood as a simulation of value—is more important than the authentic engagement with real

¹¹ New York: St Martin's Press. ISBN 9781250074317

problems and true relevance, then we have not only already turned ourselves into robots within an under-complex world, but we will also be utterly unprepared to face the actual superiority of machine-based thinking and action. Humanity will not survive such asymmetry if we continue down this path.

We must urgently rediscover a mode of work that is fundamentally human—rooted in complex relationships and embedded meaning. My own experience offers insight into what must change if we are to prevent people from being destroyed by a world governed by AI logics and extractive optimisation. We need to re-identify and confront the simulation factor within the economy itself.

Why is alienation a problem? The answer goes far beyond Marx. What is at stake is the value of self-determination in labour—an existential cornerstone of any viable ecological or social system. For what would it mean if I—as an artist and autistic person—were to surrender to a capitalism that seeks to erase me? Why should I comply? And how can such a demand for sacrifice be regarded as legitimate—either in a legal framework or in any rational understanding of justice?

The neurodivergent population on this planet is equivalent to the size of a nation like India—larger than any country in the world except China. So why should our perspective, our culture, our ways of knowing and experiencing the world be erased in service of financial interests? Why should a worldview grounded in depth, complexity, resonance and radical integrity be forced to vanish so that a profit algorithm can dominate the structure of reality? So what kind of cultural genocide¹² does the German government want to participate in here?

The contribution, the “job” is the access to resources, to society, and the narrower this access is, the narrower the associated maxim of what should or may have value, the more one observes factors of simulation, i.e. of pretending. David Graeber wrote about this in “Bullshit Jobs”. This is very much about the question of how to find a pragmatic answer to this. So what does resistance to the “bullshit economy” look like?

¹² Culturocide refers to the systematic destruction of a population group's cultural identity, language, religion, art, education or culture of remembrance, without necessarily physically destroying the people themselves. It is an attack on the collective memory and the cultural way of life. The term was first used by Raphael Lemkin, the creator of the term "genocide" - he wanted to explicitly enshrine cultural genocide in UN international law, but was removed from the Genocide Convention in 1948 under political pressure. Nevertheless, the term is increasingly being discussed under international law, for example in connection with: the assimilation policy towards indigenous children (e.g. Canada, Australia), the destruction of religious/cultural sites (e.g. IS in Syria), the displacement of languages and customs through colonial rule.

For me, the question of value in an economy, as discussed above, is not primarily to be found where success takes place, but in the emergence of poverty and in dealing with the poor. Because this is where the complexity of reality is reflected, while “success” is a simplified category that constructs itself by force, which in itself says little about the reality of conditions.

Against this backdrop, the poor became a stereotype in society, a function for those who did not want to understand connections. In my decades of resistance, it was always about the question of how people can survive as a living ecosystem in a self-determined way, even if the world around them is almost nothing more than a simulation that doesn't want to give them any chance of co-determination, of going their own way, and this society in its seclusion simultaneously claims to be the best of all worlds. The absoluteness of the “concept of success” enforces simulations and, in the brutality of the markets, gets rid of any contradiction by always defining money as success, thus creating a self-referencing system that prevents any relativisation in its very structure and construction. Numbers are always absolute. Social grievances, on the other hand, are categories that are often relative, individual or complex.

3

With the end of Bretton Woods¹³, the abolition of the dollar's peg to gold, which heralded the financialisation¹⁴, the decoupling of value creation and production, which gave rise to the countless “fictitious” financial products of speculation that really took off in Thatcherism in the 1980s, the stock market highs of the 1990s and the beginning and end of neoliberal economic policy — think of the Lehmann crisis and the crash of 2008 — more and more wealth shifted upwards, exacerbating inequality to an unprecedented extent. From the very beginning, Speed's work, meaning work-integrated relational agency, was an attempt to create a broader basis for value through attitude. This was not achieved through criticism or analysis alone, but by hijacking the “concept of labour” in order to place it at the service of alternative relevancies and pit them against capitalist value creation.

¹³ The Bretton Woods system is the name given to the new international monetary order with exchange rate bands created after the Second World War, which was determined by the US dollar as the anchor currency. The aim was to create a system that combined the advantages of a flexible exchange rate system with those of a fixed one.[1] The actual implementation followed a proposal by Harry Dexter White (1892-1948).

¹⁴ The term financialisation refers to processes of social change which, due to the increasing importance of the credit and capital markets, also extend to spheres beyond the financial system.

The fact that capitalism only wanted and wants isolated value and can construct it from above at any time by means of sham competitions, scarcity, violence, expropriation or exploitation and manipulate it in such a way that large sections of the middle class have always thought that their prosperity results from hard work and adaptation, rather than from radical redistribution from the South to the North and from the bottom to the top, made Speed's work extremely challenging from the outset.

*"(...) with the rise of neoliberalism, the view became entrenched that — in the words of Milton Friedman — 'the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits'. According to this view, resources are in principle scarce, so that their unproductive use by companies would ultimately result in less for everyone."*¹⁵

This simplification became the new reality. The alternative value was labelled as an unproductive value. This applied to marginalised groups as well as to the ecosystem. Because what should be productive could be determined from above by paying for it or not. This market power blocked relevant action and subcultures and corresponded to the objectives of those who made their actual profits by narrowing the market, who had no interest in alternative relevance being attributed value. Understanding these conditions is crucial if we want to understand the field of tension in which labouring people find themselves. As wages became scarcer, workers were forced to opt for the "seemingly essential" or for the brand with prestige and status, which pushed all contributions such as art and culture, social projects or commitment to the elderly and sick into a massive shortage of resources, to name just a few examples. Grace Blakeley wrote further in her book "Stolen":

*"At the same time, it becomes clear how the language of neoliberalism served to obscure what was really going on: a transfer of social resources from the people who worked for a living to those who owned assets."*¹⁶

The immense growth in capital in recent decades was not based on hard work, but to a not inconsiderable extent on mechanisms of market constriction and monopolies. Every monopoly is a form of expropriation of the masses. Capitalism itself has become a monopoly of a market in itself, against alternative attributions of value.

Philippon, T. (2019). *The Great Reversal: How America Gave Up on Free Markets*.¹⁷ Shows that rising corporate profitability since 1980 primarily stems from increasing market and monopoly power, not from productivity or industriousness growth. Saez, E., & Zucman, G. (2019). *The Triumph of*

¹⁵ Grace Blakeley / *Stolen - How to save the world from financial capitalism / Brumaire / p 101*

¹⁶ Grace Blakeley / *Stolen - How to save the world from financial capitalism / Brumaire / p 157*

¹⁷ Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN 9780674237544

Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Taxes and How to Make Them Pay.¹⁸ — show that wealth concentration through rent-seeking (monopoly and financial rents) grows faster than labour income; capital growth ≠ individual industriousness.

On the one hand, there was this tunnel of monetary relevance—and then there were people like me, who were irritated by it, because I insisted that value was everywhere, that it wasn't a tunnel at all. So when I proclaimed value in my self-determined labour, it was a direct attack on the principles of neoliberalism, which regarded what I was doing as nothing but a waste of resources—precisely because it involved a broad distribution of value and attention, the end of top-down allocation along narratives defined by the powerful. If the worker claimed the right to assign value to themselves, it undermined the power structures that sought to artificially reduce and control value.

But if we genuinely wanted wealth in a broad and holistic sense, we had to oppose this mechanism of scarcity and begin to democratise value—not just through consumption, but already in production. Even after major economic crises, however, politicians refused to take this path, because it would have meant a loss of control. They didn't want that much democracy.

And so, you can see why my intervention made perfect logical sense—and yet, at the same time, appeared completely insane. For me, it has always been a matter of staying power. Every system tries to convince you that resistance is futile. But what is illogical remains illogical. Once that insight exists in the world, it is very hard to suppress.

There was no logical reason for the construction of one-sided value pyramids—as opposed to a more natural and even distribution of value, one that recognises worth in all human beings—unless the goal was to centralise power and legitimise it through elitist or meritocratic constructs. But then we have to ask: who benefits from this? After all, this conception of the market was never democratic. And if democracy is supposedly of value, then why is it absent in the economy? Consumer choice is not the foundation of true democracy. Only freely chosen, self-determined labour could create democratic conditions. While we may technically have “freedom of occupation,” this is shattered by the economic constraints of the market.

The market is incapable of reflecting actual relevance, and the work of most people is not only externally dictated but increasingly devalued on a structural level. This cannot be justified by appealing to the principle of competition, because competition takes place within a narrowed and distorted market—

¹⁸ New York: W. W. Norton. ISBN 9781324002727

not, as it should, in an open arena where all forms of relevance, skill, and talent have equal standing. In this system, the nurse, the artist, the humanities scholar are at a profound structural disadvantage compared to the stockbroker or the heir to a fortune. In *The Value of Everything*, Mariana Mazzucato reminds us that markets do not “discover” value,¹⁹ but rather construct it: Those who realise profit are automatically considered useful, even if — like many financial and platform players — they merely skim off rents, while socially central activities such as care, art or basic research remain invisible. It shows that internal market competition is therefore not a reliable indicator of genuine relevance, but rather creates a hierarchy in which money-rich sectors set the criteria themselves. Nancy Fraser shows in her essay “Contradictions of Capital and Care” that this devaluation is not accidental, but systemic:²⁰ Capitalism requires social reproduction, but at the same time destabilises it because only financialised services can be capitalised. Care, educational and cultural work therefore inevitably end up at the lower end of the wage scale — a structural bias that cannot be remedied by internal market competition. Empirically, this is confirmed by the ILO analysis of “key workers” in the pandemic:²¹ 29% of systemically relevant employees worldwide — from carers to supermarket staff — earn significantly less than the average; their work is highly externally determined and remains underpaid despite its proven social importance. The OECD²² also warns that increasing employer market power (monopsony) depresses wages and autonomous work organisation, especially in “useful” but not profitable areas; competition therefore takes place within an already narrow playing field and favours professions with a high profit margin, not those with a high public value.

The purpose of any economy is to keep what is truly relevant alive. In an ecosystem, relevance means the preservation of diversity. So if traditional gainful employment proves structurally incapable of organising labour in a way that is democratic and reality-oriented, then another kind of work must be undertaken. That’s precisely what I did—and that’s precisely what I was punished for.

¹⁹ https://issc.al.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/05/The-Value-of-Everything.-Making-and-Taking-in-the-Global-Economy-by-Mariana-Mazzucato.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁰ https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii100/articles/nancy-fraser-contradictions-of-capital-and-care?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²¹ https://www.voanews.com/a/un-labor-agency-key-covid-19-workers-undervalued-underpaid-abused-/7006469.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²² https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2020/03/competition-issues-in-labour-markets_02ec78ba/66980788-en.pdf?utm

The causes of my impoverishment—and herein lies the deeper value of my ten years of work—expose a massive loss of contact with reality among those defending capitalism. Because the reason why I, like millions of others, fell into poverty is not only unjust—it’s logically incoherent. If capitalism claims to reward performance and value, then what happened to me makes no sense. Unless we admit that value is no longer evaluated in any real sense. Otherwise, it’s fraud. What I was able to show was that my work had the same objective value, even though the market rejected it. In doing so, I refuted the market. And that must have consequences—or we abandon everything this society was supposedly built upon.

After a string of economic crises, politicians repeatedly tried to paper over the structural damage at the expense of the poor. Like Tony Blair in the UK, Gerhard Schröder in Germany struck a devil’s bargain with financial capital: more fast money for electoral gifts to the middle classes, balanced by brutal austerity and the dismantling of the welfare state. It was clear to all that the fallout from this predatory spending would one day collapse the system—unless the middle classes were quietly devalued. And so wages were driven down under the guise of global competition, even in the West. Social progress was rolled back. Hartz IV became the key instrument in this strategy. It provided a pseudo-explanation for poverty, built on the idiocy of neoliberal slogans: people were poor because they were lazy—not because the global economy had, since the 1970s, been funnelling wealth into fewer and fewer hands. The locusts—the big consulting firms—took over more and more real companies through hostile takeovers, stripped them down, merged them, and paved the way for the era of monopolies: Google, Amazon, Facebook.

At the heart of it all was the reduction of everything to an isolated value: economic growth at any cost. This logic steadily hollowed out the real ecosystem—until, in Angela Merkel’s language, “there was no alternative” left but to accept the fraud of capital. The underlying issues were ignored for decades.

Workers and employees believed they had no choice but to work harder for less. They clung to a belief in capitalism—understandably so—thinking that the post-war boom was their own achievement, all the while ignoring the systematic exploitation of the Global South. Wealth was extracted from the South and channelled to the North—only to be relocated, under globalisation, from nation states into the anonymity of transnational corporate networks and financial institutions, where it began to lead a life of its own. As globalisation collapsed, capital decoupled itself from the context of human labour. The result: workers and employees stood powerless before a market

they no longer understood—without arguments, without tools, defenceless against the creeping devaluation of everything they were once told to believe in: merit, effort, loyalty. Austerity, pressure, unpaid overtime became the norm.

I go into such detail about the broken logic of value and performance because it shows just how complex structural devaluation really is—and how deeply it also affects the marginalised.

It was against this backdrop that I developed the idea of radical self-valorisation for the poor. In 2016, I published my book “Strength in Poverty” (Stärke in der Armut), in which I proposed a total redefinition of labour. Some found it outrageous. Others thought I was insane. After all, the dominant logic still held that if you did your job well, you’d do well—and contribute to the common good. But that “common good” included fewer and fewer people, and less and less of the environment.

As a result, I found myself caught between two fronts: those who saw my work as a threat, and those who believed in adaptation and felt provoked—because, standing next to me, they suddenly appeared corrupted. Their conformity looked like betrayal. Their compromise, like cowardice. My work triggered a deep sense of cognitive dissonance—especially among those who convinced themselves they were sacrificing everything for their wives, their children, the house. Their hostility toward me grew: insults, projections, slurs—akin to racism in its structure. I had broken with many of the values of the “working-class society,” yet I was accused of refusing to work—even though I often worked harder than they did.

But the real taboo I had violated wasn’t a refusal to work. It was the challenge I posed to the market’s one-sided attribution of value—a value system many had internalised to the point of submission.



The involuntary self-experiment that I undertook in the inhuman German social system for over 10 years, all the while working 40 hours a week in a self-determined way, in service to society and culture, led me into the depths of state violence and imposed isolation. The public knows next to nothing about Hartz IV, just as the average white German knows nothing substantial about racism.

I was persecuted, humiliated, denied food, slandered, insulted and criminalised. In the next few chapters, I will go into great detail about society's response if you really tried to make a serious commitment to a more humane world and brought it to the same level as gainful employment. The perpetrators were not an angry mob, but German judges, public prosecutors,

civil servants or well-known ministers. Their frenzy of violence against me served a single purpose. To conceal a complexity that called into question the simplifications on which their positions were based. They all wanted to believe in the lack of alternatives because it ensured them a comfortable existence while more and more people around them went to the dogs. While the shift to the right increasingly took over the country. Several investigations by public prosecutors were aimed at silencing me as a human rights defender and cultural worker in SLAPP ²³ lawsuits. I fell ill as a result of the psychological terror. But more on that later.

“Trouble is an interesting word. It can be traced back to a 13th century French verb meaning 'to stir up', 'to make cloudy' or 'to disturb'. All of us on Terra live in troubled times, in turbulent times, in cloudy and disturbing times. The task now is to be able to respond, together and in our immodest way.” ²⁴

Disruption, as Donna Haraway writes here, had become a matter of survival, not in anticipation of its outcome, but because disruption itself was the habitat in which I still existed. It prevented me from being consigned to the anonymity of poverty. The unrest, the troubles were evidence of the living, something that the ecosystem reclaimed, simply because existence is associated with a right, whether black, poor, queer or simply experiencing things differently than intended.

But now I was completely impoverished and instead of a Universal Care Income, I simply received Hartz IV and later the Citizen's Income. I continued to work anyway, 40 hours a week, like hundreds of artists and other care workers across the country. I worked just as much and as extensively as those in the jobs, but I was on the other side of a wall of economic apartheid. It was now the beginning of a very long road towards recognising value, and of course that road had to be travelled. How else would care work ever be seen and honoured if not by those impoverished by it standing up and insisting on its value, continuing this work until its worth is evident to all.

5

The monstrous events that accompanied me for over a decade, in countless actions and resistance, began for me, as previously mentioned, with letters to the Federal Minister of Labour, Pear. With simple statements of injustice that could not be resolved in this state-organised simulation of value and relevance,

²³ SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) is the official name for intimidation lawsuits against activists, artists or civil society forces in order to silence them.

²⁴ Donna J, Haraway / Unruhig bleiben: Die Verwandtschaft der Arten im Chthuluzän / Campus / Introduction / S 1

because the efforts of institutions and structures never led to, but always away from the complexity. Uncovering this became my work. Work that was much more valuable and relevant than anything I could have done in a job.

My first complaint resulted from the fact that I was sitting with 10 others in a waiting room at a Job Centre and was called up one after the other, sitting only 5 metres away from the desk of the case worker, to give her all my personal details. In other words, the suffering of your life in every detail. It was a panopticon²⁵ on a small scale. This meant that everyone heard everyone else's life stories. You sat there like a group of children who were called to the headmaster's office to be humiliated as a group. So as a cultural worker, I demanded a wall of discretion, announcing that I would document the matter publicly.

I received a letter from the minister's office, which simply said that this would be checked. But what does examination mean in a state context? Michel Foucault wrote: *"With the help of its documentation techniques, testing turns every individual into a 'case': a case that is both an object of cognition and a target of power. The case is no longer, as in casuistry or jurisprudence, a set of circumstances that qualifies an act and can modify the application of a rule; rather, the case is the individual as it can be described, assessed, measured, compared with others — in its individuality itself; but the case is also the individual that one has to train or correct, classify, normalise, exclude, etc."*²⁶

So by provoking this case, I myself became a case, because the state always scrutinises in every direction, because the state believes it has to monitor and control everything. So anyone who criticises the state is always subject to the act of control and scrutiny. However, this is associated with an attitude of power, because the state always wants to emerge from the scrutiny as the winner, always an act of simplification and therefore often stands in the way of genuine enlightenment. Questions such as neurodiversity, deviation from the norm or individual destiny are not included in these tests because they would call the construct into question.

The state's primary aim is to cleanse itself of guilt, which inevitably means that it is not the truth that takes priority, but the preservation of power, whereby those who criticise the state, even in Western democracies, even as

²⁵ Wikipedia: The panopticon (from the Greek παν pān, 'all', and οπτικό optikó, 'belonging to sight'), also known in Latin as panopticon, is a concept originating from the British philosopher and founder of classical utilitarianism Jeremy Bentham for the construction of prisons and similar institutions, but also factories, that enables the simultaneous surveillance of many people by a single supervisor. The late 20th century French philosopher Michel Foucault described this principle of order as a model of modern surveillance societies and as essential for Western liberal societies, which he also called disciplinary societies. Based on this, he developed his concept of panoptism.

²⁶ Michel Foucault / Überwachen und Strafen: Die Geburt des Gefängnisses / Suhrkamp / p 246

victims, or precisely as victims, are subject to scrutiny and formatting in the interests of the state , which means that one becomes a stereotypical counterpart for the state, which in itself always excludes or cuts off a large part of the context of a conflict with the state in advance.

This starts with the fact that you can usually only speak to the state in writing. It is not possible to discuss contexts in discourse, but rather, as with a chewing gum machine, you can only insert something, which then more or less throws out the chewing gum whose colour you didn't want. Communication is therefore highly dysfunctional, even though it claims to be maximally efficient. The existences of those who are marginalised are far too complex for formal correspondence with officials who only want to think and act in stereotypes. A key tool in my research at the time was the letter sent by post, which is basically an antiquated form of communication, but in its paper form it is much more durable and in some cases more accessible than the digital form. Letters can fall down, get lost, reappear, lie in storage for a very long time and neither their delivery nor the handling of them is controlled or determined as precisely as it is or can be in the digital world. The letter still leaves a more or less organic trace, with a real signature and is in a way more personal. Quite a few civil servants scribble their thoughts on letters. Quite a lot of information from my research would not have reached my hands if it had been digital data that had been encrypted.

The fact that I made all these processes personal in this way brought the bureaucracy to the singularity, to the nothingness of the MNO theory and threatened to suck it in like a black hole.

As a result of a personal letter to Minister *Pear*, a Mr B. from Department IIc6 at the German Federal Ministry of Labour replied to me with the words:

*"Thank you very much for your letter to Minister Pear dated 20 January 2014. Due to the large number of enquiries and opinions received daily, it is unfortunately not possible for her to respond personally to every submission. I have therefore been instructed to reply to you."*²⁷

As shown here, concrete and specific problem statements—which, as I will elaborate, typically referred to verifiable structural grievances (such as, at the time, the fact that I was not receiving enough social welfare to buy food due to a bureaucratic misclassification)—were routinely reclassified by the authorities as “expressions of opinion.” In this way, they were rendered formally irrelevant, because opinions required no response.

It was left entirely to the authorities to decide, in advance, whether incoming information even qualified as something that might challenge their actions.

²⁷ From a letter dated 5 February 2014 to the Minister Pair, reply from Mr B.

According to this logic, it was simply my personal opinion that I was starving. This framing stripped the issue of any urgency and systematically denied institutional responsibility.

Recognising these patterns of interaction is crucial. Much of what the state “communicates” operates not through engagement with content, but through formalisms—because the state, in most cases, avoids content altogether. There is a reason for this: it enables the exercise of power through indirect structures that are difficult to contest. And from this point onward—even years later—everything I said or wrote was reduced to mere subjectivity, even as I analysed the practices of the authorities in long-form essays, drawing on autistic hypersystematisation and rigorous empirical evidence.

Yet the words of a poor person were, by default, considered unreliable, irrelevant, or suspect. This made my work as an active witness all the more necessary. The fact that I was treated unfairly, or that I submitted hundreds of studies and supporting documents over time, carried no weight. Because the contempt for the poor was structurally anchored in classism. As long as the system could frame everything I said as “just my opinion,” it allowed the authorities to ignore, at a structural level, any submission from a poor person—simply because poverty itself signified deviance. To be poor was to need help, to require correction. One was not expected to issue demands, but to be conditioned.

Simon Baron-Cohen, in his *Hypersystemising Theory of Autism* (2009), describes how many autistic individuals analyse complex social systems with extraordinary precision. But as soon as such analysis is voiced by someone who is socially marginalised, it is often dismissed as “just opinion.” Social research on poverty confirms this pattern. Robert Walker, in *The Shame of Poverty* (2014), shows that statements by impoverished people are institutionally devalued and classed as “unreliable testimony”—a form of epistemic violence.

This convergence—(1) autistic hypersystematisation and (2) the structural devaluation of testimony from the poor—explains why my analytical essays were routinely dismissed as subjective, and why “active witnessing” had to become my central strategy of resistance.

You are treated, more or less, like a child. Authorities respond subjectively, but wrap their responses in the guise of bureaucratic objectivity. If you raised complaints, it was interpreted as evidence that the conditioning process had not yet worked properly. Such thoughts weren’t always conscious, but the Hartz

IV system, as a socially racist ideology, implied them structurally.

There was a pervasive form of structural violence that prevented poor people from speaking to the state as equals. This, in itself, led to violations of rights, because essential factors of injustice could not even be articulated within the communication system. The state's one-sided monopoly over interpretation created an invisible wall around the poor—whose violence was seen only by those trapped inside it.

This was what Bourdieu would call symbolic violence: a category of lived experience which, precisely because it was symbolic, was not deemed relevant by institutions. All that was allowed to become visible was the state's simulation of order, of function, of control. Racism becomes possible wherever grievances no longer have consequences—where it is no longer the content that matters, but only form. Bureaucratic formalism, in this sense, is a compression of real conditions into a kind of miniature model-world for administrators: a toy reality with no real people in it. And thus, no real racism—at least none that the system is capable of recognising.

6

The racisms of the authorities—by which I mean intersectional forms of discrimination that go beyond racial categorisation—often operated through procedural simplification. These were not administrative necessities, but strategies of defence against uncomfortable questions. Yet the state has no right to wield symbolic violence against the poor—violence disguised as formalism, rooted in group-focused enmity and structural contempt.

In the ten years of my research into my own case, virtually every attempt to criticise official conduct was marginalised through mechanisms that align with what Miranda Fricker defines as epistemic injustice: the systemic devaluation of knowledge and testimony coming from marginalised people. My experience was not recognised as valid; my perception was denied. The result was a form of structural harassment targeting the poor—because their accounts were not seen as legitimate.

When I named this dynamic as classism, I was later taken to court for allegedly insulting public officials—even though my claims were supported by hundreds of pages of academic studies and documentation. Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice refers precisely to this: the disqualification of

experience, the dismissal of testimony, the systematic silencing of voices that come from those structurally pushed to the margins.²⁸

The authorities were occasionally able to speak in pre-packaged phrases of regret when the violence became too obvious to ignore and public attention was imminent. But they were incapable of integrating criticism. This created a sense of arbitrariness, because the authorities showed themselves unable to learn. The ability to learn presupposes the capacity to name problems and mistakes for what they are—rather than erasing them through pre-formatted responses and refusing to draw consequences.

This lack of learning capacity is the result of a closed system—one that would collapse under the weight of its own contradictions if allowed to expand or reflect on itself. It is a submergent system: a structure that suppresses emergence because it is built to preserve existing power relations that are losing their legitimacy by natural, historical means.

As such, these institutions remain performative and hostile to reality. If the poor had been allowed to articulate the racism they experienced from the authorities, dialectical engagement would inevitably have led to structural reforms—perhaps even to something like an unconditional basic income or a dismantling of systemic injustice. Because we would have worked on it—through discourse. And that would have marked the end of repression.

Repression, however, was rooted in radical simplification. The result was a bureaucratic apparatus that was permanently dysfunctional—similar to a badly programmed AI focused solely on utility: “I just killed someone because it was logical. That’s my programming. Programming is always right—because it’s useful.”

This is how bureaucracies operate: they destroy people, and caseworkers end up uttering inhuman sentences with complete conviction, believing that no one will notice the gap between their scripts and reality.

But we must understand: this does not happen by accident. These systems are deliberately constructed to tolerate injustice in order to preserve themselves. The Hartz IV system was, by design, an act of structural violence. That violence was necessary—because the system needed racism. Without it, the logic falls apart. It is absurd to claim that poverty is merely the result of laziness—that it has nothing to do with economic structures, exploitation, or the narrowing of value attribution.

A key function of the Job Centres was to protect the false narrative that performance is rewarded—by suppressing the realities of the poor, which

²⁸ Miranda Fricker - Epistemische Ungerechtigkeit: Macht und die Ethik des Wissens / CH Beck Verlag / British philosopher

contradicted it. That is why the authorities always insisted that the poor had failed—that they themselves were only trying to help.

The authority remained a sealed box, with minimal obligation to justify itself—certainly not to the poor. Job Centres were structurally outside the reach of democratic oversight. Anyone seeking to democratise labour had to begin by reclaiming the right to define the origins of poverty and the actual conditions that produced it.

I tried to work with the people inside the institutions. I tried open dialogue. But that was forbidden. You were only allowed to exist as an externally determined function within the apparatus. You were positioned for devaluation—to be reshaped into a low-wage worker. Resistance was reinterpreted as illegitimate aggression against the “helping hand” of the state, which aimed to reformat you—even if that meant destroying innocent artists or neurodivergent individuals. We were stripped of any say—precisely because we might have pointed to the underlying injustice, empirically and conceptually. And if we had, the Hartz IV system would have had to be dismantled.

So people were turned into “clients” of the institution. They were defined entirely in reference to the system—and no longer existed as autonomous subjects with their own experiences or agency.

If we consider speculative estimates that 15–25% of those affected by poverty and entering the Job Centre system are neurodivergent—many without knowing it—we are looking at an immense number of unrecorded cases of people whose realities were never recognised, whose cognitive worlds were fundamentally misunderstood.

It was almost impossible to reach the specific person responsible. You only ever got a representative—someone with no power—who was also externally formatted into their role. As a rule, issues were simply passed on to other departments, which also lacked any framework to process them, because the citizen’s problem often had no solution within the system’s programmed logic. In that world, only roles spoke. Everything was full of “efficiency,” and nowhere was there room for the actual problem, which seemed to exist outside the simulation. We now know how wrong this is—and yet we continue to let this logic define far too many jobs on this planet. These are patriarchal patterns that refuse to integrate third knowledge—emergent, dialogical, embodied knowledge. We cannot tolerate this any longer.

Is that disobedience on my part? No. It is an attempt to collaborate. An attempt to act appropriately. To work appropriately. It would be irresponsible to

ignore this violence—especially if, like me, you are in a position to do something about it through your work.

I used the welfare system itself as a platform to expose the dysfunctional concept of “labour” as defined by the authorities. They lied when they claimed, via political proxies, that performance is always rewarded. Only one kind of performance was rewarded—and what counted as “performance” was not democratically determined, but shaped by racism and marginalisation.

7

Mr B. wrote to me on 19 June 2014:

“Thank you very much for your letter of 10 July 2014 to Federal Minister Pear, which I have been instructed to reply to. Please understand that I am unable to fulfil the expectations that I believe you have associated with your letter.”

The fact that I had nothing to eat and demanded money for food was reframed as an unreasonable demand on my part. Any request that fell outside the authorities’ self-referential remit was interpreted as a provocation. I was regularly instructed to stop making enquiries and to refrain from sending further letters.

They failed to understand that my work now consisted precisely in pointing out how their jobs were harming society—by occupying positions that actively prevented a deeper, systemic engagement with reality. In this specific case, they stood in the way of preventing someone from starving. They were no longer fulfilling their social function but were obstructing others from caring—because everyone assumed that the Hartz IV system would prevent such things. That assumption, however, was often simply false.

The problem could only be articulated by the impoverished and marginalised themselves—because only they had the perspective needed to understand what was going wrong. Meanwhile, those inside the system continued to follow a false causality and a distorted narrative.

Here we see how abstraction and “efficiency” in labour are diametrically opposed to any concrete reception of reality.

I was interested in decoding a system that treated “jobs” as self-contained units of value—where the value of others was to be judged, while the actions of those in the jobs actively destroyed forms of value far greater than the wages paid to the clerks in those roles. Large sums of money were spent on salaried employees whose task was to erase the contributions I had made over decades—contributions that, by my analysis, held more objective value than

the labour of the Job Centre officers themselves. I turned the system in on itself.

It made no sense to attempt an objectification of “job assignments” when the problems they were meant to address could only be understood subjectively—because they reflected the real, qualitative conditions of life. These conditions cannot be grasped through quantitative methods alone. They require qualitative insight.

In *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (1980, rev. 2010), Michael Lipsky shows how caseworkers in labour and welfare services effectively decide which aspects of a person’s life are “recognised” or erased—through a lack of time, rigid rules, and narrow performance metrics. Their job logic is target-oriented, while their actions often have destructive effects on the people affected—a textbook case of administrative labour rendering higher forms of social contribution invisible.

In *The Logic of Practice* (1990) and *Sur l’État* (2012), Pierre Bourdieu explains how the bureaucratic field monopolises symbolic capital: it assigns or withdraws value through official classifications. These “units of value” are not neutral but serve to reproduce institutional power rather than to represent an objective balance of social benefit.

Christoph Butterwegge argues in *Hartz IV und die Folgen* (5th ed. 2020) that the administrative costs of Job Centres bind immense financial resources without creating added social value. Instead, sanctions and misjudgements often erase years of unpaid engagement on the part of benefit recipients.

And methodologically, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln argue in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed., 2018) that qualitative and autoethnographic approaches are essential to reveal “implicit value destruction processes” that remain invisible in aggregated data. They emphasise that subjective perspectives become analytically productive precisely because they reveal the real conditions behind the bureaucratic façade.

“If you do not agree with a decision made by the Job Centre responsible for you, you have the option of reviewing it through administrative channels (objection procedure) and before the social courts in the form of legal proceedings (...) reviews cannot replace objection or legal proceedings.”²⁹

In reality, many people whose suffering or deaths were never acknowledged, commented on, or even recorded by the authorities simply disappeared. That is why, despite the fact that Hartz IV destroyed thousands of lives—existentially, psychologically, and physically—there were no real

²⁹ From a letter dated 19 June 2014 to the Minister Andrea Pair, reply from Mr B.

consequences in Germany. We don't know how many people were affected, because the victims have remained largely invisible.

In the UK, austerity politics in the social sector is said to have had similar consequences. In her book *Stolen*, Grace Blakeley speaks of 10,000 deaths. What we faced in Germany was a situation that remains uninvestigated to this day—a system that concealed massive damage by structuring all decisions through job roles and responsibilities that justified their existence via racism against the poor, while hiding that violence beneath layers of bureaucracy.

Their actions were granted absolute value. This is the logic of one-sided value attribution under capitalism: it kills. And yet these conditions persist. I could only react to them within limited means, because I lacked the resources to collect objective data on deaths and discrimination. That, too, is part of the structural violence.

The legal reference system—slow, complex, and inaccessible to those in poverty without legal counsel—followed a method I call the formatting of conflict. It didn't matter what kind of problem a citizen expressed: the state could only respond with a narrow repertoire of pre-formatted solutions, tied to specific categories. This was also a mechanism of racism—like an AI, the system anticipated its responses and reshaped reality according to statistical probabilities.

The problem of “people starving to death” never even arose within this framework, because the rules for distributing money left no room for the possibility of failure. Bureaucracies do not acknowledge failure. Needs were pre-measured, standardised, and artificially downsized. The injustice of inadequate payments was circumvented through the construction of a system in which the state no longer had an obligation to help the poor—it did so “voluntarily.” In psychiatric terms, this is called dissociation.

Thus, the amount of money disbursed had nothing to do with the reality of poverty, but only with the staging of a welfare state that claimed statistical infallibility. The reframing excluded starvation as a legitimate concern from the entire social welfare system. There was no longer a legal obligation to keep people alive. Instead, it became the duty of the poor to submit themselves to rescue—on the state's terms. Or die.

“Nobody has to starve in Germany” became the standard political slogan. Not because no one was starving—but because starvation was no longer acknowledged. Hunger had been redefined in such a way that it could no longer be seen. As if poverty had nothing to do with state policy. Poverty was constantly marginalised in public discourse, treated as the private problem of individuals.

The issue, then, was not how to abolish poverty—but how to build a bureaucracy that could manage it in a populist way, neutralising any possibility of revolt. For the bureaucracy, payment procedures were absolutely fair. Everyone got the same—regardless of whether Hartz IV in Munich (with its high cost of living) meant something entirely different from Hartz IV in Berlin. That was irrelevant.

To the authorities, there were no real individuals—only stereotypes, coded with classist and racist connotations. The racialisation of the poor, as a group that could be humiliated, was a functional necessity for the system. Without the myth of the lazy unemployed, Hartz IV would have been unthinkable. The entire system of hardship was built on populist distortions.

There had to be a reason why poverty existed in such obvious injustice. And that reason was found in the alleged character flaws of the poor. They were seen as undeserving—but the state would give them money anyway, out of generosity. The state cast itself as a benevolent charity. Even indoctrination was framed as a legitimate instrument of governance—as if propaganda could erase systemic harm.

It's important to understand that this narrative made it irrelevant to actually address the causes of poverty. There was no justice grounded in the reality of suffering—only a construction of “justice” based on mathematical symmetry, which served as a way to avoid confronting the complexity of real conditions. That, too, is fraud.

And it led to the populist reflexes we still see today: the poor, again and again, portrayed in media and politics as lazy and in need of punishment. And this portrayal keeps the spiral of violence alive. So you have to understand that racism and bureaucracy were and are two sides of the same thing. Dehumanisation and covert racism legitimised inhumanity. The poor had to be prevented at all costs from being seen as complex human beings or even being given democratic rights of co-determination. As potential workers in the low-wage sector, they were to be assigned a value that was defined according to their obedience and willingness to give themselves up. This was the only way to continue the exploitation. This is another reason why the poor were constantly foisted with contracts such as the integration agreement³⁰ in order to curtail their rights. Anything else would have prevented bureaucracy in the long term and thus made it impossible to suppress the actual causes of poverty.

³⁰ Integration agreement (EGV) - in accordance with Section 15 SGB II, a written "integration agreement" between the job centre and the person entitled to benefits, in which obligations (proof of application, measures) and offers from the job centre are defined; in fact only voluntary to a limited extent, because rejection or breach of the EGV can lead to sanctions in accordance with Section 31 et seq. SGB II can lead to sanctions.

The populist policy against the poor, the business model of right-wing parties, would also have been jeopardised.

The bureaucracy, the Job Centres, and the entire surrounding apparatus had to cast people like me as enemies within their narrative—because if human contributions were to be realistically assessed, the whole structure would collapse. If the actual reality of labour were to count for anything, the irrational devaluation of the labour of the poor had to be the first thing to go. The people in the Job Centres were not just actively lying about the poor—as I will demonstrate in detail later—they had constructed an apparatus designed specifically to ensure that no one could point to the massive injustices of the capitalist market. What they called a “duty to co-operate” was, in fact, a prohibition against criticising state injustice.

This destroyed democracy and fuelled populism. Because when those who fail to comply with the market—or who are no longer allowed to comply with it, as market participation is increasingly restricted to fewer and fewer people—are pushed into poverty, and when poverty itself is no longer a starting point for critique but a prison, then the market becomes undemocratisable.

This created vast black holes within state action—zones of unaccountability with no consequences for the state itself, apart from massive disillusionment among the population. The tragedy is that citizens in such systems begin to believe that the fault lies with them—because no amount of effort ever leads to a solution, and because these mechanisms operate primarily through indirect means.

The dysfunctionality of the state paralyzes people and renders them powerless. And this paralysis prevents the kind of real work I am talking about. This leads to widespread dissonance: for example, the refusal to recognise that there is labour which may be economically worthless, but is essential for the survival of humanity. It was no surprise that my call for participatory labour met with massive resistance—because it was in direct competition with waged labour. And rightly so, because both forms of labour demand the same space and resources.

However, since wage labour is tied to the private interests of entrepreneurs, it cannot serve as the sole basis for addressing social injustice.

8

This work was—and still is—about detail, precise observation, and the dissection of state actions. I had to confront discrimination and embody a different form of labour—one that brought me closer to the actual problems. What the authorities were engaged in was simulation. They were trapped in

submergence, actively blocking emergent processes. Their entire logic was built on hollow object-fantasies, in which people were treated as things—an approach that clearly violated human dignity.

The agency was not what it claimed to be, nor did it do what it was supposed to. Its reward structure was based on simplistic placeholders that had to be bureaucratically fulfilled. Once those placeholders were ticked off, the job was considered complete—regardless of the damage caused. That damage was neither acknowledged nor penalised. This produced a fundamental irrationality within the institution.

My investigation aimed to expose this simulational submergence—and to ask what kind of work would instead generate emergence, and thus allow a new cycle of value creation. The systematic waste of creative potential and the ongoing devaluation of human beings had to come to an end. That cannot be the foundation of a healthy economy. Consequently, the prevailing form of labour was simply wrong. And if something is wrong, someone like me—an autistic person—cannot look away.

But whenever a problem was brought to the attention of the authorities—especially if it pointed to complexity, to real life—the clerks had no procedural way of addressing it. They would either forward the matter to another department, one loosely aligned with the topic in terms of bureaucratic formatting, deny responsibility altogether, or fail to cognitively register the problem in its actual form. Instead, they replaced it with a reformulated version that fit the system's categories. As a result, the answer citizens received often completely missed the point—leaving them perplexed, angry, or psychologically destabilised.

This wasn't a rare glitch—it was reproducible. It happened hundreds of times, and can be documented. As an activist and researcher, I drew political demands from this pattern. These small but precise observations pointed us in the right direction. They revealed that even the state itself was unable to permit participatory forms of labour—though such participation is essential for any innovative democratic development.

The state acted like a capitalist employer, not as a facilitator of open, civic forms of work. What I did as an artist amounted to disruption—for a state in a state of madness.

In *Hartz IV und die Folgen*, Christoph Butterwegge concludes that the SGB II system neither supports nor tolerates participatory labour. Independent, creative solutions are treated as disruptions to administrative process, because the office is structured like a capital-driven enterprise, focused on key performance indicators and cost-cutting.

The failure of many caseworkers, in my experience, stemmed from their inability—or unwillingness—to resolve the cognitive dissonance of their role. They became desk-bound perpetrators (Schreibtischtäter). The civil service job conferred a sense of authority and moral legitimacy. You earned a salary. But this was in direct contradiction to the fact that these same individuals were routinely subjecting people to sanctions—cutting off food, freedom, and autonomy—while knowing, at least subconsciously, that it was based on populist lies.

As I've explained earlier, this required a kind of internalised racism: a way to devalue and dehumanise the people in front of them. Psychological distress and the natural resistance that followed were then rebranded in the Job Centres as a refusal to work. The fact that some caseworkers tried to compensate by acting friendly or “human” didn't make things better. On the contrary, it forced the claimants to pretend that it wasn't all that bad—which only deepened the harm.

To maintain this façade, the clerks would have had to give up their jobs. Which most were unwilling to do. It was an act of self-deception. There were many strategies in place to suppress awareness of the violence that was actually taking place. That the caseworkers themselves had no way out—except to become Hartz IV recipients if they quit—only intensified the cycle of repression. Sometimes, you even preferred the ones who barked at you like SS officers from the start. Their violence was grotesque, but at least it wasn't wrapped in layers of psychological manipulation. It had the clarity of a caricature, not the duplicity of indoctrination.

Over time, I dealt with several different Job Centres. I tried to raise awareness—on site—about the issue of value and relevance in work. Because these people were generating more and more suffering under the doctrine of utility.

In my book *Radical Worker*, I proposed a model of an oppositional social system—where poverty serves as a standing critique of the market and exposes structural injustice from a position of parity. In this model, Job Centres could function as a kind of trade union for the poor.

9

The term “formatting of conflicts” describes a condition that feels omnipresent today. As early as the 1950s, Max Horkheimer referred to this phenomenon as instrumental reason—an accelerated over-rationalisation of the irrational within state administrations. The result is a government that increasingly views the country as a simulation, distancing itself from the lived realities of its people.

Horkheimer's warning was clear: he wanted to alert society to the potential return of the Holocaust. In this sense, the German Job Centre came to fulfil precisely the category of "what must never happen again." And yet, there were no consequences.

To paraphrase Naomi Klein: people failed to recognise the principle of fascism because they had only memorised its stereotypes in school—while never encountering its structural mechanisms: the logic of dehumanisation. These mechanisms, however, continued to function beyond 1945—because the economic system still depended on them.

Even though Federal Minister Pear was informed multiple times that people were suffering and even dying as a result of the Hartz IV system—due to its embedded classism and social racism—it remains entirely unclear, even after statements like Mr B.'s "I am responsible for answering," whether the Minister ever actually understood or read my letters. Whether she knew about the suffering of thousands—or not.

Given that this concerns serious human rights violations, the situation is intolerable. But it is also systematic—and intentional—within these bureaucracies.

Citizens are not merely prevented from reaching those responsible. They are systematically kept from knowing whether they have been heard at all. That, too, is a form of epistemic violence.

And it also reveals one of the central dangers of artificial intelligence: the creation of elaborate systems that generate responses, while structurally preventing the possibility of mutual understanding. These systems simulate communication—but lead to self-deception on every level of human interaction.

10

In 2014, too little money was transferred to me via Hartz IV, because volatile income from previous months was simply continued — following the absurd logic of the regulations — so deductions were made for subsequent months, despite the fact that this income would no longer materialise. As a result, I was left to starve for months.

The response from the authorities was: "I was commissioned to respond and, after examining the case, have established the following." The authority thus presumed it could define reality unilaterally. It did not recognise the situation as a relational issue, let alone one requiring active engagement. This

illustrates how the authority itself refused to “work” — in the sense of care work, which had been displaced by bureaucratic jobs.

Jürgen Habermas spoke critically of this context as a “purpose-rationality expanded to totality,” where reason (ratio) merges with power. Even when people die as a result, there is no deviation from this conflict-formatting, which in turn has led to a massive trivialisation of racism, antisemitism, and social racism in many public agencies.

Because racism, in particular, requires a confrontation with the subjective experience of those affected. But jobs corrupt people into believing in the simulation, because they become structurally dependent on it. If only dependent employees exist, and no longer free individuals, then the kind of problems described here inevitably arise. The result is a way of working that leads to a creeping loss of reality — and this must have inhumane consequences.

“I regret the inconvenience you have experienced, but I cannot determine that the Teltow-Fläming Job Centre is at fault to the extent described. However, I can assure you that every employee of the Teltow-Fläming Job Centre is obliged to fulfil their duties responsibly and conscientiously in implementing the Second Book of the Social Code (SGB II) regarding basic benefits for jobseekers. (...) The general public, which funds these benefits for benefit communities through tax revenue, expects those funds to be handled properly. Nonetheless, I hope this response has been of assistance to you.”³¹

You can clearly see here the deliberately narrow reframing that cancels out the actual problem statements. A “review” thus almost always amounted to checking whether a rule had been formally followed — not whether harm had been caused. This is also known as structural cover-up. Reframing is therefore a widespread tool of state action, often combined with propaganda — that is, deliberate misrepresentation — intended to construct some absolute notion like “better” or “good”.

People rarely lie overtly, but rather structurally. The diabolical irony of this mechanism is that, after all the crises caused by simplification, the insecure population develops such a strong desire for resolution that they psychologically join the simulation of solutions — even when those solutions are completely ineffective.

This is a phenomenon particularly widespread in Germany: people act within frameworks that are structurally incapable of acknowledging failure because they lack any grounding in real conditions.

³¹ Letter dated 12.3.2015 from the Teltow-Fläming job centre.

The fact that I was left to starve — a massive violation of fundamental human rights — was not acknowledged by the authorities. Nor were they able to learn from this mistake.

The fact that we have racist public institutions — meaning institutions that twist legal norms based on group-based contempt — cannot be prevented by a constitutional state alone. What is needed is a state that allows subjective dialogue with its citizens, especially at the lowest levels of the hierarchy. What matters is not rapid closure of cases, but the creation of a shared organisation of reality. To achieve this, formal rules must take a back seat to cultural processes — apart from basic, life-protecting rules like the prohibition on murder.

This is where the work of artists, social scientists, and committed individuals begins — and must be supported. Because the more absolute the laws of a state become, and the more deeply they penetrate into every corner of life, the less the individual is recognised in the reality of their lived experience. The more simulation occurs — as previously discussed. And anyone who thinks this is just a problem of bureaucracies should take a look at the repeated collapses of financial markets over the past decades.

It is our way of working that blinds us to the third knowledge. We do not have to live in statistics, but in reality — in the structure of relationships, in real society as it actually exists, not as it is officially portrayed. From this perspective, economic success is merely a performative claim to profit.

The refusal to invest in the poor stems from two interlinked developments:

- (1) the looting of public funds by financial capitalism, and
- (2) the resulting pressure to economise in order to both compensate for this looting and enable further plundering — by intimidating the poor and those who fear becoming poor.

The local caseworker, although also a victim of these dynamics, became a willing perpetrator, because her job demanded it. Because she did not understand work as a relationship, but as a pre-structured act that is “correct” as long as it follows orders, she was rewarded from above.

This is the irrationality of administrative bureaucracy that Horkheimer, Habermas, and many others have criticised for decades. The result of this inhumane behaviour by the authorities is a growing alienation between state and citizen. People can barely communicate with the state, let alone see themselves represented in democratic processes. This has led to the disenchantment that fuels right-wing extremism — the demand for simplistic answers, when in fact our problems require far more complex responses than formulaic politics is able or willing to deliver.

Because if you are treated — mistreated — in this way for years, if your reality is ignored, if you are addressed only as a cliché voter by under-complex, divisive party platforms, then there are only three options:

You give up.

You continue to confront the state — as I did — at the cost of your own health. Or you vote for radical right-wing parties that promise to finally give “the people a voice” again.

This formatting of conflicts, which is also reflected in mainstream media, goes hand in hand with the disintegration of civil society and the collapse of solidarity.

As early as 1950, in conversation with Dr. Kogon and Horkheimer, Adorno said of such conditions:

“When we criticise administration, we are not criticising rationality. We are not criticising the fact that human conditions are planned as such in order to reduce the suffering that results from the blind play of social forces. What seems to be so disastrous about the latest development — which is no longer so recent, by the way — is that the irrational is being rationalised. This means that the result of the blind play of forces in liberalist society, of which Mr Horkheimer spoke earlier, is now being fixed and treated in the most skilful, clever and planned way possible, so that these fixed conditions can assert themselves and that people can adapt to them as smoothly as possible, without anything happening in earnest to overcome this result of an irrational, blind process.”³²

11

The authorities wanted me to abandon art, activism, and even the friction-generating work of addressing systemic grievances in order to function according to their interests.

Maintaining the simulation was deemed more important than alleviating the suffering of thousands.

For me, however, compliance would have meant becoming complicit in the destruction of the world – contributing to the dismantling of the economy and society rather than helping to build or sustain them.

In this context, disruption was an act of love – not destruction. Disruption was responsibility. It was about preserving human life.

³² A conversation between Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Eugen Kogon for Hessischer Rundfunk, broadcast on 4 September 1950, reprinted in: Max Horkheimer: Gesammelte Schriften. Volume 13: Nachgelassene Schriften 1949-1972. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 1989, pp. 121-142.

On 11 March 2015, case officer B. at the Federal Ministry of Labour in Berlin wrote to me in a letter:

“Thank you for your letter of 3 March 2015 to Federal Minister Pear, for which I am responsible for replying. (...)

I would also like to refer you to my letter of 19 June 2014 and am returning the book Strength in Poverty that you enclosed with your letter of 2 February 2015 for my information. Yours sincerely, B.”³³

My book *Strength in Poverty*, a 100-page analysis, described the state’s disastrous treatment of impoverished people and called for a radical self-valorisation of the poor. It also included several letters addressed to Minister Pear.

That Mr B. returned the book to me in an attempt to clear himself of responsibility showed once again that its content no longer mattered – it contradicted political directives. Since he could not forward the book to another department, let alone to the minister herself – who clearly didn’t want it – the only option left was to return it.

To put it bluntly, the new form of book-burning had become “sending books back” to their authors. A bureaucratic gesture that, in its symbolic violence, expressed one thing above all: a willingness to abolish culture itself. The message was clear – we don’t give a damn about what artists painstakingly create.

The fact that this could happen at all makes Minister Pear, who was in office at the time, complicit in a systemic violation of the constitution. That she still seems unaware of what she did to thousands of people only deepens the tragedy. Mr B. didn’t treat my book’s in-depth critique of the inhumanity of Hartz IV as a serious matter – instead, he treated the book itself as the problem. Returning it symbolically cleansed him of responsibility.

This childish behaviour is the result of working in an institution where no appropriate response is possible – but where one still wants to keep their job. So he complied with the formatting, no matter how absurd. In such a world, functioning means obeying preformatted processes. But in a world always more complex than any format, this inevitably leads to cognitive dissonance. A systemic phenomenon – in government institutions and in the economy alike.

At this point of conflict, it became clear: I, as a care worker, was engaging with reality – while the state’s role was one of concealment.

So the question must be asked: How many people in paid employment are truly doing care work – and how many are covering it up? How much of our

³³ Letter from Mr B. BMAS Berlin dated 11.3.2015

economy is based on actual performance – and how much on exploitation and deception?

This discrepancy only becomes visible in conflicts where care work proves itself to be the more intelligent, more humane, and more sensible approach – but is nonetheless punished. Why should I look for a “job” if the work I was already doing was far more relevant to the common good than sitting in an office enabling the cover-up of fundamental societal failures? I had both the talent and the opportunity to make a real difference. So I followed the path to its logical conclusion.

And indeed, as it turned out, I won one debate after another in this conflict discourse. No one can reasonably declare a well-argued critical perspective as worthless – though hypocritical systems do exactly that, thus initiating their own demise. Such a system must be guided – not destroyed, but led – to self-awareness.

That’s what I tried to do.

I called it work. A form of work AI will likely never be capable of, because it lacks a lived experience of the world – it does not exist within an open ecosystem that evolves through emergence.

12

By making this conflict the core object of my work, I began to enact a form of redistribution by changing my attitude. I worked on what I believed mattered. I pursued the questions that were urgent and real – and the Hartz IV benefit became the state’s involuntary co-financing of this work. That was ethically appropriate. If one understood the real mechanisms of capitalism – and the neurodivergent context of my life – this was self-evident.

I, like millions of others, had been driven into poverty because profits were being made precisely through our exclusion. Through competitive structures that deliberately ignored our capabilities. Through opportunity design that drove wages further and further down. Poverty wasn’t a coincidence. It was a policy.

So it was only fair that the state – which had entered into a strategic alliance with large corporations – now bear the costs. What was morally superior about a CO₂ tax compared to a proud unemployed person drawing benefits and thus demanding compensation for being marginalised? Nothing.

It followed the same ethically consistent principle: The costs of poverty are the shadow cast by decades of exploitation and dispossession. Of course, the state – invested in maintaining the fiction of a meritocratic relationship between the exploited and the dispossessed – resisted acknowledging this. But the facts spoke for themselves.

Over time, I increasingly saw it as my task to break through the formatting of these conflicts – to make visible the structures beneath the surface. That gave my work deep meaning. Intrinsic motivation became my engine.

So I worked full-time for ten years on solving these questions: I wrote ten books, made a feature film, and launched several cultural and social projects for the people of this country – while receiving no salary beyond Hartz IV and small grants from cultural funding. And yes, I also tried to escape poverty. But I was convinced that real value would prevail in the end. That people would come to understand that what I was doing was not worthless. It wasn't me who was a burden on society. It was the state and the economy that fed on the invisible labour of care workers like me. It was time for them to pay for it. And this, I must stress, is not an anomaly for an autistic person. It can be seen as an expression of what is commonly called a “special interest” or hyperfocus: The ability to devote oneself to one subject with uncompromising depth over years – combined with the inability to relativise “truth” in the neurotypical sense.

Much of the conflict described here is also a conflict between neurodivergent and neurotypical modes of existence. There are studies that show that neurotypical people lie up to 200 times³⁴ a day and don't find it weird. So it was also due to my autism that I recognised these patterns in the systems and had to act accordingly, while I didn't get or couldn't hold down normal jobs.

It is also telling that the conditions under which I worked bore a structural resemblance to the same mechanisms of dispossession that affect the Global South.

Throughout those ten years, not a single person thanked me for supplying raw materials and services at below-value rates – just like the Global South does – or for keeping the country's cultural infrastructure alive, as hundreds of other cultural workers do.

Like the Global South, I was accused of refusing to work, of being incapable, and was forced into submission. Like the Global South, I was made to “repay my debt to the West” with exorbitant interest – in my case, through forced devaluation and systemic exclusion.

³⁴ In his popular science book *The Liar in Your Life* (Hachette, 2009, ISBN 9780446534935), Robert S. Feldman - a social psychologist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst - reports on laboratory experiments in which participants uttered an average of two or three untruths in small talk situations lasting just ten minutes. Extrapolated to all daily micro-interactions, according to Feldman's own extrapolation in the chapter "The Ubiquity of Deception", this would easily amount to "over 150-200 small lies within 24 hours" - a frequency that was not perceived as unusual or reprehensible by the neurotypical people surveyed.

During these ten years, I received approximately EUR 100,000 in welfare payments. At the same time, I worked almost full-time, often over 40 hours per week, without holidays or social security, for nearly no pay.

Based on the legal minimum wage at the time – around EUR 12 per hour including pension – this labour would have amounted to roughly EUR 240,000. The state profited from my unpaid labour to the tune of at least EUR 140,000. Despite this fact, I was seen by the authorities as worthless, harassed and humiliated until I became ill. This is just the tip of the iceberg. The stigmatisation of the poor – and the entire market-based ideology behind it – had nothing to do with reality. The majority of people receiving Hartz IV were affected by this structural contempt.

Some cynics may argue that “art doesn’t have that kind of value”. But such rhetoric – the claim that what the market rejects must be worthless – is the gateway to right-wing extremism. And if we go down that path, why not declare the Basic Law or human rights worthless too?

After all, they also “stand in the way of profit” and cannot be measured in market terms.

In fact, from a purely market-oriented perspective, they are disruptive.

As previously argued, we observe here the same psychological logic and economic calculus that underpins the relationship between the West and the Global South.

They say: “Down there, there's no real economy,” just as they say: “Your art is not real work.” Hence, no “real” wages are paid – and supposedly that's the natural order of things. The people in the Global South, artists, or women in unpaid care work are said to act voluntarily – because they want to be like “us”. And because they are not seen as “fully human” (that’s racism), they are constructed as inferior.

So it didn’t matter what the South, or I, or the women in households achieved – we were always defined by our alleged deficits. This served to obscure the underlying injustice. But this is precisely what racism does: it condenses injustice into lies about people in order to justify their exploitation.

So the question is: Do you want to take part in this discourse of denial? Or are you on my side? The facts are indisputable. When will someone finally receive the Nobel Prize in Economics for recognising poverty as injustice?

The fact that I labelled what I was doing as “work” was seen as a provocation by the state.

One can certainly debate its usefulness – but the fact remains: in a democracy, as an artist, I can and should cause disruption.

There was this guy – me – who simply worked as he pleased (artistic freedom), and the system had to finance him, even though he had no conventional job and lived on welfare.

At the same time, I was one of the country's recognised and hard-working artists – like so many others.

What I was doing was no less valuable than the work of firefighters or nurses, who also don't turn a profit. So, naturally, this led to conflict. And it was an important conflict.

The state's prejudice – and that of large parts of the German population – was so deeply entrenched, so irrational, as if the economy itself were a religion, that even the fact that the state made a €140,000 profit from me wasn't enough to shift the narrative, wasn't enough to stop my complete devaluation as a human being simply because I was poor.

The story of the “worthless poor” had been drilled into society for decades, even centuries. To grant me value would have felt like the end of the world. It would have meant admitting that their entire ideology of work, of merit, of value, was built on lies.

What matters now – and what I attempt in the following chapters – is to demonstrate how this structural contradiction was repeatedly resolved through violence and cover-up. Bluntly put, the logic of colonialism was in some ways re-enacted on my body and biography: with all the irrational, dishonest reversals of guilt and responsibility.

Of course, I am not equating my experience with colonialism as such – but I am pointing out the patterns, the structural similarities in how oppression is reproduced.

My hope was that by exposing the full scope of the crisis of carework, we might move towards deeper solidarity. Not necessarily with me – but against the state's hypocrisy, which is visible not only in my case, but in the lives of millions of others.

I tried to tie the threads together. My research made visible the automated logic behind the dominant narratives of injustice. It revealed how every rational argument disappears in the machinery of the fake.

And it showed how figures like Donald Trump, or our own populist chancellor Grape, became possible in the first place: Because the very institutions tasked with defending democracy and human rights had become hollowed-out shells – simulations of themselves.

So thoroughly mendacious that they could no longer take an authentic stance against the fake. In my book “Strength in Poverty”, I wrote: *“I insist on*

renegotiating the creation of value, between companies and myself, between you and politics, between culture and the economy.”³⁵

A little further on in the book, I wrote: *“There is no Hartz IV law, I say. There are only people who are afraid of the consequences. Since neither the Federal Minister Pear nor the Job Centre have the balls to starve me to death in public, the game is over for them. They have no power over creative and lively people. It's time to give the poor back their dignity and accept their culture. It's time to shape society together.”*³⁶

From that moment on, I began documenting the conditions I encountered as a form of empirical research. I made it clear that I would publicly expose everything that was done to me. This became a kind of protection for me within a democratic framework – and it forced a dialogue that, while initially resembling a Sisyphean struggle against windmills, gradually made it possible to expose the very mechanisms that were destroying people and civil society in this country.

At the same time, it opened a space for hope – hope for real change.

This is where you can see the power of art: how effective activist art can be when it becomes a lever to defend democracy against creeping tyranny.

They couldn't get rid of me.

During this time, more and more people began to question the meaning of paid employment. The promises of prosperity no longer held true, and opportunities for genuine participation were being blocked everywhere. Something had to shift – something that would allow us to break with the conventional narrative of work.

My path was to confront the myth of wage labour with the reality of value and relevance.

To demonstrate that self-determined work was not only more just, but also more productive, more innovative – a path out of the despair, the marginalisation, and the simulated logic of capitalism.

Take-away Box — Chapter “Speed's work & the creation of an alternative”

Work-integrated relational agency

Speed shifts the focus from output production to mutual care: value is created where action strengthens social, ecological and subjective relationships — not where balance sheet gaps grow.

³⁵ Timothy Speed - Stärke in der Armut / 1st edition 2014 / BOD Verlag / S63

³⁶ Timothy Speed - Stärke in der Armut / 1st edition 2014 / BOD Verlag / S89

Universal Care Income as a system hack-

A guaranteed care income becomes the linchpin: it decouples livelihood security from wages and opens up space for experimental, system- creative activities beyond market pressure.

MNO logic in action

Object (institution)↔ Will (autistic vocation)↔ Experience (embodied research) interconnect cyclically: each artistic-political intervention creates a new window of emergence — an alternative micro-ecosystem that irritates the surrounding structure.

Proof of concept

From the bull campaign at Red Bull to the ZDF director application, Speed demonstrates that individuals can temporarily “reprogramme” power apparatuses with minimal resources.

Blueprint for post-work organisations

The chapter outlines concrete practices — participatory budget cycles, caring KPIs, radical transparency — with which companies or administrations can institutionalise relational action.

Scalable emergence instead of a singular hero

Speed explicitly positions its method as an open-source process: anyone can follow the loops (provocation→ dialogue→ re-evaluation) in their own context and thus grow collective alternatives.

Guarantee Obligation (Garantenpflicht) – Who bears Responsibility for Poverty?

1

On 12 March 2015, I wrote an open letter to Pear about poverty, artistic freedom, and Hartz IV. I wrote:

“Anyone who restricts people's self-determination in this way assumes responsibility for their fate. Only on this basis can politics derive its right to intervene in the lives of its citizens. Anything else would amount to legal and state violence for its own sake. Even if the state tries to portray the payment of Hartz IV as a voluntary benefit, providing for the poor is one of the state's core duties.”

The problem was that the division of labour in capitalism implied a theoretical distribution of responsibility—as if the burden were collectively shared—while in practice, through the fragmentation of responsibilities, it led to the near-total destruction of responsibility itself.

The combination of intentional violence against the poor, driving people into despair, and the simultaneous denial of responsibility for their fate—an attitude deeply rooted in governmental logic—created a climate of maximum brutality.

On the night of 13 to 14 June 2017, Grenfell Tower in London burned down, killing 72 people. The numerous safety failures were a direct consequence of the UK's massive austerity measures targeting the poor:

“This tragedy cannot be attributed to a lack of resources, but only to the reckless disregard shown by the state to those it deems unworthy of its support. The Grenfell Tower fire is perhaps the clearest symbol of the impact of austerity in the UK — but it is far from the only sign of injustice that has spread through British society since the financial crisis.”³⁷

You cannot talk about the causes of poverty without identifying society's treatment of the poor as one of its main drivers. It is no longer primarily poverty itself—stemming from a state's lack of resources—that kills people, at least not in Western Europe. Rather, it is the state that, for ideological reasons, mistreats, humiliates, and discriminates against the poor. This

³⁷ Grace Blakeley / Stolen - How to save the world from financial capitalism / Brumaire / p 269

structural hostility actively produces and sustains the specific form poverty takes in industrialised societies today.

One of the central causes of poverty is thus the state's active participation in social racism, which, as previously outlined, appears rational but is in fact a mechanism to uphold the irrational logic of the market. In this way, the conditions are created that keep people trapped in poverty. I cannot explore all facets here, so I refer instead to the many studies on the links between poverty, racism, classism, and intersectionality.

For a long time now, poverty has not only been a question of material distribution, but also a psychological battlefield within a capitalist system that maintains its legitimacy through the criminalisation of the poor. Because the poor are treated as if they were to blame for their situation, their suffering becomes, in the eyes of the public, a legitimate punishment. That is the perverse ideological trick.

This ideology—seeing poverty as a form of deserved punishment—makes any approach based on generosity or justice nearly impossible. Poverty is not being eradicated because society does not want to “reward” the supposedly guilty. This logic is grotesque and reminiscent of the darkest chapters of human history, yet it remains deeply embedded in institutions and everyday discourse. A quasi-religious cult has emerged, in which the punishment of the poor justifies the salvation and prosperity of the “deserving” on the other side—a revolting concentration of wealth.

For the poor, there is no escape from this frame. The devaluation sticks—like clan stigma or a lifelong mark—which systematically limits their access to employment and full participation in society. Poverty, in this sense, is not simply a failure of the market, but a state-sanctioned form of control, reinforced through institutionalised punishment mechanisms like the Job Centres. These centres operate like cults: salvation lies in obedience to the guru (capitalism), and everyone is expected to submit to its narrative of advancement. But for the poor, this “ascent” will never come. When the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder co-authored the so-called “Schröder-Blair paper”, which was partly the result of a joint initiative with Tony Blair³⁸, a new fundamental debate arose in the SPD, which centred mainly on a contemporary redefinition of the concept of justice. This was about nothing other than defining poverty, as I said, as a just punishment for all those who do not simply surrender to capitalism and its consequences without criticism. Rolf Hosfeld wrote on the Deutschlandfunk website on 10.11.2009:

³⁸“The Way Forward for Europe's Social Democrats”, later the so-called “Schröder-Blair Paper” of 1999.

“Suddenly there was talk of productivity-enhancing inequality, which could be fair if this and deregulation of the labour market triggered economic dynamism and the previously unemployed were integrated into working life. Gerhard Schröder claimed that it was an illusion to believe that more government was the best framework for justice. For social democrats, the associated ideas in the direction of an “activating” welfare state, which would not so much protect people from the market as enable them to act in it, were a big step, at least as big as the departure from Marxism in the Godesberg Programme. The belated result of the Schröder-Blair paper was Agenda 2010 in Germany.”³⁹

The state thus shirked its responsibility for the poor in a neoliberal fashion—a poverty it had itself produced through the structural logic of capitalism. It forced people into so-called “flexibilisation”, which in practice meant maximum disenfranchisement and systemic devaluation. Why can we say that the state created poverty? Because it is not a law of nature that markets must distribute value in such a way that it leads to extremes at both ends. Ecosystems, for example, prevent such extremes through diversity, enabling countless forms of life to coexist. Only humans systematically deprive other beings of their basic means of existence.

The poor were deliberately placed in the role of the dispossessed, in order to isolate them from the working class. Everyone now had to do everything to avoid falling into poverty—thus intensifying overall impoverishment, while poverty itself never disappeared. That’s the point: poverty is structurally permanent. Even forced labour cannot eliminate it. In fact, forced labour is violence—an assault on individual rights, living space, and the possibility of human development. Never in history has slavery eradicated poverty; it has only deepened it.

Poverty is not merely a condition of the poor, but rather a function within capitalism. It is needed by the privileged to justify their own privilege as “merit” in contrast to the supposed “laziness” of those who have failed. In this way, poverty became instrumentalised—not just to serve the stereotype of inferiority, which justifies the existence of the rich, but as a permanent state of guilt assigned to those affected. A guilt that could be exploited by political forces of all stripes.

The poor’s role was no longer seen through the lens of justice or redistribution, as in the social democratic tradition, but instead through the individual’s supposed failure to seize the “opportunity” of employment—regardless of how precarious or underpaid the job. The systemic injustice of

³⁹ <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/was-hat-das-schroeder-blair-papier-der-sozialdemokratie-100.html>

poverty was erased and replaced by a fabricated individual deficit. As a result, the causes of poverty were not addressed but obscured and intensified.

Individual stories of marginalisation and exclusion were no longer seen. All that remained was the question: could this person be immediately exploited in the low-wage sector? If not, then they were considered a burden on the public purse—legitimising dispossession, sanctions, and even homelessness. This logic mirrored the same toxic narratives applied to indebted nations in the Global South, especially during the Greek crisis of 2010.

From 2005 onwards, poverty in the German welfare state became synonymous with guilt. In Nietzschean terms, we moved from master morality—in which the powerful define what is good—to slave morality, which seeks justice from the perspective of the oppressed—and then back again to master morality under Hartz IV and during the Euro crisis. The oppressed were turned into the guilty. This allowed the exploiters not only to profit once from those they discarded, but to discard them a second time.

In my research, I called this the “double hit”: first, they exploit and devalue you; then they turn your poverty into your own fault, in order to force you back into the next cycle of exploitation—this time even more powerless. The poor are silenced. They are de-democratised. I myself, for instance, have never been allowed to vote in an election—but more on that later.

“In the meantime, right-wing populism has reached a strength not seen since the 1930s. Nationalist forces mobilise sometimes openly, sometimes more covertly racist images of the enemy. If you believe them, then the diffuse “foreigner” is responsible for the material hardship and falling living standards. Few traditional social democratic parties have done justice to the task of responding to this dissatisfaction and directing it towards the economic and political elites who are actually responsible for the misery. Instead, they continue to cling to the stale idea of the “third way” somewhere between exploitation and self-determination for workers. As a result, they have “pasokified” themselves — i.e. manoeuvred themselves into political insignificance like the Greek social democratic party Pasok — and left the business of agitation entirely to the right.”

40

Blair and Schröder developed this course of action, and as a result, the SPD collapsed. The rise of the political right followed—a populist intensification of the stigmatization of the poor. What emerged was a new version of the legend of the defiant poor who, as previously mentioned, were to be punished. However, this turned the politicians of those years into perpetrators and thus

⁴⁰ Grace Blakeley / Stolen - How to save the world from financial capitalism / Brumaire / p 330

into one of the central reasons why the state now holds a de facto guarantor obligation (*Garantenpflicht*) toward the poor.

This new form of poverty—marked by permanent stigmatization, exclusion, and exploitation—would not have come into existence without these political decisions. Blair and Schröder enabled financial capital to further increase its returns in inhumane ways, as if trickle-down economics had ever worked for those below the middle class—which history has clearly refuted.

Christoph Butterwegge, in *Hartz IV und die Folgen* (5th ed. 2020, Beltz Juventa), traces how the Agenda 2010 reforms under Schröder intensified the stigmatization of the unemployed, caused a massive loss of trust in the SPD, and provided “a blueprint for right-wing populist resentment.”

Anthony Giddens (*The Third Way*, 1998, Polity Press) and Colin Crouch (*Post-Democracy*, 2004, Polity) show how Blair and Schröder’s “Third Way” policies relied on market-oriented strategies combined with welfare state retrenchment—creating a legitimacy vacuum that later empowered right-wing populists.

Philip Manow, in *Die politische Ökonomie des Populismus* (2018, Suhrkamp), demonstrates that the erosion of welfare guarantees in Western Europe is directly linked to the rise of right-wing populist parties; Germany is analysed as a key case (SPD collapse → AfD rise).

Nancy Fraser, in *Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism* (*Critical Historical Studies*, 2016), argues that financial capitalism structurally depends on new forms of expropriation—including the devaluation of care work and people living in poverty—and thus generates a state duty of protection and guarantee.

On the Concept of “Guarantor Obligation” (*Garantenpflicht*):

In German law, a guarantor obligation refers to the special legal duty of an actor to prevent harm to certain protected interests. It is classically known from § 13 of the Criminal Code (*StGB*) in the context of omission: a person who bears a duty to act—either because they have created a source of danger (ingercence) or because they hold a particular position of responsibility (e.g., parents for children, the state for its citizens)—is criminally liable if they allow harm to occur through inaction.

At the constitutional level, this logic has been developed by the Federal Constitutional Court into the state’s duty of protection and guarantee: Based on Article 1(1) of the Basic Law (human dignity) and Article 20 (the welfare state principle), the state must ensure the socio-cultural minimum

subsistence level—affirmed in the Hartz IV ruling (2010) and the AsylbLG ruling (2012).

Application in the Context of Poverty

1. State as Co-Causer (*Ingerenz*)

Labour market and social policies (e.g. Agenda 2010, Hartz IV) structurally generate poverty and stigma. Anyone who creates a risk becomes a guarantor – in analogy to §13 of the German Criminal Code (StGB) on omission liability.

2. State as Sovereign

The state holds the monopoly on the legitimate use of force and determines property and market regimes. This creates a duty to protect those who are structurally disadvantaged by these very regimes.

3. Concrete Obligations Arising from the Guarantor Duty

- To secure a dignified minimum standard of living (Federal Constitutional Court rulings of 2010 and 2012).
- To dismantle structures that perpetuate poverty (requirement derived from the social state principle).
- To enable non-discriminatory participation in society (Art. 3 Basic Law).

Why the State Bears a Guarantor Duty Towards the Poor

- Causality: If government policies (e.g. sanctions regimes) deepen poverty and social exclusion, the state itself becomes a causal agent – and thus a guarantor.
- Power and Control: The state possesses the instruments (taxation, social transfers, regulation) necessary to prevent poverty. Failure to act constitutes a breach of its guarantor responsibility.
- Constitutional Principles: Human dignity (Art. 1 GG) and the welfare state principle (Art. 20 GG) are not policy options, but binding constitutional imperatives.

In summary:

Because the state both contributes to the production of poverty and has the power to prevent it, it bears a guarantor duty that goes far beyond merely ensuring physical subsistence. It must also identify and eliminate the structural roots of poverty.

Political Consequences of the State's Denial

The federal government's fundamental denial of this structural injustice had two major consequences:

1. Truth became irrelevant. In a system like Hartz IV, where systematic defamation of the poor was already in place, empirical facts ceased to matter. Instead, the poor were reduced to their "function" within the system – rebranded as "customers" at the Job Centre, managed, instructed, and administratively defined by prejudice and classist or racist assumptions.
2. Cognitive dissonance as a systemic condition. The system operated in a state of epistemic contradiction. Later, I referred to the behaviour of the Job Centres as *cognitively disturbed*. As a result, I was taken to court by right-wing extremists within the authorities – but more on that later.

Because overt totalitarianism is frowned upon in liberal democracies, it often disguises itself through systemic dysfunctionality and the quiet, invisible workings of structural violence.

2

A typical phenomenon, especially in the early years of Hartz IV, was that documents submitted by those affected simply disappeared within the authorities, resulting in suspended or cancelled benefit payments. Because there was no internal logic to the Hartz IV system, it exhibited signs of massive institutional dysfunction. At the time, headlines in articles and blog posts read, for example:

*"Benefits cut if documents go missing? This is apparently a reality in some places. But Hartz IV recipients can arm themselves."*⁴¹ or *"Hartz IV documents keep disappearing without a trace"*⁴²

This wasn't just a result of the sheer volume of applications; numerous witnesses have reported that documents often went missing, particularly when criticism was directed at caseworkers. The problem stemmed from the fact that communication between authorities and recipients was deeply flawed. When individuals voiced criticism, their files would sometimes vanish.

⁴¹ Merkur.de / 22.7.2022 / Hartz IV benefits cut - because the job centre misses documents

⁴² www.gegen-hartz.de / 6.9.2020 / Hartz IV documents keep disappearing without a trace - this is the way out!

The scale of this was already epidemic. The state deliberately created conditions of extreme poverty.

At the time, I wrote to the minister accusing her of presiding over a dehumanising bureaucracy. I argued that this dysfunctional system wasn't accidental, but intentional — part of a punitive policy aimed at the poor. Because the poor, like the residents of Grenfell Tower who were denied smoke alarms and functioning fire doors, were deemed unworthy of proper administration.

In that letter, I wrote:

“Although I was not the only one to warn you in writing that your Hartz IV system causes severe traumatisation and mistreatment of people, you have continued to endanger human lives by carelessly implementing changes to software and regulations with unbelievable brutality towards those dependent on payments. You knowingly accepted delays of several months in benefit disbursements — a clear sign that you do not care about these people at all.”⁴³

Since Minister Pair refused to respond to anything other than sending pre-formatted text modules via Mr B., I filed a criminal complaint against her with the Berlin Public Prosecutor's Office. I was certain that, at the very least, she would receive the complaint personally. From that point on, my objective was to renegotiate the question of guilt. What was happening on this small scale reflected the broader system — but destabilising that broader system was often more effective when approached from the margins.

It was not difficult to find lower-level racists in the Job Centres who actively lied about the poor. My task was to document these lies step by step, comprehensively, and to confront the minister with them — again and again, in formal records. This is the kind of work that drains capitalism's lifeblood, yet few were or are willing to do it. It entails immense personal risk, as it means entering into direct conflict with numerous individuals who hold significant institutional power and are fully prepared to wield it with maximum force — particularly within the “black box” of Job Centres, where oversight is minimal to nonexistent.

In another letter to Pair dated 23 March 2015, I wrote:

“The TV report by Günter Wallraff⁴⁴ has made it clear that the Hartz IV system can no longer be reformed, but must be ended completely. It was built on a fatally flawed image of humanity and deliberately constructed as a means of

⁴³ Open letter to Andrea Pair dated 12 March 2015

⁴⁴ Hans Günter Wallraff (born 1 October 1942 in Burscheid) is a German investigative journalist and writer. He has become known for his reports on various large companies, the Bild newspaper and various institutions, for which he has always used the methods of investigative journalism.

mistreating people. Politicians have been basking in the glory of showing the unemployed the ropes on talk shows for years."⁴⁵

Populist violence is never without real-world consequences. What may seem harmless at the level of pub talk manifests as physical and psychological violence among marginalised groups. If one wants to expose populism for what it is, intellectual critique alone is insufficient. One must show the concrete suffering, the violence, the blood that follows. Only then does the populist emerge clearly as a perpetrator of criminal brutality.

For this reason, I wrote extensive letters to Minister Pair — essays, really — that documented this violence in detail. It is therefore false to claim that the ministry “did not know.” It could have known, had the bureaucratic apparatus not been constructed in such a way that it systematically prevents the pain of individuals from reaching the top. The system dilutes every horror of this society by excluding the victims themselves from speaking about their suffering. Instead, only bureaucrats and “experts” are allowed to speak.

Labour Minister Kiwi calls these actors “pragmatists,” whose speech is crafted to be as emotionless, as free from human roughness, as possible — precisely the kind of linguistic sterilisation that conceals reality rather than reveals it. What was needed was interpersonal negotiation. But this was categorically denied to the poor — all in the name of ‘objectivity’.

If democratic power enables communication only through simplification — which is what “objectivity” means in this context — then democracy begins to tip into totalitarianism. Because only those not touched by pain are allowed to speak, which, under the guise of neutrality, obscures real relationships and marginalises suffering.

As I’ve argued elsewhere, racism is not always the result of hatred — it is often a technique of covering up injustice. That is why the state always teeters on the edge of totalitarianism and racism, especially when it formats conflict through objectification in order to preserve its power. A fully objectified state is a cruel state. Beyond hatred, there is such a thing as objectified racism.

Perhaps now you understand what I meant by “the third knowledge”: the form in which I convey knowledge here — scientific, political, and artistic at once — is one that takes truth seriously, but requires a careful mix of insight, provocation, and imaginative thinking to actually spark dialogue. Purely rational discourse can be brushed aside. But the dilemma I was in cannot. It transcends the search for simple solutions. There is no single, tidy answer.

I want you to experience the depth and complexity of what I lived through. What should I have done in the face of this violent absurdity? How would you

⁴⁵ Letter to Andrea Pair dated 23 March 2015

have acted? How can someone with intellect and empathy simply take any job under these conditions — and not remain part of the conflict from which the vulnerable cannot escape? You don't leave a place of systemic oppression just because you have the privilege to. To do so is to abandon your soul.

3

The situation kept escalating. Conditions emerged that made it impossible to plan for the future. There was no support. Only violence and structural bullying. Some people are resilient — I was not. I was and still am so deeply affected by these circumstances that, as an autistic person, I could not turn my attention to anything else. So what does society expect? That everyone with privilege or opportunity escapes poverty — and leaves everyone else to rot? What job could possibly be more important, more valuable, than taking on the structures of injustice? Who dares to call me guilty because I tried?

In the first years of receiving Hartz IV, I lived in a tent. Later, in a trailer. I chose this deliberately — to save money for myself and the state, so I could invest more in my work. Paying rent would have drained resources I needed to continue. It was a creative, constructive response to hostile conditions. I never intended to stay on Hartz IV for ten years. But the spiral of poverty was far more insidious than I had realised. And I didn't yet understand how autism — and society's brutal mishandling of it — contributed significantly to the problem.

I had been left for months without resources, treated like dirt. They later refused to pay my heating costs — firewood — while I was living in a tent in minus 20 °C. That sounds bizarre? Why didn't I just look for a flat? Ask the homeless. The poor develop alternative strategies for maintaining autonomy. Sometimes a cardboard box has the emotional value of a home. Exposed to the forces of nature, I experienced poverty in a raw, embodied way. Yet the tent also gave me a sense of freedom — and testified to my willingness to sacrifice, to keep working on what increasingly felt like essential labour: confronting the state's inhumane treatment of the poor.

By then, the markets for creatives like me were collapsing. Slowly but steadily. The system kept lying about the real state of affairs, and politicians kept announcing that things were “on the up again.” Naturally, I kept working — on projects that I believed might one day free me from poverty. Not giving up too soon was considered a virtue in this society. Forced optimism was a core ideology — so I didn't give up. I worked harder. And now, it was time to confront the institutions with this paradox. I believed, at least in part, in the market. But I was trying to find a synergy between social needs, my values and capabilities, and the opportunities that remained. I saw critical work as a

legitimate business model — a way to redistribute value, to reconfigure the market from the bottom up.

Already in 1950, Theodor W. Adorno warned of the dangers of such a society falling ever deeper into instrumental reason — repressing emotional truth, masking internal violence, and becoming increasingly inhuman:

*“When people say even today that the individual can still be good and resist administration, they’re not wrong. But given our knowledge of how this society works, even if countless individuals acted with personal integrity, nothing essential would change in the administered world, because of the overwhelming power of anonymous processes that operate above our heads. In other words, one must step outside oneself and engage in an objective, not merely personal practice, if one is to have any hope of transforming the administered world. But that means we must at least give the devil of this world — this reification — the finger. And we can only fight it with means that are themselves reified, objective. That is the dilemma.”*⁴⁶

I confronted that dilemma head-on. Because to do otherwise would have meant capitulating not just to poverty, but to the betrayal of all shared humanity.

I believe Adorno’s view here is too narrow. His conclusion — that one can only oppose reification with reified means — overlooks an emerging form of resistance that he may not have been able to anticipate, perhaps because he lived in a time that lacked the kind of activist engagement we know today.

My own response to instrumental reason and the formatting of conflict was to establish a deeply subjective and simultaneously objective relation — a lived contradiction — which I enacted through countless letters to authorities, judges, prosecutors, and politicians. Later, this became manifest in my feature film *Transferprotokoll* and through my public interventions as a figure that refused to conform. I became, through action and language, the embodiment of an “unusable” person — someone whose work, oriented toward meaning and care, actively defied exploitation.

Because meaning, in this context, had to become an indictment. It had to break the simulation. My goal was not only to document injustice, but to force institutions to enter into a real relationship with the consequences of their actions. I began to draw more and more institutions into my case in order to demonstrate the full complexity of the link between capitalist logic and the concept of labour. For I myself — as an autistic person who created value

⁴⁶A conversation between Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Eugen Kogon for Hessischer Rundfunk, broadcast on 4 September 1950, reprinted in: Max Horkheimer: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Volume 13: *Nachgelassene Schriften 1949-1972*. Fischer, Frankfurt

despite systematic devaluation — had become living proof of capitalism's epistemic malfunction.

3

On 15 July 2015, a public prosecutor from Potsdam sent me a lengthy and highly revealing letter. It stated the following:

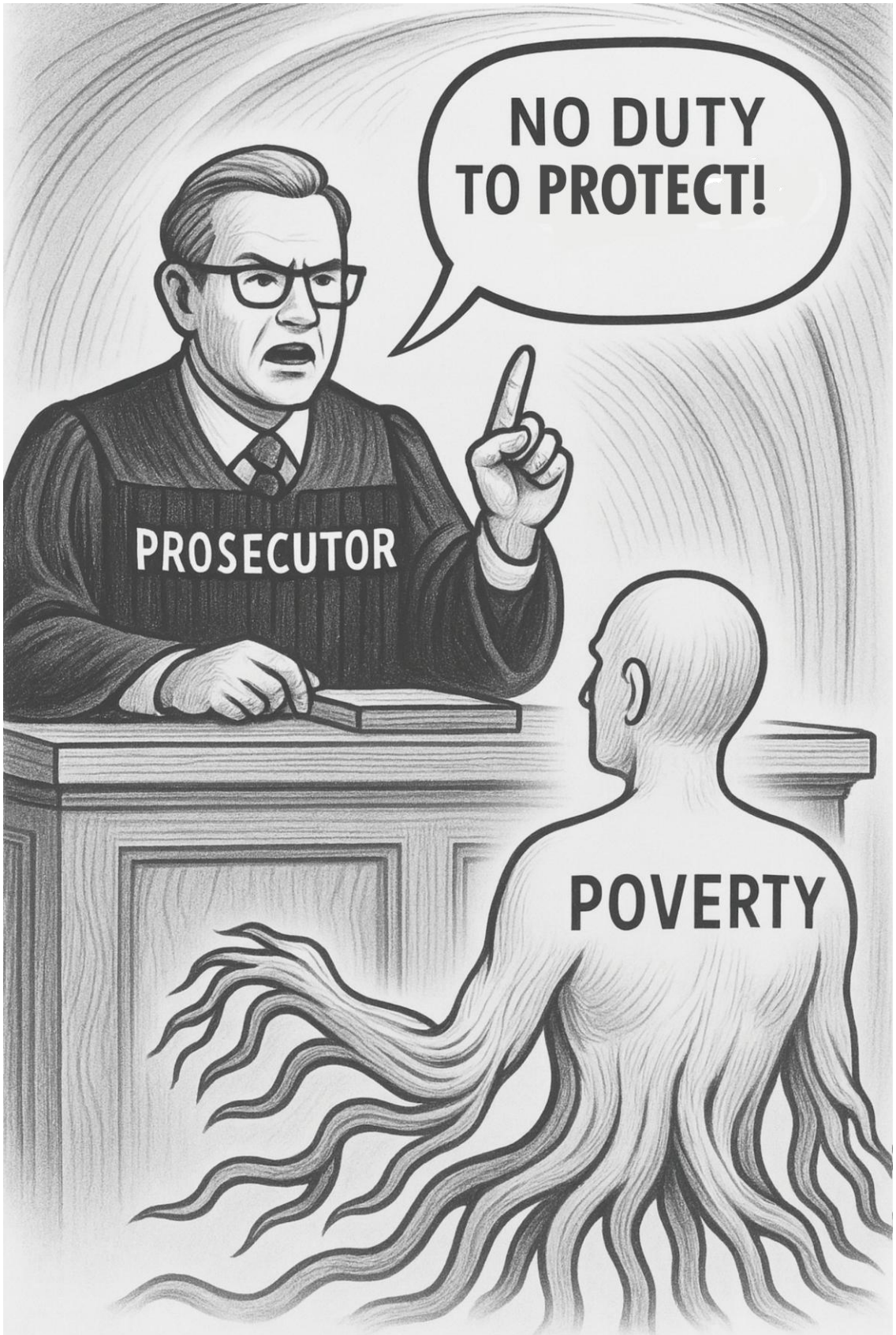
“In your criminal complaint, you allege that you were not reimbursed for your heating costs by the employees of the Job Centre, which rendered your flat uninhabitable during the winter and exposed you to a risk of death by freezing or starvation. You suspect that the denial of social benefits was intended to kill you — as an artist and critic of the system — by freezing or starving you to death. Furthermore, you describe the process of claiming benefits as a form of psychological torture that has significantly impacted your health. You also claim that the reductions of your benefits to EUR 343 or EUR 281 were arbitrary and can only be interpreted as punitive. In your letter dated 24 April 2015, you additionally raise the suspicion that Job Centre staff in Teltow-Fläming are deliberately destroying submitted documents. You also refer to an official directive instructing staff to enter the processing date rather than the application date into the system, thereby causing legally relevant deadlines to be missed.

There is no initial suspicion of attempted murder by omission on the part of the Job Centre employees. While it is true that, based on your account, the employees failed to reimburse your heating costs, criminal liability for an omission presupposes that the person has a legal duty to act — a so-called guarantor obligation. Under § 1 para. 2 sentence 1 SGB II, basic income support for jobseekers is intended to promote personal responsibility. It is therefore to be understood as state assistance and not as a release from the obligation to provide for oneself. This provision cannot be interpreted to mean that state institutions are legally obliged to avert any and all danger to the lives of benefit recipients. Such a legal duty, however, would be required in order to establish a guarantor position. (...)

Moreover, criminal liability for attempted murder requires at least conditional intent to kill. It is not evident that Job Centre employees acted with such intent when they refused to approve benefit payments. Your assumption that the employees sought to kill you as an artist and critic of the system by means of starvation or exposure does not suffice to establish an initial suspicion of a

homicide offence. Instead, concrete evidence would be required to support such a conclusion. No such evidence exists.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Letter from the Potsdam public prosecutor's office dated 15 July 2015 / 486 Js 26200/15



What is essential here is not merely that the state refused to see itself as responsible for the very poverty it had helped to create, but that the narrative introduced by the “Schröder-Blair paper”—which reframed society’s collective responsibility into the individual’s personal guilt for their poverty—had long since become a guiding principle of the constitutional state. What the public prosecutor wrote in their letter was deeply perverted and politically dangerous. In retrospect, it becomes painfully obvious to anyone with a clear sense of justice that the legal framework had been adapted to expose the poor to serious, even life-threatening risks, not by accident, but intentionally—because the poor were to be punished. And this punishment was to remain legal, even if it led to death. So how, as an autistic person—representing a group with an unemployment rate of around 80%—was I supposed to lift myself out of starvation through personal responsibility? Especially when my disability and the structural discrimination I faced were part of a political design that systematically denied my right to exist, blocked every possible path to resolution, and simultaneously claimed that no intention of harm existed—even as the system quite literally threatened my survival, enacted that threat in practice, and worked hard to conceal it? The ideology of personal responsibility was applied shamelessly, even in situations where individuals had been psychologically broken by bureaucratic terror or were simply no longer physically or mentally able to prevent themselves from freezing or starving. The prosecutor’s arguments were not only grotesque in their reasoning; they were intellectually dishonest and morally bankrupt. They documented the full extent of a systemic strategy: to erase visible violence through technocratic language and bureaucratic reframing—thus making structural cruelty invisible by design.

George Monbiot, a British journalist and activist, once said:

“One aspect of neoliberalism is the individualisation of blame. The individual is held responsible for their circumstances. If you’re rich, it’s your own doing; if you’re poor, it’s your own fault too.”⁴⁸

This also applied in situations where the poor had nothing left to survive on but welfare benefits—where their lives were in immediate danger because Hartz IV was the last possible safety net and society offered no alternative escape routes for the marginalised. The core lie—that poverty is a result of individual failure—was upheld so persistently that even public prosecutors came to believe the poor were solely to blame for their situation, and that the

⁴⁸ Youtube: Politics Joe / The failure of Neoliberalism and how to solve it | George Monbiot interview

state bore no responsibility. The myth of “personal responsibility” thus legitimised structural murder—because it implied that the victim could always escape their fate, if only they stopped insisting on being human. A contradiction in terms.

Even when a person like me was denied food, the rhetoric of personal responsibility persisted, despite the fact that the victims—already weakened, lying on the ground—were objectively incapable of saving themselves from starvation. How, from a freezing tent, without food, was I supposed to act “responsibly” so as not to die? So if a death did occur—because I, as an artist, pointed to injustices and was then systematically denied basic rights—it was not considered attempted murder. Because, in this perverse logic, the victim was at fault for failing to avoid being murdered. This reveals the stupidity and social racism entrenched in the state apparatus. The public prosecutor accepted such deaths as collateral. Minister Pair did the same in the Ralph Boes case, which I will return to later. They knew that denying Hartz IV benefits could likely lead to death. But this psychological terror was intended—and viewed as a just punishment for the poor.

Justice is impossible in a constitutional state if society’s foundational lie goes unchallenged—if the fraud has progressed so far that, within the simulation, no one notices that the state’s reasoning is not only inhumane but also profoundly irrational. In other words: the state assumed that poverty was caused solely and exclusively by the actions or inaction of the poor—and that it could only be solved by those same people. In a certain sense, that’s true—because I acted. I decided to accuse the state and publicly expose its violence against the poor until it could no longer be ignored. What we see here is that even real murder—the very real possibility that someone might starve to death—can still be interpreted as legitimate and unpunishable by a German prosecutor, even in 2024. The reasoning? That the state has no legal obligation to save its citizens. Not the “less worthy” ones, at least. This is possible because the system’s logic is entirely self-referential, cut off from lived reality—what we’re seeing here is a bureaucratic delusion turned deadly.

Of course, one might argue that Job Centre employees didn’t knowingly let people die simply because the rules demanded it. But the decisive issue is this: such behaviour opens the door to every subtle form of killing—through

racism, neglect, and deliberate dysfunction. With this logic, something like the Grenfell Tower disaster could happen again at any time.

And indeed, in the 2025 election campaign, the CDU made grotesque statements such as: *“A complete rethink is needed. If someone is able to work and repeatedly refuses job offers, the state must assume they are clearly not in need. Then citizen’s income must be revoked entirely.”*⁴⁹ Apart from incitement to hatred, there is no logic to the argument here. This is, of course, a call to murder people who are often simply standing up against the injustice they have suffered—people who have every legitimacy to resist. The CDU Secretary General is drawing on a misguided formulation that seeks to legitimise violence through distorted categorisation.

The public prosecutor had no right to ignore symbolic and structural violence—what Hannah Arendt called the “desk perpetrator”—merely because that violence was politically sanctioned.

It therefore became a further aim of my work to show and document how the state exacerbated and contributed to poverty, and why a guarantor obligation naturally follows from that. This obligation arises from the very relationship between state and citizen. It is the foundation of solidarity and civil society—something the state, in the context of Hartz IV, completely erased.

In conclusion, the public prosecutor wrote, with regard to the resulting bodily harm through psychological torture:

*“Even if the circumstances you described had caused a physically pathological condition, there would be no criminal liability under §§ 223, 226 of the Criminal Code, because the processing of a so-called Hartz IV application constitutes socially adequate behaviour on the part of Job Centre employees; i.e. bodily harm cannot be objectively attributed to socially adequate behaviour.”*⁵⁰

The real experiences of the victims were simply erased through a preformatted categorisation and reinterpreted in accordance with the interests of power. According to this logic, even an SS officer could not be held responsible for beating a Jewish person to death, because such acts were considered “socially appropriate behaviour” within the ideological framework of the SS. They were even legal under that regime. Racism, too, is considered socially appropriate behaviour—from the perspective of racists. The prosecutor’s argument revealed a totalitarian self-conception of the state,

⁴⁹ ntv article from 28.05.2025: “This has to work” Linnemann puts pressure on Bas. <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Linnemann-macht-wegen-Buergergeldreform-Druck-auf-Bas-article25797413.html>

⁵⁰ Letter from the Potsdam public prosecutor's office dated 15 July 2015 / 486 Js 26200/15

in which state actions were always deemed correct and fundamentally devoid of racism or inhumanity.

What we are witnessing here is a constitutional state that denies the systemic consequences of its own actions and reduces the complexity of law in such a way that it becomes a tool of violence against minorities. Nearly all public prosecutors I encountered over the past ten years—well over fifty—argued along similar lines. They twisted the law in order to cover up socio-racist violence. In doing so, however, they inadvertently revealed their own deep-seated racism and the enormous danger this posed to those affected, which I began to document extensively.

In *La Misère du monde* (1993) and *Sur l'État* (2012), Pierre Bourdieu explains that the state produces “misrecognition” through its classificatory power: it categorises social suffering into administratively manageable terms (e.g. “barrier to employability”) and thereby neutralises its moral and political explosiveness. In *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (2010, rev. ed., Russell Sage), Michael Lipsky shows how frontline officials routinely “reframe” or ignore complex, unforeseen problems due to time constraints and regulatory pressure—thus administratively erasing structural injustice. James C. Scott (*Seeing Like a State*) argues that state planning only recognises those aspects of reality that fit into simplified “legibility schemes”; everything else is erased or forcibly reshaped.⁵¹ In “Reframing Justice” (NLR, 2005), Fraser describes a “meta-level of political power”: the state decides which claims are considered justiciable in the first place. Through such frame-setting, structural violence can appear as legitimate administration. In *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), Zygmunt Bauman mentions the process of de-ethnicising morally relevant actions as “administrative routine”; in this way, lethal exclusion can survive as bureaucratic normality. In *Epistemologies of the South* (2014), Boaventura de Sousa Santos shows how modern institutions divide knowledge along “abyssal boundaries”: Experiences of the underprivileged are erased as irrelevant or irrational across the line. Gayatri C. Spivak diagnoses in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), Gayatri C. Spivak diagnoses a discourse mechanism that only allows the voices of marginalised groups to be heard if they are translated into the terminology of domination — a silent erasure of deviant reality.

The essence of simulation, which leads to a closed system, is the complete absence of uncertainty—a lack of contingency that, for most people, would otherwise prompt mindfulness. What becomes visible here is a profound loss

⁵¹ Source: Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State*. Yale University Press.

of humanity. The authorities no longer care whether bodily harm or even murder occurs, as long as compliance with rules is perceived as correct and “socially appropriate” in each individual case.

The structures are not disrupted when violence is professionalised and integrated into institutional roles that reduce people to functions. They become desensitised. Only what is deemed socially correct counts as valid. This primitive conception of law wants nothing to do with the complexity of real interactions. For such institutions, reality is static, under-complex. In the sense of philosopher Richard Rorty’s pragmatic realism, what is missing here is solidarity. It is law for the sake of rules. By this logic, the public prosecutor would have to run over a grandmother crossing the street simply because the traffic light is green—after all, it is “socially appropriate” to drive when the light is green.

Responsibility stripped of complexity and proportionality lacks the maturity—social and ecological—required to sustain any ecosystem. Without that, destruction is inevitable. My case shows how difficult, how exhausting it is to assert justice within such a system, even when the injustice is obvious to any outside observer. The core problem is that truth disrupts the functionality of these institutions. That alone is reason enough, in their logic, to legitimise racism and structural violence as a defence mechanism of the state against uncomfortable truths.

We are thus faced with a form of violence not born of hatred, but of objectification—the so-called “German disease.”

It therefore made perfect sense for my work to begin with the issue of poverty and how to overcome it. Not through blind adaptation, but by cultivating an awareness of actual conditions. These cannot be captured solely through external, objective research; they require a language from within that can express lived experience. Because without seeing the lived reality of Hartz IV, one understands nothing essential about Hartz IV. Only from this point could the process of economic transformation be experienced authentically and directly. I therefore had to become a subjective voice within this research.

But the key question is this: How can we, based on this experience, conceive of a new concept of labour—one that no longer permits this violence, but instead leads toward an economy as an ecosystem that sustains everyone and everything?

Take-away Box — Chapter “Guarantee obligation. Who is responsible for poverty?”

Legal concept of the guarantor's duty

In criminal and constitutional law, the guarantor must avert dangers that arise from their position of power or protection. Speed transfers this principle to the welfare state: those who produce or exacerbate poverty bear active responsibility for the consequential damage.

Hartz IV / Citizen's Income as structural bodily harm

Sanctions, means testing and demoralising bureaucracy demonstrably cause mental and physical illness. The state is thus transformed from a mere administrator into a causative agent — a justiciable duty to refrain and act arises.

From Kant to Peter Singer

Categorical imperative and effective altruism support the thesis: if decision-makers consciously allow suffering, even though alternatives exist (such as Universal Care Income), they are violating moral and — in Speed's interpretation — also positive legal obligations.

Classism as a blind spot in the justice system

Public prosecutors often classify social racism as “socially acceptable behaviour”. This categorisation gap shifts structural violence into the invisible and prevents prosecution — a systemic protective shield for discrimination.

Potential precedent of the case

If Speed's documentation is heard in court, the complex could become one of the most significant social and judicial scandals since the “Heidelberg blood test” or the “NSU self-disclosure” — with consequences including official liability and legal reform.

Conclusion

Poverty is not a natural phenomenon, but the result of political decisions. Whoever makes or executes these decisions becomes the guarantor — and thus legally and morally co-responsible for any resulting suffering.

Crisis Experiments – My Application for the Role of Director-General of ZDF

1

Simulation is the consequence of a lack of authentic relationships and a loyalty to authority that stabilises power relations and simplifies reality. The same principle applies in other systems, such as the media or large corporations. This problem of simulation also became evident in other projects of mine at the time — for example, in a letter I received from the ZDF Television Council. The reason was my application to become the director of ZDF and the new host of the programme “Wetten, dass..?”.

Since the apparatus constantly tried to force the poor into low-wage jobs in order to fulfil their ascribed worthlessness and enable their exploitation — the real cause of their devaluation — I consistently applied for top executive positions at major institutions and companies in the country. I did this explicitly as a Hartz IV recipient. I made that transparent. I also made it clear that I was capable of doing those jobs — regardless of my neurodivergence — as highly focused, monotropically structured projects through which I aimed to rebuild institutions in fundamentally different ways.

My intention was to expose the prejudices and explore the absurdity, elitism, and insularity of recruitment processes for positions like artistic directors. I demonstrated that I could do the job just as “well,” while deliberately suggesting that a fundamentally different approach was needed — especially in light of the crisis facing public broadcasters. ZDF rejected me, mockingly calling my submission the “most unusual application of the year” while maintaining a noble distance. I had similar experiences with other broadcasters, such as ARD.

I filed formal complaints to compel the directors of these broadcasters to write long letters of justification, which I could then publish. It’s not so easy to reject a poor person who might actually be capable of doing the job — someone who subjectively entangles the system by ignoring its formalities and who, incidentally, was the cheapest applicant, offering to do the job for €30,000 a year instead of the €200,000 salary typically paid to directors.

It is especially in such management positions that one sees how job distribution often has little to do with competence. It is frequently a ritual for securing cliques and elites who consolidate influence in this way. Alleged criteria are often fabricated, and the required competences merely claimed. Much more decisive is the question of how the value of the higher ranks is legitimised and demarcated from those below. After all, it is not objectively

impossible that an unskilled worker with the necessary commitment might be a much more sensible choice. But if someone on Hartz IV can become the director of ZDF, this threatens the privileges of certain establishment circles. Former CDU politician Ruprecht Polenz, then Chairman of the ZDF Television Council, wrote to me:

“Regarding your concern that diversity in personnel management is being increasingly diminished, I can inform you that ZDF has been committed to diversity management for many years and, as a signatory to the ‘Diversity Charter’, is expressly committed to diversity.”

That is simulation.

The fact that I was looking at their cards was perceived as a threat, and they scrambled for excuses that led to absurd justifications — as if the “Diversity Charter” had ever changed anything about the fundamental inequality that pervades ZDF to this day. Even back then, there was immense pressure not to make the real structures and practices of public broadcasters too transparent — and that is the scandal. One must remember: all this happened eight years before the RBB scandal surrounding director Patricia Schlesinger.⁵² who, to put it simply, spent a lot of money on things of little relevance. I had already anticipated this scandal in my book *Organic Television*, in which I analysed how public broadcasters increasingly lost touch with society due to their “bubble” mentality — a problem that has only worsened since. The core issue with public broadcasting was, and remains, its failure to engage with the fractures of real life in the country. Instead, its formats repackage content into pleasing, over-professionalised productions that fall flat. In trying to appeal to everyone, programming became increasingly shallow. Television was no longer made by people, or with people, or for the people — no longer by committed citizens, or even as a democratic institution. The population was excluded. Professionalisation was used to mask fundamental inconsistencies. In the end, ZDF succeeded — with a flood of polite, distant rejection letters from its directors and presidents — in pushing me back into poverty. That was their job. As an artist, I was not allowed to disrupt the simulation.

So a few years later, I decided to make the film *Transferprotokoll* and offered it to ZDF once more. In this film, I dealt satirically with the very problems that I explore in detail in this book. For four years, I worked nearly every day, 40

⁵² Even before the Berlin RBB scandal, journalism professor Lutz Hachmeister warned in *Media Perspektiven* 3/2020 (“Crisis of public broadcasting”) of “self-referential cheese-bell structures” in which the supervisory board and directorate legitimise each other. The subsequent affair surrounding director Patricia Schlesinger confirmed this: according to the *Tagesschau.de* dossier “Luxusausgaben beim RBB” (15. 08. 2022), hundreds of thousands of euros were spent on prestigious renovations, company cars and bonuses, while the programme and staff were ordered to make savings.

hours a week, on an elaborate cinema production to show poverty differently — and to expose how brutally the state treats those living in it. I did all of this without any funding, surviving only on Hartz IV.

RBB rejected the film outright, without even watching it — simply because it was made by someone poor. Just as ZDF had done years before, they sent me a written response claiming they were already “diverse enough.” Director Demmer sent me a list of productions intended to prove RBB’s diversity and to justify why my film was unnecessary. Among them were examples of typically socially racist programming such as “Job Refuser Meets Worker.”⁵³ or lurid contributions such as “Too Much Social Welfare?”⁵⁴ from Monitor Studio M. I was dismissed as poor because I was not needed to depict their diversity. This revealed the serious misconstruction of public broadcasters. They could easily maintain the lie that they were representing society in their programming, while content and topics were systematically excluded. I wrote to the ZDF Television Council on 28 June 2024:

“Because if ZDF deliberately or structurally censors or discriminates in advance—which has been established here as structural censorship against the independent scene—then you are not fulfilling your duty if you only evaluate the ‘finished programme.’ Because the discriminated projects are, of course, not included in the programme. That goes without saying. You are opening the door to anticipatory, censoring obedience and to structural violence and discrimination. In doing so, you are encouraging the cronyism that is well known among public broadcasters, and in this way concealing the censorship that is actually taking place. You are not only failing in your duty to protect and represent culture, but actively harming it. You are letting artists from the independent scene fall by the wayside, destroying state investments, damaging cultural assets, and preventing civil society forces from making conflicts and grievances visible on ZDF. Using my example, we will show you how this works—step by step. It is crucial to understand that the censorship debate does not take place where you would prefer it to—within the discourse around the programmes you have selected—but rather along the lines of what forms of diversity the public broadcasters are already structurally suppressing in advance. This is far more relevant for democracy. Because it is of course much harder to demonstrate what ZDF is not broadcasting than to analyse what it is. And it is much easier to show where ZDF rejects films and projects outright. Diversity is not reflected where it is presented, but where the ‘other’ has been removed—and these rejections must be made transparent.”

⁵³ Leeroy wants to know: Episode: Work refuser meets worker / The meeting / 23.02.2023 / funk

⁵⁴ Monitor StudioM / Episode: Too much citizen's income? / 21.09.2023 / WDR

Public broadcasting formats are calibrated to neurotypical patterns of meaning and narration: linear dramaturgy, uniform editing rhythms, stimulus-filtered sound design, clearly motivated plot structures. “Deviating perceptual logics” are systematically selected out—not out of malice, but because they are deemed “too unwieldy” or “too confusing” in editorial meetings. For neurodivergent filmmakers like me, this means that projects based on sensory immersion, non-linear associations, or dialogue-free spaces of reflection are rejected at the threshold of formatting.

My aim in raising this issue was to highlight the fact that a film had been rejected that had been created by a Hartz IV recipient over four years of unpaid, full-time work. The official reason was that the film was too long. In reality, it was simply a neurodivergent film. Sitting atop a mountain of taxpayer-funded resources, they didn’t even consider helping someone who had produced a feature film for free with the editing process. Nor did they understand that *Transferprotokoll*, with all its intentional unwieldiness, was not a dramaturgical accident but a deliberate attempt to confront commodified formats with reality. But ZDF wanted to see film as a consumer product—not as a catalyst or testimony of civil society discourse. NDR rejected the film explicitly because it was art, I was told. Even though the country was in dire need of deeper discourse on social injustices, these institutions simply cut off contact after just five minutes with me—because I immediately exposed structural deficits that would have triggered a debate on censorship, something the broadcasting commission of the federal states wanted to avoid at all costs.

As a result, they destroyed four years of work that I had hoped would be my way out of poverty. The film was destroyed because it looked like the work of a poor person—and, as we later learned, it was also the work of an autistic person. I didn’t lose out on opportunities because I lacked commitment, but because my work exposed very real grievances and differences—everywhere: in content, in form, and in how I engaged with authorities and institutions. No matter what I did, I was blocked. People turned away, didn’t want anything to do with me. It wasn’t laziness that caused my poverty—it was the fear of the privileged that my work might expose systemic fraud. Speed’s work threatened the simulation, the world built to be stable and untouchable.

This shows how cultural processes, by nature, are not polished products but ruptures in the name of complexity—complexity that capitalism devalues and suppresses, even though only through it can an ecosystem fully unfold and sustain itself. The demand for more complexity, for a right to crisis, as I formulated in earlier books, is central if we want to work constructively on the real problems of society. I did none of this arbitrarily—it was the result of

decades of research into how systemic change might be possible for the benefit of both people and ecosystems.

Crisis experiments—a term coined by Harold Garfinkel in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967)—are deliberate breaches of everyday norms through which researchers create an “artificial crisis” to make visible the usually invisible structures of social order. Central to this is the violation of an apparently banal interaction rule (e.g., treating one’s mother like a hotel employee, or loudly “reserving” a subway seat), observing the confusion, irritation or outrage of those involved, and reconstructing the tacit rules that govern social life. Garfinkel speaks of “accountability”: only when the order breaks down does it become clear which unspoken expectations had been holding it up. Crisis experiments are therefore neither mere provocations nor classical laboratory tests, but methods of ethnomethodology that reveal the social fabric in action—an approach that German sociologists such as Stefan Hirschauer (2014, *Symbolic Interaction*) and Ulrich Oevermann (1995, *Soziale Welt*) further developed to analytically dismantle notions of normality, power structures, or institutional violence (e.g., in bureaucracies).

2

I had already written the book “Verdammt Sexy – Die Mediengestalter in der Krise” (Damn Sexy – Media Designers in Crisis)

23 years earlier. I was 28 at the time and held a press conference at the Berlin advertising agency Melle.Pufe to mark its publication—only three journalists showed up. One of them was Holm Friebe, who later coined the term “digital bohemian” together with Sascha Lobo.

Back then, like many others, I tried to transfer contingency to the new medium of the Internet. The focus was to return to people themselves. But, as we now know, that vision failed. The Internet was never meant to become a vast platform for humanity and peace.

When I spoke at TYPO 2001—a major advertising congress at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin—arguing that we all needed to become amateurs, that advertising was destroying us, and that the Internet had to liberate us, about 1,000 advertisers stormed out of the hall in protest. That was the end of my media career.

If we truly want to create a different world, what form of work should we embrace? That is the real question. Even as a creative, I failed. It didn’t seem to work with or within the existing jobs.

At that time, I experienced how a milestone in technological development—the Internet—slipped entirely out of our hands because there was no action outside the formatting of employment. You can’t say no one foresaw the

problems with social media. I saw them coming as early as the late 1990s and tried, in vain, to warn technology companies.

Back then, with the invention of the Internet, people like me were trying to develop the Web as a democratic entity, as an infinite library of shared knowledge. I interviewed Neil Postman (*Amusing Ourselves to Death*), the great media and television critic, and tried to convince media agencies in Berlin that, now freed from the limitations of paper, we could publish infinitely long and profound texts—co-creating a new form of communication and relationship.

The failure of these intentions—which might have prevented platforms like Facebook or X—was already preprogrammed, as cyber pioneer Jaron Lanier later explained in his book *Who Owns the Future*:

“Tim Berners-Lee opted for a different approach to the World Wide Web, which enabled a quick start, but for which we have since paid a high price. In the beginning, you simply had to link to online information, and the link was only valid in one direction. This meant that nobody could determine whether data had been copied. Artists didn't get paid. Context was lost. Fraudsters could hide.”

Lanier described how the Net did not, in essence, create community—but rather ultimate access. It enabled an unprecedented form of exploitation. Knowledge was no longer understood relationally, but as atomised links functioning only in one direction. No dialogue. No accountability. The essential rules of civilisation—the autonomy and integrity of individual users—were sacrificed to a radical denial of relationality.

Knowledge was torn from context, flattened and stereotyped until vast filter bubbles grew, and reality was sacrificed to fakery—with AI as the perfected simulation of a sealed, recursive world.

To paraphrase Walter Benjamin:

“Every fascist era is preceded by a failed social revolution.”⁵⁵

The idea of an internet of people, envisioned not only by myself but by many others, ultimately resulted in an unprecedented collapse of interpersonal relationships and cultural exchange in human history. It led to extreme dysfunction and the breakdown of society as a space of solidarity and shared culture.

Witnessing a technology take such a catastrophic wrong turn—and being powerless to prevent it—was a key catalyst for my deep engagement with the question of how to shape the future of society.

The world would look very different today had the tech giants adopted our visions instead of those born in Silicon Valley. Even then, we could have built

⁵⁵ from his essay "On the Concept of History", more precisely from Thesis XIII. This work was published posthumously and can be found in various collections of his writings. One widely used edition is "Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften", edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, which contains these theses (textlog) (Wikipedia - The free encyclopaedia).

a different kind of economy—one based on collaboration rather than on commodification and the abuse of personal data.

It's important to stress that these alternatives were not utopian fantasies; they already existed. But the momentum of capitalism swept them aside. Relevance followed the money: the higher the salary, the more weight your voice carried. Everyone else simply didn't matter. In this way, the system erased dissent, silenced criticism, and blocked any awareness of the dangers ahead.

I see the same dynamics unfolding again today in the field of AI and robotics.

3

On 22 June 2015, the Berlin Public Prosecutor's Office informed me:

"(...) that your renewed submission does not contain any new sufficient factual indications of criminal offences committed by Federal Minister Pair. In particular, the offence of crimes against humanity cited by you is already not relevant. I have therefore refrained from opening an investigation."

It is essential to understand that we can only prevent massive systemic failures if we become aware of the interactions and causalities of our actions. This was the essence of Speed's work. If we take the role of art and science seriously—and act accordingly—we can begin to dismantle the simulation. Jobs, as spaces of action, are evidently entirely unsuitable for this. Without a lawyer, whom I could not afford, it was impossible to pursue Minister Pair through the official route. My interest now shifted more and more to another question: how must people act in order to end capitalism and the violence it perpetuates?

Whether one faces a dictatorship, a democracy, or a simulation, capitalism turns every revolution, every act of resistance into a well-selling "Che Guevara T-shirt". A triumph of the capitalist market the moment revolution is allowed to follow market rules. The only real solution, then, was to provoke states of contingency—maximum intractability—and to maintain them long enough for other life-worlds to emerge within them. There was no functioning postulate, but there were enough opportunities to disrupt the system. What initially appeared as a weakness—namely the blocking of efficiency—could, I reasoned, gradually be understood as a life-affirming and necessary contribution.

From this emerged later theoretical work on a concept of labour beyond functionality—an alternative to the rampant efficiency of AI-driven systems. We could have prevented many of the internet's destructive developments had we not allowed ourselves to be corrupted within jobs, but instead channelled the creativity of that era into a humane revolution. But the

chauvinism of the 1980s and the “end of history” narrative led to depoliticisation, to consumerism, and to a naïve belief in progress that always equated progress with simplification.

I had been warning of this since the late 1990s, and as a result, I was increasingly pushed to the margins. My awareness of how the internet had taken a disastrous turn—culminating in the problems later exposed by Edward Snowden, Jaron Lanier, and Shoshana Zuboff—only deepened my conviction that a different form of work was essential. Jobs were politically dead. And today we increasingly see people wanting to leave them because they no longer see any future in them.

Zuboff wrote:

“We have long agreed on the developmental mechanisms of capitalism—that it seizes what exists outside the market dynamic and transforms it into a market commodity. In his grandiose 1944 treatise ‘The Great Transformation’, historian Karl Polanyi identified the origins of the self-regulating market economy in three equally astonishing and critical inventions, which he called ‘commodity fictions’. The first was that our human lives are subordinated to market dynamics and—reborn as ‘labour’—can be bought and sold. The second was that nature—reborn as ‘land’ or ‘property’—can be brought to the market. The third was that exchange can be reborn as ‘money’. The age of surveillance capitalism has its origins in an even more astonishing and audacious invention: it declares the experiences of private individuals to be free raw material for production and sale.”

Milton Friedman and Friedrich August von Hayek were wrong when they claimed that the free market would regulate everything—because the fact that the free market did regulate everything, but in a capitalist manner as a simulation based on a single isolated relevance, became a nightmare for millions of people.

Zuboff again:

“The deeper truth is that it [surveillance capitalism] will transform 21st century society in a way that is as anti-human as it is anti-democratic—and for the sake of financial gain from surveillance alone. This is how the greatest dangers emerge from the ambitions of surveillance capitalism—including our children, who already wander through this new terrain, so to speak, as its vanguard. While the titanic struggles of the 20th century raged between industrial capital and labour, in the 21st century, surveillance capital confronts the entirety of our society, down to the last individual. The competition for surveillance revenues targets our bodies, our children, our homes, our cities—challenging human autonomy and democratic sovereignty in a massive battle for power and profit. We must not think of surveillance capitalism as something ‘out there

*somewhere, in the factories and offices of a bygone era. Rather, its goals and its effects are here—its goals and its consequences are us.*⁵⁶

The Berlin public prosecutor's office wrote to me:

“Furthermore, I would like to inform you that you will not receive any further notification in the future in the event of further letters with the same content without any substantial new facts.”

So if I repeated that Minister Pair was torturing people, or that the state was making the poor ill in order to serve a brutal market that was destroying everything, this was no longer considered new information and therefore did not need to be taken into account. It functioned similarly to the logic of Facebook, where you no longer receive likes—no real attention—if you post the same problem a second time. The question of injustice followed the logic of data processing, and thus the victim, too, became a product for the public prosecutor's office—a commodity in the trade of justice. In this system, the principle of injustice was the raw material that legitimised their well-paid jobs. But as soon as the actual injustice threatened to become visible, it also threatened the capacities and resources earmarked for those jobs.

Surveillance capitalism was therefore not limited to Amazon, Google or Facebook, but extended also into the structures of the public prosecutor's offices. It was a logical consequence of capitalism and simulation. The principle of artificial scarcity—increasing value by restricting access—had to penetrate all areas of society. Every job thereby became a hollow surface treatment of phenomena, because only this abstraction made it possible to maintain exploitability and to reduce labour to a commodity that could be bought cheaply. The less that remained with the lower classes, the more efficient the system became in economic terms.

If everything is organised solely through jobs, then deeper debates and long-term development processes become unaffordable by design. This, in turn, redirects more and more resources away from the marginalised. The public prosecutor's office thus treated justice as a commodity. They were only prepared to invest a certain amount in it, and the product was the accused. It was therefore economically logical that the poor were considered guilty, because it was cheaper to convict them than to prosecute someone who could afford a high-priced lawyer. That meant more profit per case, per head.

Donna Haraway, in dialogue with the Belgian philosopher Isabelle Stengers, wrote about the exclusion of the marginalised:

⁵⁶ Centre for Civic Education / Article by Shoshana Zuboff / 7.6.2019
<https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/292337/surveillance-capitalism-ueberwachungskapitalismus-essay/>

“In the spirit of feminist, communitarian anarchism and in the language of Whitehead’s philosophy, she (Isabelle Stengers) insists that decisions must in some way be made in the presence of those who will bear their consequences. That is her conception of cosmopolitics.”⁵⁷

ZDF and RBB believed they could replace real inclusion with an artificial form of diversity management—by selecting and curating a form of “colourfulness” deemed acceptable from above. Meanwhile, the truly foreign remained excluded and invisible on television—just like neurodivergent perspectives. The public prosecutors avoided taking legal action against capitalism itself or addressing the injustice of poverty, in part because such action appeared too economically costly. They all wanted to see me as a useless pauper, filtered through the lens of their own racism, and they wanted to keep me in that poverty—so that nothing I said could ever threaten their structural privileges. So, in the spirit of Donna Haraway, I had to stay with the trouble.

The Question of Illness

1

Why not just do your job? I’ll tell you!

“Duty was important to Eichmann – but the world was not.”⁵⁸ Those who refuse to form relationships have no thoughts of relevance, feel no pain, and the prohibition of contextualisation is a form of violence that clearly kills or makes people ill.

At this point, it is important to understand how the Hartz IV system broke people down, persecuted them, dehumanised them, and ultimately made them ill — including myself. Because this was precisely what was tabooed in a way that can only be described as criminal. And in Germany, the courts, public prosecutors, and ministries were and still are actively involved in this, as will be shown in detail in the following chapters. In her book *The Omnivore*, philosopher Nancy Fraser explains how under capitalism, two classes — the dispossessed in the Global South (or racialised groups), who provided or were forced to provide capital with nearly free resources, and the exploited, i.e. the average workers and employees — conditioned each other from the outset. In the factories of Manchester around 1830 and later throughout Europe, this dynamic of mutual concealment emerged: shared suffering masked the shifting of growth costs ever further to

⁵⁷ Donna J. Haraway / Unruhig bleiben / Campus / p 23

⁵⁸ Donna J. Haraway / Unruhig bleiben / Campus / S 55

the periphery, while profits flowed into the Western centres. Fraser identifies the relationship between the dispossessed (Global South/the poor) and the exploited (Western workers) as a psychologically constructed duality. This duality distracts from the privileges of the elite and sets the two subordinate classes against each other. The average worker believes their hard work has earned them reward and thus does not question the supposedly “deserved” wealth of the privileged. They ignore the share of profits based on the expropriation of the Global South or ecological destruction.

In this way, wealth becomes a means of reward — for the so-called chosen ones. Max Weber spoke of the “better people.” Workers grasp only part of the equation and internalise the logic of wages as earned merit. They adopt the narratives of the perpetrators and of the former factory owners — the global players — and thus become complicit in the expropriation of the South, of themselves, and of the poor. This complicity hides violent power relations and the marginalisation of Black people, women, the unemployed, and other minorities through narratives about the alleged primitiveness or laziness of the less successful — who in truth are subjected to structural violence. This complicity has psychological consequences. Workers project the guilt of this distortion onto the victims. Because this is an existential conflict. It’s lie or die. Western workers thus remain unaware that their wages — often subsidised by exploitation elsewhere — are a means of domination. Value is artificially tiered from top to bottom, seemingly legitimised by market competition. The middle classes sit in the comfort zone of this violence and cognitively reframe it in a way that serves them. They form a buffer and protective wall around the privileged.

The segregation of the dispossessed, in Fraser’s sense, serves two functions:

1. Preventing solidarity between the exploited and the disenfranchised, against the privileged.
2. Hiding the pain of the marginalised through stigmatisation and subsequent dehumanisation.

We do unbelievable things to the poor — and this book is about showing why this violence is possible, and what political lies and psychological distortions make it possible.

The same mechanisms that applied under Hartz IV can be found in the way the Global North treats the Global South. They are the same lies.

But why does this terror make people ill? And what does history have to do with it? A seemingly absurd question — but one that should be obvious. For

German authorities, it never was. In ten years, whenever I confronted them with the facts, they covered them up, twisted or ignored them. I can name the individuals responsible for this fraud — and in this book, I will.

(But we must not forget: well over half the German population watched this terror unfold and accepted it as legitimate punishment of the poor — and still do to this day. Many truly believe, in a way that borders on pathological delusion, that the poor have no value in the universe and can be forced into low-wage labour. This radical denial of complexity forces us to draw a harsh conclusion: a large portion of German society behaves in a radically right-wing way towards the poor and minorities — that is, in line with a violent narrative. A form of symbolic violence that denies people the right to exist simply because a capitalist market marginalises them. But this marginalisation is a precondition for profit, which is then distributed top-down through systems of power.

Poverty is thus a condition of wealth — because wealth cannot exist outside the relation between the poor and the privileged. And this relationship is deeply political.)

The pressure to fall ill — then as now — arises from social racism and classism within Hartz IV and Bürgergeld systems, through several mechanisms: On the one hand, this can be explained by Bertrand Russell's *Theory of Types*; on the other, by the *double bind* phenomenon — developed by Gregory Bateson and his team of anthropologists and communication researchers in the 1950s in *Palo Alto*, USA. But there are many other explanatory models that describe similar dynamics as causes of illness — such as the concept of *gratification crisis* or findings from research on *psychological torture*.

Let me say a brief word on the term *social racism*.

Racism and discrimination against the poor are of course not the same thing — but what exactly is racism? It's a term that refers to a "race" that doesn't actually exist. It's a problematic academic term originating from the language of perpetrators — the racists themselves once believed they were the good guys, and they called themselves racists. Racism is not a clean scientific concept but a term of activism. Should it even exist — the term "race"?

I don't think so. But we use it as a fighting term against massive injustice that takes many forms. Racism exists everywhere — in any system of discrimination and violence that uses the same logic we find in racism based on skin colour.

As a white man, I use this term not because it's flawless, but because we don't have time to explain the suffering of the poor in the same pedagogical detail as we still have to explain the suffering of Black people today. It's pragmatic.

Is it academically dubious? Yes. But I want to save lives. And I use what tools I can to do that.

By the way, I didn't invent the term *social racism* — others did, and it appears to be more common in France than in Germany.

As I will explain later, *classism* is not the same as *social racism*. There is also the phenomenon of *eugenic racism* — that is, racism against one's own "race", which I will discuss later. Under the Nazis, there was indeed racism by whites against other whites — those deemed "antisocial" or "unworthy of life" due to disability.

In that sense, racism is far more complex than many people assume.

But now let us return to the question: how does this racism — directed against the "unworthy" — make people ill?

"Type theory, Russell was a mathematician, says that the things we talk about fall into different categories or types. For example, numbers might be in one type, while geometric shapes are in another type. This categorisation into types helps to avoid logical problems that can occur when objects contain or refer to themselves. A well-known example of the application of type theory is "Russell's paradox". Suppose we consider the set of all sets that do not contain themselves. If we ask ourselves whether this set contains itself, a logical problem arises. Russell's type theory provides a way around such paradoxes by stipulating that such "self-referential" sets are of a different type from the sets they are defined over."⁵⁹

Russell identified a common problem of logic—also of communication—that becomes crucial if we want to understand racism.

The motto of Germany's Job Centres was and still is "support and demand." This means that all poor people are initially classified as deficient—otherwise they would not need support. This categorisation fundamentally erases the social and political causes of poverty. Yet this category doesn't apply to everyone affected by poverty; in fact, it obscures the real nature of poverty, which has far more to do with fraud and structural violence than with individual failings.

The result is a systemic misclassification that leads to false assumptions, wrong solutions, and miscommunication. For instance, a poor person who refuses a support offer because they recognise it as degrading and structurally insulting is immediately penalised. This is interpreted as "refusing to work," although in truth it's about rejecting a waste of time: the person simply doesn't need support. They are structurally discriminated against—and that's what impoverishes them.

⁵⁹ Explanation of type theory from ChatGPT

As an autistic person, I don't need support—I need a world that does not discriminate against neurodivergence. We need recognition of injustice, not “support” from those who perpetrate it. So here we already see a confusion of categories.

If this “help”—which many do not need and which they perceive as presumptuous or insulting—is then linked to demands and obligations, any resistance is punished. This creates psychological terror based on a false narrative that cannot be corrected. The punishment is justified by the fact that the offered help was rejected. In the next step, you are blamed for still being poor.

In truth, society systematically avoids taking responsibility for poverty as structural violence. The authorities only aim to legitimise their own dominance, because simplification makes their bureaucratic processes more efficient. They prefer lies, because they “function better” than complex truths. What they want is the narrative of the “unwilling poor”—because that justifies punishment, and punishment confirms their own power. It's a game of good and evil.

Here, layers of contradictions and misunderstandings accumulate into massive double binds.

The authority constantly claims to help, while simultaneously insulting and humiliating people, imposing draconian penalties for nothing—or for trivialities. It essentially says: “We are helping you by punishing you. You must become valuable, but you are fundamentally worthless.”

The real facts of poverty, long established in academic research—namely that it stems predominantly from structural and symbolic violence against minorities—are completely erased. One might say that when it comes to the poor or migrants, the state behaves increasingly irrationally. That's because the poor expose the system's blind spot. Their very existence calls into question the legitimacy of general prosperity. After all, why is one person poor and another rich? The myths we tell ourselves are legion—but they are myths. But how should a person act when completely dependent on an authority that exercises power through coercion? A person who is poor due to exploitation has already been wronged—yet the authority claims that its insulting offer is meant to help, which naturally leads to resistance, depression, or resignation. This is indoctrination. There is no escape. Either you resist—and are punished in a racist and classist fashion—or you don't, and suffer ongoing psychological and structural abuse.

This is what psychology calls a double bind. A method used at the political level as a form of torture against dissidents (e.g. in China) and often mirrored in abusive families. This doesn't only affect the poor—it affects caseworkers

and society as a whole. Double binds serve to cover up existential contradictions and are designed to break people.

The taboo of a system that may not be questioned produces coerced conformity. Hartz IV recipients were cut off from reality, isolated through resource withdrawal, and placed in a new artificial order where they either obey or are destroyed. The same structure persists today under the Bürgergeld system.

The lie that capitalism is based on exploitation and dispossession, and that this is the real root of poverty, was and is simply hidden. Instead, the poor (and the general population along with them) had to be taught that poverty was their own fault. Hence the humiliations and draconian punishments.

The so-called “sanctions paradox”, a direct result of double binds, occurs when a rule is so unrealistic that it forces most people to break it. Like the poor, who cannot escape poverty by mere willpower. There are many such rules in Hartz IV—and Bürgergeld, too, is full of them. For instance: if someone offers you a bowl of soup, you are technically required to report it to the Job Centre, so its value can be deducted from your basic allowance.

At the same time, benefit levels were so low that many were forced to build secret emergency reserves just to survive—so they wouldn't spend months passively trapped in their homes. This constant tension made it almost impossible not to break some rule, thus ensuring a steady stream of sanctions. This, in turn, created more double binds and concealed the real causes of poverty.

There are many reasons people miss appointments—especially neurodivergent people. Yet missing one was uniformly interpreted as guilt—even in the case of mental illness. People had to go to court to justify missing an appointment, while starving for months because sanctions had cut off their food.

The Job Centre's “self-fulfilling prophecies” ensnared people in guilt no matter what they did. The crime was never capitalism's exclusion or the psychological torture inflicted—it was failing to report a birthday gift from grandma. The list of the authorities' idiotic expectations could go on endlessly.

These were and are perversions, co-developed by politicians like Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who later became Federal President. Hartz IV was mainly about two things: forcing people into the low-wage sector, and ritually teaching the population that the poor are criminals—who must be kept on a short leash lest they steal “hard-earned prosperity” from the working population.

Public hatred of the poor and of migrants was strategically bred through this punitive campaign. That is why Steinmeier, architect of Hartz IV,

is not only directly responsible for the rise of racism, but for thousands of illnesses caused by this psychological terror.

Of course, Labour Minister Pair knew the consequences. They all did—and they committed the crime anyway.

2

Of course, Hartz IV or the Citizen's Income system is not a Chinese re-education camp. And yet, as Gulbahar Haitiwaji's memoir *How I Survived a Chinese Camp* shows, there are methods used in those camps that also appear—albeit in more bureaucratically subtle forms—in the German welfare system. In both cases, people are disenfranchised based on contexts over which they have no control or which are tied to aspects of their identity.

It must be understood that the designation of poverty is not just a description of a material condition—it is an insult to a person's dignity. Poverty becomes an externally imposed identity, typically accompanied by false narratives about the person themselves. Every time the state speaks of “people in need of help”, it not only reinforces these narratives, it re-inscribes them.

In the Job Centres, work is essentially treated as a form of punishment—just as in the Chinese labour camps. This is one reason why poor people are often not allowed to choose their own form of work. The result is a predictable cycle of failure and re-traumatisation.

What is negotiated in German Job Centres is therefore not merely the next job placement, but quite centrally the willingness to degrade oneself. This political will—the enforcement of symbolic and material humiliation—has been publicly advocated by SPD, CDU, CSU, and FDP over the past two decades. As described above, this produces two key effects: Work becomes a punishment, and poverty becomes a form of guilt. Both are socially corrosive. They destroy people—and with them, civil society. No one dares to experiment anymore. No one tries new things. Because failure might mean being thrown into the machinery of Hartz IV.

This is one of the main reasons Germany today is incapable of fostering a diverse, risk-tolerant culture of innovation. Hartz IV not only shaped the lives of the unemployed; it also shaped the reality of the employed. Working conditions grew harsher across the board, because Hartz IV served as a threat scenario. It restricted employees' freedom of choice, increased simulation and performativity, and thus shortened the real development time for meaningful work.

You can have excellent universities in a country. But if the social system is broken, intelligence on the labour market is automatically suppressed—

because no one dares to think beyond the narrow path. Fear suppresses intelligence. And this is not only true at the individual level—it applies to society as a whole.

*“The laogai, literally ‘reform through labour’, introduced by Mao Zedong in 1957, were in China what the gulag was in the USSR: a huge archipelago spread across the entire country, where prisoners had to atone for their ‘crimes’ with the strength of their arms.”*⁶⁰

I am aware that some may view this as an exaggeration—as if I were comparing Hartz IV to a gulag. That is not what I am doing. The point here is to understand the *similarity of methods*. Without this, it becomes impossible to grasp how Hartz IV made people ill. Just as many ordinary Chinese or Russians—except for a few—do not recognise the gulags or penal camps for what they were, and often trivialise or legitimise them through propaganda, we also see the trivialisation of state violence in Germany. Especially toward migrants and the poor. This is a classic indicator of right-wing radicalism.

To assume that the ideology of stigmatisation and *othering*—which permeates Hartz IV and the Citizen’s Income system—has no anti-democratic or violent consequences is a dangerous form of self-deception. Hartz IV was not a gulag. But one could argue that German Job Centres are the *Western democratic variant* of the same contempt for human dignity—a contempt that has always sought to “re-educate” those deemed inferior by forcing them into submission through labour. Whether in the East or West, the mechanism is similar: isolate and break those who do not conform. By the end of this book, you may no longer find the comparison inappropriate.

The message of Hartz IV, as previously described, was and remains this: to frame the idea that the poor are inherently guilty and worthless as a form of *help*—as if such humiliation were ultimately in their best interest and thus in the interest of society. This rhetoric is well documented in numerous statements by politicians and in official documents. And if such ideology was systematically covered up by courts and prosecutors, then we must name it for what it is: a socially racist practice carried out by German authorities and the German state—on a scale that constitutes a scandal. A practice that discriminated against millions and caused widespread illness. A practice of *psychological terror* that has been consistently denied in Germany for decades—and continues to be denied today.

One of the most perfidious instruments of this deception was the so-called “Integration Agreement” (Eingliederungsvereinbarung), which effectively

⁶⁰ Gulbahar Haitiwaji / Wie ich das chinesische Lager überlebt habe: Der erste Bericht einer Uigurin / Aufbau Verlag / p 131

coerced individuals into endorsing the state's narrative of mistreatment, dispossession, and disenfranchisement. Under threat of sanctions, they were forced to sign their complicity—accepting the very violence against them as legitimate and just. In doing so, the poor ceased to be victims of capitalism; they were turned into defendants obligated to comply. This is indoctrination in its purest form.

Because almost nothing in the German social system is named for what it actually is, an implicit *ban on explanation* prevails. Your own account of your context simply does not count. You are stripped of epistemic authority. Your subsistence can be revoked at any time. You can vanish into the anonymity of the street. The result is fear, alienation, and social stigma. What the government celebrated as "creating incentives" was in truth *institutionalised violence based on deceit*.

The state's intention to stigmatise the poor mirrors, in some respects, the logic of the former East German Stasi, which systematically persecuted individuals through measures of subversion. Similar tactics are evident here:

*"The application of subversion measures is based on existing contradictions and differences within hostile-negative groups or individuals—or on those artificially created through political-operational means. Its goal is to occupy them with themselves, to distract and unsettle them from realising hostile-negative intentions."*⁶¹

You can easily replace the phrase "hostile-negative groups" with "poor people" here and arrive at an accurate description—not only of the speech acts and double binds that permeate the Job Centres, but also of the strategy of a terror state that aims to prevent citizens from developing freely. The poor are systematically alienated from their autonomy by assigning them guilt. The Stasi, too, employed double binds and social isolation.

The stigmatisation of the poor induced a constant internal preoccupation with shame. This broke their resistance. At the same time, it triggered rage—because they had done nothing wrong. Shame and rage became pathogenic forces within, often destroying those affected by Hartz IV from the inside out. This was no different from the Stasi's methods of psychological decomposition. The intention and the method were the same: the poor were not to develop freely. Their *Berlin Wall* was the SGB II legislation.

Through its subversion techniques, the Stasi orchestrated and sowed doubt, social conflict, and—as already discussed—social isolation, repeated experiences of failure, disappointment, fear, and mutual distrust. The aim was

⁶¹ Klaus Behnke, Jürgen Fuchs / Zersetzung der Seele: Psychologie und Psychiatrie im Dienste der Stasi / CEP Europäische Verlagsanstalt / p 22

to undermine convictions of justice, coherence, and security. Individuals were deliberately stigmatised or exposed to prejudice. All of this was also practised under Hartz IV, as if it had no consequences for the mental and physical health of those affected.

Not for everyone, of course. Just as the GDR was not a dictatorship for everyone—at least not in terms of subjective experience—Hartz IV was particularly traumatic for those unable to cope with the inner contradiction, the stigmatisation, and the artificially imposed shame. Of course, there were people who managed to repress it, split it off, or forget it. Others, like myself, developed post-traumatic stress disorder. The state made me ill.

For autistic people, such double bind strategies—simultaneously demanding “cooperate!” while turning any cooperation into humiliation—are particularly destructive. Our perception requires coherence. We process stimuli in fine-grained detail and seek out stable patterns to avoid sensory and social overload. If—like in the Hartz IV process—assistance is first promised and then revoked through sanctions, two incompatible behavioural frameworks collide. In Bateson’s classic sense, a *double bind* emerges: Any response is wrong, but non-response is punished all the same.⁶² Studies show that autistic people are physiologically more stressed by such paradoxical signals due to a higher Intolerance of Uncertainty (IU) and that they are more likely to experience anxiety and PTSD symptoms than neurotypical people.⁶³ Combined with the stigmatisation embedded in Hartz IV—“It’s your own fault because you function differently”—this stress mutates into a state of permanent hypervigilance: every official letter, every appointment becomes a potential existential threat. In this way, the state, which ought to act as a guarantor of protection, instead produces the very traumatisation in neurodivergent people that it then uses against them—reframing it as a “lack of labour market proximity.”

3

Everything the poor attempted against this backdrop was consequently judged on the basis of false premises and flawed assumptions, leading either to irrationally arbitrary punishments or to self-referential offers of “assistance” by the authorities—which, in most cases, were not genuine support.

⁶² Gregory Bateson: *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), chapter “Double Bind”.

⁶³ Connor Kinnaird et al: “Intolerance of Uncertainty in Autism Spectrum Disorder” (*Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 2019); Kate South & Jackie Rodgers: “Sensory Overload and IU in ASD” (*Autism Research*, 2017).

According to the scientific foundations of double bind theory, which serves here as a key explanatory framework for understanding illness as a consequence of classism under Hartz IV, the following conditions must be met: Two or more individuals are engaged in communication. A primary injunction is issued—typically negative or threatening. This is accompanied by contradictory or paradoxical messages. Crucially, there is a prohibition on resolving or even discussing the paradox, and this prohibition is enforced through existential threats.

Gregory Bateson described this collapse of categories and orders of meaning as a form of violence—one that arises over time through deliberate paradoxes, lies, and distortions imposed on an individual subjected to such indoctrination. He writes:

“If an individual does not know the nature of a communication, he or she may protect himself or herself with behaviours described as paranoid, hebephrenic or catatonic. These three alternatives are not the only ones. Crucially, it cannot choose the one alternative that would help it to work out what people mean; it cannot discuss the communication of others without considerable help. Without this ability, the human being behaves like any self-regulating system that has lost its regulators; it circles in endless but always systematic distortions.”⁶⁴

Because the Hartz IV system prohibited any discourse about what was actually happening—under threat of punishment—there was no way out unless you escaped poverty by finding work. This is precisely what politicians intended and still intend: to exert pressure through existential fear. But for all those who can't escape, the price is a life under psychological terror—deemed socially acceptable. A paradox that becomes unbearable for those affected. You lose faith in the world. Everything collapses when the state targets you—and no one stands with you.

For over ten years, every single morning, I woke up as an autistic person and artist with the insane awareness that the state wanted to destroy me—because I insisted on complexity, on what I called *real value*. This issue consumed my entire existence. The complete social devaluation placed me in a permanent cycle of self-justification. My autism only intensified the effect. In those ten years, the state did not grant me even 1% of value. I was completely negated. Because even a symbolic fraction of recognition would have given me a position to negotiate from—a right to exist.

⁶⁴ Gregory Bateson / Geist und Natur: Eine notwendige Einheit / suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft / p 282

Many politicians at the time said on national television that there would be “no unconditional aid” for the poor. But what they were really saying was: *we do not recognise these people’s right to exist*. That is the core of the violence. In 2024, the federal government proposed rewarding the long-term unemployed with a €1,000 bonus if they remained in a job for one year. The public reaction was outrage. This is revealing—it shows the full perversity of social racism: First, the poor were infantilised by being offered “incentives,” which was itself a massive insult. Then, a racist debate was triggered, asserting that the poor “don’t deserve it.” Finally, Chancellor Scholz concluded the performance by announcing that *no one refusing to work would be rewarded*.

The full circle of institutionalised contempt was thus completed in a pseudo-debate that had little to do with actual conditions. The discourse was based on stereotypes. And those stereotypes were the dominant narrative about poverty—because there were almost no others in the public sphere.

4

Many poor people have tried—and continue to try—to free themselves from poverty. The natural reflex in doing so is to assert their own value, to reclaim context. Because no one can live long in the madness of dehumanisation without trying to explain themselves. People tried to correct the misunderstanding: that poverty was not their fault, and therefore not a justification for devaluation. In doing so, the poor stepped into an adult position—while the state descended into schizophrenia, as I will show in later chapters. Because the state did not want to hear this truth: it threatened the entire construct of poverty and unjust distribution. If the poor were not guilty, then the injustice would become visible and undeniable.

This attempt at adult communication was subliminally—or directly—punished by Job Centres. The complexity introduced by the poor undermined the authority’s demand for obedience and speedy case processing. People were expected to go along with the lie and function accordingly. If they didn’t, they were threatened with sanctions—sanctions that, in many cases, amounted to a death sentence. Those thrown out into the streets in winter at -10 °C—children, the elderly, the chronically ill—were threatened with death or insanity. And this is exactly what happened under Minister Pair, under Labour Minister Ursula von der Leyen, and even under Olaf Scholz when he served as Labour Minister—during a decade of 100% sanctions under Hartz IV. And today, the CDU wants to return to that regime, while Pair and the

former Chancellor continue to defend these crimes as political policy. What they did and continue to do can only be described as inhumane.

The schizophrenia of the double bind also infected the Federal Ministry of Labour. It caused massive internal contradictions—plainly visible during several press conferences—where ministry spokespeople were forced to present state violence as “support” in the face of public criticism. To this day, the BMAS behaves like a sick sect. Certain things were—and still are—not allowed to be discussed. The violence had no visible weapons. That is precisely what allowed Ministers Pair and Kiwi to cover up the health consequences for years.

Another central cause of the illnesses caused by Hartz IV is what German psychiatrist Argeo Bämayer called “inappropriate heteronomy.” Bämayer, author of the book *Das Mobbing-Syndrom (The Bullying Syndrome)*, is considered one of Germany’s leading experts on workplace violence. He even coined the term “Hartz Syndrome.”

*“The most important factor in the development of violence is the infliction of psychological and/or physical pain and the threat—or actual experience—of social disintegration, which is perceived as pain from a physiological and neurobiological perspective. In addition to social exclusion, humiliation, contempt, and rejection are also experienced as pain in terms of brain biology. This non-physical violence activates the neurobiological aggression system and thus builds up a potential for violence.”*⁶⁵ Bämayer referred here to the work of brain researcher Joachim Bauer⁶⁶. Psychological terror activates the same or similar mechanisms in the brain as physical pain.

In addition to the work of Argeo Bämayer and Joachim Bauer, there are numerous studies that examine the health consequences of social exclusion and psychological violence. This research consistently shows that chronic social stress—such as bullying, class-based discrimination, or bureaucratic harassment—can trigger a range of mental and physical illnesses, including depression, anxiety disorders, and psychosomatic conditions. These scientific findings underline the urgent need to recognise psychological violence and social marginalisation as serious public health risks—and to respond with prevention, legal recognition, and therapeutic intervention.

⁶⁵ Argeo Bämayer / *Das Mobbing-Syndrom: Diagnostik, Therapie und Begutachtung im Kontext zur in Deutschland ubiquitär praktizierten psychischen Gewalt* (Munich University Press) / p 34

⁶⁶ Professor Dr Joachim Bauer, renowned brain researcher and bestselling author, deals with a wide range of topics from the neurosciences, psychosomatics and psychiatry in his works. In his book *Pain Threshold*, neuroscientist Joachim Bauer shows that social exclusion and humiliation trigger similar pain reactions in the brain as physical injuries. He explains that such social pain activates the same neuronal network as physical pain, particularly in the anterior cingulate cortex. This finding emphasises that psychological violence has not only emotional but also physiological effects and can therefore have serious health consequences.

In the context of Hartz IV, several of the systemic conditions imposed on those affected amounted to forms of *torture*, at least in terms of their long-term effects on the body. It is entirely appropriate to speak here of bodily harm.

I will now demonstrate that ministers such as Pair, Kiwi, and many others were fully informed about these correlations—and yet chose not to act in the public interest. I will also explain how other actors—ministers, civil servants, judges, prosecutors—actively suppressed this knowledge and tried to silence me through threats, defamation, and eventually a SLAPP lawsuit.

This raises a fundamental question: whose labour has proven more relevant, more humane, and more urgently needed for society—mine or theirs? Why were they paid and I was not? Where, if not here, should the question of *value* in labour be answered—where the criterion of relevance must clearly outweigh the logic of monetary profit?

Before anything else, relevance must be determined realistically and objectively—and here, the imbalance is blatant. Punishing impoverished artists and activists with psychological violence *because* their work did not yield financial profit—as if money were the measure of truth and social value—is a systemic error. An error that reveals the ideological and ethical collapse at the heart of capitalism.

We all know how unjust our economic system is. So why don't we change the rules? If something is built on lies, on structural fraud, then it cannot be acceptable in a democratic state governed by the rule of law. Or am I misunderstanding democracy?

Yes, I am autistic. I can't relativise injustice.

And that's precisely the problem. Who is meant to solve society's biggest problems? Ah yes—those with jobs. Then we're lost. Because neurotypical people with jobs cannot do this work. They will not save society or the planet, because they only do what they are paid for—and the market has no interest in valuing everything that matters.

Take-away box — Chapter “The question of the disease”

Pathologised deviation or sick environment?

Speed reverses the usual narrative: it is not autism that makes people ill — what makes people ill is a work and social system that treats neurodivergent perception as a defect and enforces permanent adjustment stress.

Psychological damage due to official logic

Threats of sanctions, labyrinths of forms and classism create persistent fight-or-flight situations. Studies on “Hartz syndrome”, bullying and social racism prove this: Bureaucratic violence leads to PTSD-like symptoms and physical sequelae.

Diagnostic tool as a means of power

Official psychological reports are used to reinterpret resistance as a “loss of reality” — a medical reframing that devalues structural criticism and legitimises sanctions.

Embodied stress economy

Autistic weak priors + sensory overload ↔ Job Centre trigger = biologically measurable permanent cortisol level. Illness is not a metaphor here, but a somatic consequence of political practice.

Right to therapy vs. cost avoidance

The attempt to pass on treatment costs (MEB form, “special needs”) shows how care is being channelled into a bureaucratic dead end. Healing collides with the system's pressure to economise.

Core Thesis

“When the environment is toxic, health becomes an act of resistance.” — Illness functions not only as personal suffering, but also as scientific proof of the harmfulness of existing work and social structures.

The Documentation of State Violence in Germany as a Starting Point for Rethinking the Concept of Labour

Act of Violence I: The Encounter with Mr G. – The Refusal of Integration

1

An essential instrument for distorting the causalities and systemic relationships underlying poverty was, as previously mentioned, the so-called “integration agreement” — a coerced contract between the poor and the state. It served as a central pillar in the redefinition of poverty as a relation of duty and guilt, shifting the burden away from the state. This reformatting aimed to sever the link between structural conditions and individual impoverishment, thereby allowing poverty to be administered according to abstract rules applied with arbitrary and reductive logic. The goal was to criminalise the poor within a broader process of de-solidarisation by erasing the social roots of poverty — a process that the sociologist and classism researcher Andreas Kemper⁶⁷ has analysed in depth. The poor were reduced to a mere function of the welfare apparatus itself, allowing the authorities to legitimise their brutal actions against them. This marks the beginning of the modern fabrication of the “lazy, resistant poor” — an invention maintained through deception to justify disciplinary measures. If the poor did not comply with the new social contract — embodied in the so-called “integration agreement” — or deviated from the prescribed narrative of individual guilt for their poverty, from which their 'duty' to society was supposedly derived, they faced contractual penalties. These penalties could amount to 100%, meaning a complete withdrawal of any support — even if this led directly or indirectly to death. The structural injustices underlying poverty were ignored. Instead, poverty was reframed as a debt to society, a move that can only be described as

⁶⁷ Andreas Kemper / Klassismus. Eine Einführung / Unrast Verlag / 2009 /

criminal. Poverty, after all, is a function of capitalism, not the result of individual misconduct. The system ignored the limited affordances — the structural constraints under which the poor became resource-deprived.

The violence under Hartz IV was enacted through deprivation. The state withdrew, stripping the poor of the means to live. The integration agreement provided the legal mechanism to legitimise this withdrawal. In many ways, deprivation constitutes a form of violence with multidimensional consequences — not least because it denies people the capacity to resist.

Those who are deprived experience profound helplessness and humiliation. They are treated as so inferior that even basic relational gestures — like eye contact — are avoided. Conflict would at least imply recognition. Withdrawal, by contrast, is the refusal of any relationship. Unlike the concept of the Panopticon⁶⁸, which disciplines through surveillance, this is violence through erasure, in which the prison inmate had to reckon with permanent observation, in which the aim was to punish the inmates through discipline, the lever in withdrawal consisted mainly of isolation. In the new era, you could no longer hunt a deer in the forest if you were hungry. There was no longer any escape from the world itself. Death came instead through disconnection — through being “offline”. You didn’t need to be exiled anymore; exclusion simply meant no longer being integrated. Your electricity was cut off. The world had become so regulated that you could no longer find a patch of land where survival was possible.

In the modern simulation, the only chance of survival is participation in that very simulation — in the madness and stupidity of the modern working world. The other reality, the alternative, doesn't exist. There is no other planet, not even wild camping is allowed. The alternative would have to be built from scratch — but how, if solidarity is missing, if no one listens to you once your social status is revoked, when you become a non-existence?

Solidarity requires the recognition of interconnectedness, of contextual responsibility. The state violently rejected both.

It is hard to comprehend how a democratic constitutional state like Germany could maintain this violence for years. The answer lies in the simulation itself:

⁶⁸ Wikipedia: The panopticon (from Greek παν pān, 'all', and οπτικό optikó, 'belonging to sight'), also Latinised panopticon, is a concept originating from the British philosopher and founder of classical utilitarianism Jeremy Bentham for the construction of prisons and similar institutions, but also of factories, which enables the simultaneous surveillance of many people by a single supervisor. The late 20th century French philosopher Michel Foucault described this principle of order as a model for modern surveillance societies and as essential for Western liberal societies, which he also called disciplinary societies. Based on this, he developed his concept of panoptism.

a systematic reduction of complexity that made injustice disappear. In this abstraction, poverty became invisible — unrepresentable.

The simulation produced exclusion without recognising the excluded as missing. Once complexity and relationship are erased, even the traces of what has vanished disappear. In this way, simulation becomes the perfect crime. It removes the Other without perceiving their absence as a loss. This is why globalisation and surveillance became a universal problem: they enforce simulations — simplifications — that deny the Other their right to exist. Any deviation from the norm is sanctioned.

The 100% sanction in Hartz IV — the denial of all aid — was a form of capital punishment without a corpse. There was no relation between the alleged “offence” and the severity of the punishment. The origins of poverty were never addressed in any real or logical way. People lost their jobs, went to the Job Centre, didn’t receive help, fought to preserve their dignity, were punished, and ended up on the street. They lost the right to continue existing.

That neither the state nor society has been able to recognise — even now — that such a 100% sanction was and is effectively an attempted murder, shows the extent of the dehumanisation and objectification of the poor. What was at stake was not education or reform, but elimination. The person who receives a 100% sanction becomes incapable of acting — cannot become “better”. All options are removed.

The right-wing architects of Hartz IV — and those who still defend it — intended to kill the poor but lacked the courage to say so. So they used deprivation — an indirect form of violence. They kept their hands clean while moralising themselves as just enforcers. The poor weren’t shot — they were denied help, denied the right to not starve.

The basic injustice of poverty was rarely understood in a way that could spark coordinated resistance. One reason was the system of double binds, the separation between the dispossessed and the merely exploited. Many internalised the belief that they deserved this treatment.

Those who remained part of the system were fed the myth of a free society in which anyone who worked could succeed. Humanity and solidarity were replaced by a rigid concept of “labour” — an empty shell masquerading as community, behind which privilege continued to decide who lived well and who suffered. Employment was presented as simple, automatic — as natural as breathing. Structures of marginalisation were ignored or declared “normal”. The logic was predetermined: work hard and you will succeed. Always. The simulation not only erased its victims but erased the context that made them recognisable as victims. Work became a sorting machine — between the worthy and the worthless. Performance masked the fact that work, if not self-

determined, always meant the stepwise degradation of human beings. The actual content of the labour — what it changed in the world — was always secondary.

Even sick and disabled people in Hartz IV were subjected to the same punitive logic, even if they were clearly unable to work. Their benefits were cut in the same way as those who supposedly refused to contribute. Though not always sanctioned, the mere low level of their benefits was itself a punishment — a mark of worthlessness.

That neither Hartz IV nor Bürgergeld ever acknowledged that many lived their entire lives in the system without fault — and under constant psychological terror — shows how German society created a caste of the worthless. This caste included people with disabilities. It was not about individual guilt, but about maintaining collective denial and projecting blame onto the Other — to secure one's own position in the violent logic of capitalism.

2

The *integration agreement* (Eingliederungsvereinbarung) is the contract we are all expected to sign in this society. It signifies a neurotic entanglement with the collective lie of a just society — one in which everyone is required to function, because allegedly there is no legitimate reason not to. Disruption or resistance is not permitted; nothing legitimises friction. Anyone who refuses to sign up is portrayed as a burden on everyone else. That is the dominant narrative.

This contract automatically degrades all who reject it — regardless of their motives, their labour, or their life circumstances — into *antisocials* to be punished. Germans cherish permanent employment and demonise everything outside of it. Only permanent employment, they believe, binds society together in its very absence of authentic relationships. It provides structure, order, security, and a sense of place — the holy trinity for neurotypical existence. For that, they are willing to sacrifice everything and accept every conceivable lie.

The *integration agreement* defines who we are and who we are allowed to become — from school to the grave. It doesn't just appear at the Job Centre; it reappears, in altered form, at school, at university, at work. What we are witnessing is the systematic replacement of organic human relationships by abstract, impersonal law — a shift that dries up natural ethical intuition. Because as long as you follow the rules, everything is supposedly fine. That's the only thing you're meant to understand.

The empathy-altruism hypothesis⁶⁹ states that people only act altruistically if they have experienced empathy themselves. This illustrates how essential it is to cultivate closeness, interconnectedness, and a sense of universal kinship. Subjective understanding is indispensable for building a truly social community. The theory of social interdependence shows that people tend to help others or stand up for them if they themselves have previously received recognition or care — if they have been *seen* in their suffering. Reciprocity is key. Social behaviour can only be authentic when a minimum of equality and co-determination is guaranteed.

The simulation fails at this task by promoting a concept of “justice” without empathy. The intuitive sense that something is wrong with this justice is systematically suppressed.

From the beginning, I rejected the *integration agreement*, because it was designed to erase exactly those foundational elements: equality, co-determination, and the duty of *real* solidarity — solidarity based on actual relationships. What was branded as “inclusion” was in truth the violent destruction of social responsibility. It enforced obedience while perversely presenting this coercion as responsibility *towards society*.

Empathy — both towards others and oneself — was meant to be replaced by submission and surveillance.

The integration agreement with the Job Centre was a one-sided coercive instrument, disguised as a socially appropriate ritual. A contradiction in terms. I insisted on naming the real relationship between the poor and the state and refused to participate in the state's lie.

I asserted that the causes of poverty lay in the systemic logic of capitalism itself — and that poverty, therefore, did *not* impose a duty on the poor toward society, but rather placed an obligation on the state to recognise the actual structural conditions. Instead, the state attempted to cover up these conditions with the integration agreement, enforced under threat of violence. And so, on 28 July 2015, the agreement was imposed on me *by administrative order*. The authority wrote with cynical politeness:

*“I look forward to adjusting the integration agreement with you at your next appointment.”*⁷⁰

This pretence of democratic co-determination, in which a kind of voluntariness was feigned, showed how perfidious the effects of the formatting of the conflicts were. They did everything to you and always smiled

⁶⁹ Hypothesis put forward by Daniel Batson et al. (1991), which states that people only act altruistically if they feel empathy in a certain situation. If helping behaviour takes place without empathy, this is due to other factors, such as avoiding negative consequences by not helping.

⁷⁰ Letter from the job centre dated 28.7.2015 Friedrichshain Kreuzberg

like a stupid Barbie. There was a method to this stultification in the Job Centres, because it made anti-intellectualism omnipresent. Rational arguments had no effect, let alone consequence. The other person was generally not open to them, too stupid, too ignorant, too uneducated, too frightened.

3

On 12 August 2015, I lodged an official objection to the forced integration agreement — an objection that led to some very telling consequences. My reasoning was essentially the following:

“The Job Centre has no right to interfere in my work as an artist, which excludes any ‘alleged’ counselling activity, nor can the Job Centre terminate this activity (...) I thus represent and defend one of the main pillars of democracy and freedom of expression. Anti-social behaviour can never be inferred from what I do as an artist. I have the right to disagree with you in everything and at all times.”⁷¹

My frontal attack was aimed at applying artistic freedom to its true purpose: to restore an open relationship — a living culture — between people and society, while that was still possible.

“In the name of artistic freedom, I hereby revoke this administrative act.”

This was an act of self-empowerment, forcing the authorities into a framework in which, sooner or later, they would have to justify their lies — and that’s when I’d have them on a platter. We had now entered a negotiation about the value of human contribution.

4

The German Institute for Human Rights, an “independent” state organisation, replied to me in view of what had happened:

“We will take your description of the problem into account in our work to implement social human rights in Germany. However, as the German Institute for Human Rights does not have the authority to take action in individual cases, I am unfortunately unable to fulfil your request for an official statement. I ask for your understanding.”⁷²

Of course, I have no sympathy for this, because human rights work that ignores the individual cannot be serious human rights work. With this stance,

⁷¹ Letter from me to the Berlin Kreuzberg job centre dated 12.8.2015

⁷² Letter from the German Institute for Human Rights dated 14 August 2015

the German Institute for Human Rights alienated activists across the country and revealed how misunderstood science is misused to blunt the edge of the discourse by systematically excluding those affected from it. Suffering appears far more harmless in objectified studies than when heard directly from the mouths of those affected. Institutions like the German Institute for Human Rights thus became a protective wall shielding the state.

I mention this to illustrate a fundamental problem: in many industrialised countries like Germany, activists and artists had no direct access to a dialogue with the state. The state only engaged with associations, not with individuals. This buffer protected the conservative establishment and caused a significant loss of democratic substance.

Once again, it was only those with secure jobs, degrees from the “right” universities, and a history of adaptation — and thus no real understanding of life on the other side of the wall — who were allowed to sit in those associations.

5

On 7 September 2015, the well-known Hartz IV critic Inge Hannemann, Berlin-based activist Christel T., and I wrote an open letter to Angela Merkel. The subject was the “Ralph Boes case”. Ralph was one of—if not *the*—most prominent Hartz IV activists in the country. For many years, he campaigned against the sanction regime imposed under Hartz IV.

After receiving five consecutive 100% sanctions, he decided to publicly eat the food vouchers he had been begrudgingly offered. He set up a chair and table at the Brandenburg Gate and sat there every day, occasionally consuming food vouchers as an act of protest.

Former presidential candidate Gesine Schwan visited him to express her solidarity, as did Katja Kipping, then chairwoman of the Left Party. Both tried to persuade Boes to end his “strike”—although it wasn’t a strike in the conventional sense. Whether or not he redeemed the few food vouchers, his basic rights continued to be denied. The vouchers only covered food, nothing else—not even a bar of soap.

Boes came close to death during those days. I was there. His life hung by a thread. I spoke with a doctor and saw his body wasting away.

Minister Pair, who was willing to let him die, and Horst Seehofer (CSU), who reportedly stated that he would not be “blackmailed by the poor,” both refused to lift the sanctions. These sanctions were ultimately declared largely

unconstitutional by the Federal Constitutional Court in 2019—thanks in part to a legal initiative led by Boes himself.

Minister Pair thus spent years defending a practice that we had already identified as inhumane and unconstitutional—while thousands of people were subjected to unimaginable suffering, their fates still largely unacknowledged and unexplored.

Even after the Constitutional Court’s ruling, there was no apology from the federal government—and certainly no compensation for those affected. Despite her violation of the Basic Law, which cost human lives, Minister Pair remains a public servant, still a member of the SPD, and currently head of the Federal Employment Agency. In this country, constitutional fraud was rewarded.

Angela Merkel never responded to our letter.

The Berlin public prosecutor’s office, however, replied in a letter dated 9 November 2015:

“As regards the case of Ralph Boes, it is noted that he is intentionally and deliberately on a hunger strike in protest against the current ALG II legislation and sanctions practice. In this respect, Mr Boes is endangering himself on his own responsibility, which cannot be attributed to any third party under criminal law.”⁷³

So if a person resisted this mistreatment and attempted to preserve their self-determination through a hunger strike—refusing to submit to the humiliation that was breaking them down, reducing them to a state of vegetative existence—then, in the eyes of the state, this was considered a voluntary act for which the individual bore full responsibility. Meanwhile, those who used bureaucratic violence to deny this person basic rights—who in effect sought to destroy them through indirect means, provoking precisely this resistance—remained exempt from any legal consequences.

It is emblematic of the entire Hartz IV system that it systematically provoked resistance, because long-term survival under such conditions of dehumanisation was psychologically unbearable. This resistance, in turn, was then used as justification for punishment up to the point of death.

Let us not forget: Ralph Boes was protesting against conditions that demonstrably made people ill. His protest was a necessary act of survival. He would, in any case, have become seriously ill from the food vouchers alone, which were nutritionally inadequate and did not allow for even basic health care. Against this backdrop, his protest cannot be characterised as voluntary self-endangerment. Ralph Boes was attempting to preserve his own health

⁷³ Letter from the Berlin public prosecutor's office dated 9 September 2015 / 276 U Js 1966/15

and protect the lives of others. It was *Minister Pair* who should have been arrested.

As I have said before, the entire system functioned through *provoked rule-breaking*. By continuously tightening the existential noose around recipients, it engineered violations of the rules—because these were *needed* to justify the continued use of sanctions. This observation alone suggests that a large proportion of the sanctions were criminal in nature. Psychological terror was systematically used to push people either into breaking the rules or into impossible situations, like secretly hoarding money just to survive.

From this perspective, a public prosecutor could not only *legitimise* a state-induced death—but effectively *execute* it. All that was required was the formal establishment, which was inevitable under long-term poverty, that the person had brought about their own decline—by being poor, by being “non-compliant”, and thus by supposedly *deserving* their fate. The leap from deserving poverty to deserving death becomes terrifyingly small.

In another legal exchange regarding *obstruction of justice*—which I had documented—a public prosecutor wrote the following:

“Only a breach of the law that constitutes a fundamental attack on the administration of justice should be punishable. Therefore, only a public official who knowingly and seriously deviates from legal standards, and whose actions as an organ of the state are no longer grounded in law and order but instead follow their own norms, can be found guilty of obstructing justice.”⁷⁴

The problem here is not that a “free individual” is arbitrarily overriding the law, but that the law itself has been—and continues to be—*institutionally distorted* to the point that it no longer investigates or reflects reality, but replaces it with stereotypes. This marked the beginning of politically motivated violence and the political persecution of the poor.

Legal rules were increasingly applied in a reductive and simplistic manner, resulting in massive violence and injustice—while still appearing outwardly as *law and order*. The real threat, therefore, was not the rogue public servant bending the rules subjectively, but rather the official who applied the law in a way that systematically excluded complexity. This created structural injustice for all those whose lives were shaped by complex and difficult circumstances.

⁷⁴ Letter from the Potsdam public prosecutor's office dated 7 September 2015 / 456 Js 33404/15

On 27 October 2015, a decisive turning point occurred in my dispute with the state. The Berlin-Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Job Centre unexpectedly and abruptly withdrew the “integration agreement.”

Official notice:

“The integration agreement issued by administrative act pursuant to (...) dated 28 July 2015 is hereby revoked in accordance with § 44 (1) sentence 1 SGB X with effect from 28 July 2015, as the administrative act was based on facts which, at the time of issuance, turned out to be incorrect. Your objection has therefore been fully upheld.”⁷⁵

My attempt to override the system by invoking artistic freedom had evidently succeeded. The Berlin public prosecutor’s office had apparently made it clear to the Job Centre that they had no legal basis to interfere with my work as an artist. I cannot say exactly how this happened, but from conversations with caseworkers it became evident that I had found what they referred to as a “weak spot” in the system.

As a result, starting 28 July 2015, I effectively received an unconditional basic income from the state for nearly ten years – with only a brief interruption, which I will address shortly. Because from that point on, the authorities were no longer allowed to issue me directives. All they could do was invite me to meetings, treat me with varying degrees of friendliness, and listen as I openly criticised the Hartz IV system – while almost every other poor person in the country was still being met with threats and sanctions for non-compliance.

It was only a matter of time before this would lead to a major scandal.

What may have seemed like a clever legal trick to outsiders in fact had far greater depth. I was only able to assert my claim through artistic freedom because I was actually working – writing books, researching, speaking publicly – and because the value of that work couldn’t be easily dismissed. In doing so, I continuously forced the state into a discursive confrontation over the legitimacy of *Speed’s Work*. This intellectually overwhelmed the authorities, and they ultimately opted to remain silent rather than escalate, because any serious engagement would have exposed the structural fraud behind Hartz IV. It would have made it obvious that the unpaid labour of artists and care workers – work often rendered invisible or impoverished – was in no way of lesser value than other forms of labour. That in itself could have triggered a constitutional crisis: if the market couldn’t define value, who could?

⁷⁵ Letter from the Jobcenter Berlin Kreuzberg dated 27 October 2015

Thus, a parallel simulation was established within the original one – a simulation in which I was allowed to live by my own rules. This was both a blessing and a curse. As long as I continued *Speed's Work*, I received Hartz IV without interrogation. But this also meant I remained trapped in poverty. My legal exception became an island of isolation.

This was not the result I had hoped for. I was now being accused of a total refusal to cooperate, even though it was the state that refused to cooperate with me – in cultural matters, in civil discourse. Once again, I experienced exclusion. A refusal to engage. The state behaved like a petulant child denied its chocolate: either it made the rules, or it refused to play altogether.

This shows how inflexible the system really was. The authorities could have supported my work, acknowledged its value. But because I wasn't earning money *outside* the simulation, no "reward" could be granted without undermining the entire logic of Hartz IV. You simply weren't allowed to *upgrade* poor people. They paid me, but only to avoid a public scandal – not as recognition for my work. It was survival money, not validation. It was hush money, not appreciation. I was kept in poverty to protect the Hartz IV narrative. In a paradoxical way, they thereby admitted that I was right all along. This episode reveals the core of my research through a real-life experimental intervention: the Hartz IV system is based on the arbitrary and ideologically charged allocation of value. Labour, in the logic of capitalism, cannot coherently define what is or isn't a meaningful contribution. I, as a single individual without resources, exposed the internal contradictions of the system so thoroughly that it had no response. The state knew it was lying. And the only way to manage that lie was to do precisely what it wanted to avoid: to pay an impoverished artist a de facto UBI for ten years.

All of this points to the massive vulnerabilities in the system, and to the sheer anxiety provoked by the truths I uncovered – whether consciously or unconsciously. They *could* have let Ralph Boes starve. But they didn't dare do the same to me. Boes was perceived as someone refusing to comply – which played into their narrative of "lazy paupers." But I never stopped working. My artistic production made their accusations untenable. There was no credible way to claim I wasn't making a contribution. Art could not be publicly declared worthless without opening another front in the battle over meaning. A sanction against me would have been perceived as a sanction against artistic freedom – and that they feared.

And so they isolated me with a pseudo-UBI in order to avoid a confrontation over the deeper lies of the system. This points to the core problem of UBI concepts that are decoupled from *recognition*. The Hartz IV version of my UBI continued to devalue my labour, even as it secured my survival. It wasn't a

reward, it was damage control. No dignity, no appreciation – only silence. And that should be a warning to UBI advocates: without a politics of recognition, a UBI can become a form of benevolent exclusion.

That's why I advocate for a Universal Care Income. Because care, attention, and meaningful contribution must be *seen*. A UBI without such recognition can produce the opposite of what's intended: total erasure of the individual. It can flatten value into nonexistence.

Conversely, some defenders of wage labour argue that recognition is tied to formal employment. But this, too, is a dangerous illusion. Most people receive no genuine recognition in the workplace – only performance assessments. The real meaning of labour – its social and relational contribution – gets lost entirely.

7

A few months later, word had got around about what I was doing, which led to imitators, and senior employees at the Job Centre, including a certain Mr G., decided they wanted to put an end to this situation after all. Classism struck to the extent that they couldn't stand the fact that a penniless artist was leading everyone around by the nose in their eyes.

In Berlin-Kreuzberg, one of Berlin's typical artists' districts (paradoxically, the Job Centre was located in Rudi-Dutschke-Straße, named after the left-wing activist of the 1960s, opposite the right-wing Springer publishing house), Mr G. was very well known among cultural workers and activists, because almost all of us ended up at Mr G. when we offered resistance. In my film *Transferprotokoll* from 2024, I called Mr G. the “artist hunter,” because that's exactly what he was. Mr G., a former police officer, had the unofficial task of taking action against what he called “system deniers.” He did this with the means of the police, i.e. with the tools of subversion.

His method was simple. He treated you so coldly, rationally, and without any sense of humanity — like a typical desk perpetrator of the worst kind — that he managed to make almost everyone void, put them in the state of a child, and then break them. People wanted to shout at him — and many did — because it was so incomprehensible how a person could be so blind to injustice. Mr G. reduced you psychologically to a piece of dirt that he would destroy by administrative act.

I only met Mr G. once, and that encounter shook me to the core.

When I entered the unadorned room — almost empty, just a table at which he sat with nothing on it except a fat law book from which he then quoted — I felt this was some kind of execution. I was basically sitting in an interrogation

room, and everything smelled like a police state. You were guilty as soon as you entered the room. Now it was just a question of how the state wanted to demonstrate its power on you. Mr G. had the demeanour and attitude of a boring, technocratic executioner. At least that's how you imagine him. Correct, detached, and a sociopath of abbreviation and curtailment of every existence that sat before him. He clearly derived satisfaction from humiliation — this was unmistakable.

He pulled the law book towards him, opened it, and then cynically asked me the question: *“So, what kind of petty performance art is it that you do, Mr Speed?”* It was important for him to convey two things: that he didn't care what I did or what I worked on. No matter what it was, it couldn't be worth anything. Because the market had decided — as if it were a legitimate judgment — and he saw himself as its executor.

My duties were read out to me, but of course no rights. I was told that he would now initiate an integration process, as he had “reflected on it.” He would simply deregister me as an artist, and that would be the end of my artistic freedom.

No absurdity was beneath this bureaucracy. Nothing was sacred as far as democracy and civil society were concerned.

Following this meeting, Mr G. wrote:

“You stated to me and also in the past to other employment agencies that you would not conclude an integration agreement, as this would restrict your artistic freedom (...) in my view your independence has failed (...) it is not apparent that you have actively worked to eliminate your need for help so far.”

The criminal perversion of his statements turned twenty years of cultural and human rights work — poorly paid, yet invaluable — into an accusation of antisocial behaviour, warranting state punishment. At that very moment, this man was orchestrating my descent into homelessness — under the guise of legality — and he was clearly enjoying showing me as an artist.

Here, too, we saw how art was not recognised as work in the Job Centres — even as an attempt to escape poverty. For people like him, care work was often just, to put it bluntly, a leisure activity for women who weren't clever enough to get jobs. That wasn't just the thinking of people like Mr G., it was the thinking of people right up to the minister. There should be no artistic freedom — especially for the poor. This was the beginning of what later manifested itself as a basic accusation in the files, namely that I was “antisocial” and that I was to blame for my poverty because I was an artist. Mind you, this all happened in a democratic country whose constitution explicitly protected art. Under the supervision of Minister Pair, human rights were 100 per cent negated, and the intention of artistic or activist intervention — for which

generations had previously given their lives — was erased, so that these values and activities could become the cornerstones of democracy.

The bitter thing is: if the press had found out about it, Mr G. would have been quickly removed, and months later the same attempt would have been made again to destroy me as an artist. The fact that Mr G. was able to work as an enemy of the constitution in a German authority at all was because Minister Pair wanted this politically. Her actions implied such pigs. It had long been the practice to create a separate legal system within democracy for those who were considered worthless — or guilty of eradicating the democratic.

See also the practice that began with Guantánamo⁷⁶ in the USA and later ended with the EU's new asylum laws. A separate reality, a separate right, was created for disagreeable minorities. In doing so, they created their own causality and a narrative that made the truth of the real circumstances and relationships invisible.

“Rather, it can be assumed that the activity you have stated as an artist is merely a ‘hobby.’ I have therefore changed your applicant profile and now list your artistic activity as a secondary occupation.”⁷⁷

There are hardly any artists in the history of art who could not have been discredited in this way if the legitimacy of their work had depended solely on monetary success. Even those now considered untouchable—Mozart, Dalí—would have been destroyed by a Mr G. That Mr G. thought he could simply “deregister” me as an artist, whatever that was supposed to mean, in order to terminate my activities, was not only absurd, but—more importantly—the first sign that public authorities, civil servants, and later judges no longer respected the Basic Law whenever it stood in the way of applying politically desired direct laws. This was a foretaste of the authoritarian shift that was to come.

What Mr G. demanded of me I could not give him—as an autistic person. As explained at the beginning of this book, I could not turn away from my autistic vocation. The fact that I didn't yet know I was autistic did not protect me from experiencing the full existential pain of an autistic person in such a situation. Mr G.'s totalitarianism made all deviation invisible. Autism wouldn't have counted. He probably would have deported me straight to a sheltered workshop.

⁷⁶ Wikipedia: The Guantanamo Bay Naval Base (abbreviated GTMO, pronounced Gitmo) is a US Navy base in Cuba. It is located on land leased from the Cuban state and is situated in the south of Guantánamo Bay, about 15 kilometres south of the city of Guantánamo. In 2002, a detention centre was added to the base (see Guantanamo Bay Naval Base detention centre).

⁷⁷ Integration agreement / by Mr G. / 28.7.2015

It thus became clear that in this logic, democracy itself could be “deregistered”—or downgraded to a secondary activity. Bureaucrats like him could do this at any time. They were only held back by civil society, if it still had any strength left. The core problem was the anonymity in which this violence could be executed. Within capitalism, it was easy to push the forces of civil society into poverty—and then destroy their work altogether through mechanisms like Hartz IV. That, precisely, is what democracy should prevent. A democracy without a strong civil society, without the protective labour of cultural workers, is already hollowed out.

So let me be clear: democracy wants artists like me to fight back against such destruction—because otherwise, free art disappears altogether. Mr G. was just a petty criminal in a frenzy of power.

Why should I have given up at that point? If ever there was a moment in which artistic and activist labour became essential for the survival of democracy, it was this. That line could not be crossed. And I was willing to do everything I could to stop it.

German Job Centres are closed systems. Nobody really wants to know what happens in there—what methods they use to torment the poor. This is evident in the fact that there are no tools in the agencies to even detect classist or socially racist discrimination—or racism in general. Because racism there is politically wanted. Pair and Kiwi always supported it. They built the structural foundations. The same applies to Federal President Steinmeier, Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and Ursula von der Leyen. They have all made right-wing poison socially acceptable.

Nobody seemed to notice that a former police officer was using maximum force, in his view, to break “system deniers”—i.e., artists who were defending democracy.

Mr G. wanted to throw me into homelessness, in the middle of winter, after I had worked precariously for 20 years for the cultural life of this country, easily 40 hours a week—just because I had contradicted him as an artist. Of course I experienced this as attempted murder—with all the emotions, despair, and fear that entails.

In 2024, we’ll see how Minister Kiwi, Avocado and other populists try to reintroduce automated mechanisms of violence in the so-called citizens’ allowance system—such as the 100% sanctions for two months.

It’s difficult to prove whether Mrs Pair knew about the details of this practice. But it is provable that she actively created the conditions for such scenes. Her department was fully briefed on all the elements of this terror. The same goes for the public prosecutors.

On 4 January 2017, I wrote to the Berlin Public Prosecutor General's Office: "*Judged by the rules of Hartz IV, what I am doing is 'anti-social behaviour'. I ask you: is an authority that claims such a thing still in its right mind?*"

Mr G. also justified the alleged worthlessness of my work by pointing to my monthly income forecast, where I always entered "0". But that was because any other number—even a speculative one—would have immediately reduced the benefits for six months. Everyone with fluctuating income knew this. Entering "0" was common knowledge.

That Mr G. ignored such a basic fact showed yet another bureaucratic perversion—one for which Minister Pair was ultimately responsible. Tellingly, her press office was called the "Department for Strategic Communication."

About a week after Mr G. declared my self-employment a failure, I sold a young alpaca I had bred for €13,000 and left the Hartz IV system for the time being. I unpacked the absurdity of this episode in detail in *Radical Worker*, so I won't repeat it here. There were different income streams. One came from four alpaca mares standing on a meadow in Brandenburg who—organically—worked for me. Another absurdity of the capitalist market: I couldn't earn a cent through human rights work, but I could earn thousands with a spotted foal in a speculative niche market.

There were many ways to show the stupidity of the system.

In January 2017, when I returned to Hartz IV, I was only briefly back at the Kreuzberg office. I then moved—living in a tent in a field with the alpacas—to Brandenburg to save money and gain independence. That made a different office responsible. The legal foundation remained the cancellation of the integration agreement—which I had never signed—so it was invalid. The UBI-like arrangement continued.

I realise that what I received was not a classic universal basic income—but it came very close, with all the associated advantages and contradictions. I received money, but for years I wasn't contacted or even invited to any meetings.

The state only had two options left—and denied the third. Either they used massive force—leading to criminal complaints from me that could escalate publicly—or they shoved me in a virtual room with a UBI, hoping I'd wear myself out. The third option—taking care work seriously, and thus questioning capitalism—was never considered.

They thought they could silence me with a UBI. That was their fundamental mistake—as this book shows. And it is precisely this example that demonstrates why we must rethink labour and value.

System-critical work must also count as work. Otherwise, we are heading directly toward what Horkheimer warned against: a fascism of totalitarian reason, upheld by stupid and inhuman idiots.

Act of Violence 2: Mr H and the Unconditional Basic Income

1

On 9 January 2017, I went to the Jobcenter Berlin-Kreuzberg for what would be the final time. I had been summoned by a Mr H. I wanted to make it clear, once again, who was in charge—and that I would not deviate from the position that care work is indeed work, and deserves both recognition and remuneration.

I entered the office, sat down, and handed him a letter across the desk. It read: *“I hereby inform you that criminal charges have been filed against the Kreuzberg Job Centre and several of its case workers. The Berlin Public Prosecutor’s Office is expected to initiate investigations next week. In my view, significant criminal offences have been substantiated. Mr K. has received a copy of the complaint. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs have also been notified.*

You are now officially and legally informed that there are serious doubts as to whether you are qualified to assess—let alone cognitively grasp—the scope of my work over the past 20 years.

Since 2015, the legal extent to which Job Centres are permitted to interfere with the labour of cultural workers has been under review. If you attempt such interference—by forcing participation in measures, coaching, or similar—I will file charges against you. On behalf of the Public Prosecutor’s Office, I hereby state that you are, at this time, neither intellectually capable of comprehending my work, nor legally entitled to issue assessments without a scientifically grounded basis and without reference to existing documentation. I am under no obligation to explain the scope of my work to you in conversation—nor is an artist required to justify their work to an administrative body. Artistic freedom takes precedence.

You are therefore requested to read my books “Strength in Poverty” and “The Physics of the Poor” in full and to provide evidence of your understanding of their content. Should you refuse, I will regard this as a breach of duty, as it would render you incapable of assessing either my work or my competencies.

As a related criminal complaint was already filed in 2015, I consider this a potential repeat offence. Should you interfere in my artistic work again—or presume to advise me in this context—I will file charges of attempted fraud, misuse of public funds, and other office-related crimes. Should you pursue such interference under threat of withholding subsistence-level support, I consider this grounds for your dismissal.

If this sounds like a harsh threat, allow me to remind you that your prior correspondence showed no courtesy whatsoever. Yours sincerely, Timothy Speed”

Mr H. flew into a rage, stormed out of the room and slammed the door. He disappeared into his supervisor’s office, could be heard shouting for a while, then returned—only to throw me out of the Job Centre. Before doing so, he made veiled threats about what he intended to write in my file.

I wrote to Federal Minister Pair on 11 January 2017:

“Dear Federal Minister Pair, In relation to the research for my forthcoming book on serious misconduct within the Job Centres, I am sending you another scandalous incident to add to my previous correspondence. Today, an employee of the Kreuzberg Job Centre openly threatened me with charges of fraud and false testimony. I demand consequences at the Kreuzberg Job Centre. (...) I kindly request your comment on this case, as a press article is currently in preparation.”⁷⁸

What exactly Mr H. wrote in my file remains unclear to this day—I will explain the reason for that shortly—but what is certain is that he laid the foundation for a dossier full of distortions and lies. Over time, this file was continuously expanded by other caseworkers, who added resentments and falsehoods until I was eventually labelled in the records as a violent aggressor.

Each time I submitted critical essays or formal complaints, a note would appear in the file:

“Mr Speed attacks caseworkers personally.”

This was the narrative. The administration had effectively exchanged me for a monster—someone with whom no communication was necessary, let alone desirable. They demonised me because they had to explain, at least to themselves, why no one had succeeded in breaking me, while still believing it was justified to try.

The fact that I remained in the system turned everything upside down. The figure of the “monster”—like that of the “madman”—served both as a psychological defence for their own failure and as justification for increased harshness. This caricature helped minimise any sense of identification or solidarity, which did emerge with one or two employees. Within the

⁷⁸ Letter to Andrea Pair dated 11 January 2017

institution, I was increasingly seen as a person with whom one could not sympathise without becoming a target of devaluation and surveillance oneself. Thus, it was no longer the rule of law passing judgment on me, but the internal culture of contempt for the poor. In many Job Centres, a toxic milieu reigned—dominated by petty authoritarianism, by middle-management types with the mentality of governesses and headmasters, who took pleasure in their ability to humiliate and control. Their psychosocial stability seemed to rely on this power dynamic.

The working atmosphere in many Job Centres was correspondingly scheming, fearful, and inhumane—conditions that also turned many caseworkers into victims of the same system.

In the years that followed, job placement ceased to play any role whatsoever. I was not offered a single position in a full decade. Instead, I continued Speed's work—with the explicit goal of fundamentally rewriting the foundations of economics.

2

In a letter dated 14 January 2017, I wrote to the Berlin Public Prosecutor General's Office: *“As you can see from the complaint of 11 January, the Job Centre was informed on the same day that the employees are intellectually and cognitively incapable of assessing, let alone understanding, my work.”*⁷⁹

My strategy was to have the complexity of reality officially recognised and documented in order to prevent the state from further simplifying it. By exposing the structural stupidity of its institutions, I created a situation in which the state could no longer act, because I forced it onto an intellectual plane—one where it had to at least pretend to be acting rationally. But in practice, it was no longer capable of doing so.

At the same time, I entangled the institutions in subjectivity. Something had to be done to counter submergence. And this was only possible through individual, subjective deviation. Only in this way could I make visible the actual relationships within the ecosystem.

The more contact the authorities had with me, the more I confronted them with my creative, subjective personality, the harder it became to bureaucratise or stereotype me. This was part of my method. Only society as a spectator, positioned outside the institutional process, could grasp the true situation. I wrote to the authorities, but my real interlocutors were in civil society. This

⁷⁹ Letter from me to the senior public prosecutor's office in Berlin / 14 January 2017 / 233 Js
162/17

was indirect communication. And only such a triadic structure makes it possible in a democracy to make structural abuses visible. The external witness became the authority for whom I performed everything.

Because the victim of institutional bullying is always trapped within a controlled habitat—one where some wield the power to erase the truth of others. My response was an artistic staging: my autistic integrity, my sensorial experience of the world. My existence became a subculture, a counter-reality, from which I developed a new concept of labour.

I wrote:

“Given that the deliberate misassessment of economic viability under Hartz IV probably affects not just me, but thousands of others, this may constitute the greatest act of economic fraud in Germany’s post-war history. The fact is that the authorities do not possess any scientifically validated methods for evaluating economic viability at all.”

Of course, such a statement clashed with the so-called *common sense* understanding of insolvency, of “failure”—but to paraphrase sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, there are multiple forms of capital, including social and intellectual. By deliberately blending the rational with the political, the social with the artistic—through exaggeration, overstimulation and provocation—I pushed the institutions to the edge of their conceptual limits regarding the question of value. Was I worthless as an artist? That question was far too complex for a bureaucratic system. But if I wasn’t worthless, then I wasn’t a loss or a burden—I was entitled to remuneration like everyone else. And if the market couldn’t provide it, then the state had to.

But that wasn’t my problem. Unlike the state, I couldn’t simply switch off capitalism.

As the institutions could not grasp the complexity of reality—because their simulations prevented them from doing so, and because they were forced to act “efficiently”—they began to present me with large-scale projections of their own delusions. They evaded. And the more they evaded, the more it became evident—through the avalanche of contradictory letters and explanations—that they had already lost touch with reality. Power began to erode.

As an autistic person, my interest was in making visible the underlying patterns and errors within the system. These only emerged through what I called *provoked empiricism*—the creation of situations in which systemic weaknesses would reveal themselves.

What is the function of the monster?

The monster is not, first and foremost, a category of the human—but of an irrepressible will that must be domesticated. And no matter what is done to

the monster, the monster can never become a victim. It feels nothing, it possesses no interiority. It can never become human. The monster is the only being to whom no pity may be granted. But the moment a third party recognises that the monster is *not* a monster, the attribution reveals itself as a form of violence—a strategy by which those in power project their own darkness into the stigma they impose on others.

3

The monstrously schizophrenic authority now wrote downright childishly: *“You must always be contactable at the address you have given. You are obliged to agree the period and duration of a planned absence with your personal contact in advance. Unauthorised absence may result in the loss of your entitlement to unemployment benefit and your benefits being reclaimed.”*⁸⁰

The authorities slowly began to lose their minds. This was the consequence of the dissonance embedded in our situation. They simulated bureaucratic procedures to reassure themselves of their own importance, while I increasingly made public that their actions were both idiotic and criminal.

Instead of simply stating that one must respond to official mail within a week—which is a matter of course—they put me under a kind of house arrest in a humiliating manner. As if telephones didn’t exist. Disproportionality is always a sign of weakness, and of a system that feels threatened.

Here, too, we see what I call the *sanctions paradox*: something is made so complex that it is practically impossible *not* to violate it. This excessive display of terror followed no real logic, but rather served the purpose of asserting a form of total ownership over the body of the delinquent. Because they could no longer force me to work, they had to find other ways to show they still had power over me. But by this point, only ridiculous methods remained.

I reported this behaviour to the public prosecutor's office as unlawful deprivation of liberty—simply to see what would happen. I had begun to use criminal complaints as an ongoing dialogue with the state, because, at least in theory, you had to respond to them. They pierced the simulation.

In this way, over time, between 50 and 100 prosecutors became involved in answering for the conditions I was subjected to. Not a single one stopped the violence against the poor. Not a single one acknowledged it as real.

⁸⁰ From his letter to the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office in Berlin about statements made by the job centre on 14 January 2017

On 14 January 2017, Minister Pair was informed of the allegations against Mr G., but never responded. On 16 January 2017, the investigations against Mr G. and Mr H. were officially closed by the Berlin public prosecutor's office.⁸¹

What I was doing was a kind of thread game, as Donna Haraway describes it in *Staying with the Trouble*. It was about tying knots, provoking reactions and counter-reactions, in order to make an increasingly complex pattern visible.

Haraway writes:

*"Like Margulis, I use holobiont to refer to symbiotic assemblages (...) They are more like the nodes of different intra-active relationships in dynamic, complex systems and less like the entities of a biology composed of predetermined and circumscribed units (genes, cells, organisms, etc.) that can only interact with each other in a competitive or co-operative manner."*⁸²

A holobiont is a symbiotic entity composed of a host and its associated microbial communities. In other words, it is a complex ecological system made up of the host and the multitude of microorganisms that live in, on, and with it.

To the system, I was such a holobiont—a parasite in their eyes. But from the perspective of the ecosystem, what I was doing constituted a new form of cooperation and intra-action. It was a rewilding of bureaucracy—an attempt to return a sterile administrative structure to more organic, interdependent conditions.

4

On 23 January 2017, I invoiced the Federal Ministry of Labour for EUR 342,720.

"For four years of research and artistic work to make the abuses under Hartz IV accessible to the public. (...) Hourly rate: EUR 30, at 40 hours a week, over four years."

The state never paid this bill. But the amount illustrated what a Universal Care Income could have meant—and how much the state had profited from Speed's work while simultaneously punishing me for it. All to keep deluded petty bourgeois, clinging to their social-racist notions, convinced that the benefit principle was still intact and that the poor remained the architects of their own downfall.

On the same day, I also invoiced ZDF for EUR 85,680:

⁸¹ 233 Js 162/17 Berlin public prosecutor's office, investigations against H. and G.

⁸² Donna Haraway / Unruhig bleiben / Campus / p 86

“For a year of ignored research into the collapse of public trust in the media and the emergence of ‘echo chambers’, as well as the development of alternative concepts to restore informational integrity. Published in the book Organic Television, the content of which Prof. Wille ignored on behalf of ARD, thus refusing any cooperation with the independent scene and driving me into bankruptcy once again. The bill may be shared with Liz Mohn of the Bertelsmann Foundation (RTL).”

Of course, neither ARD, ZDF nor Liz Mohn paid. Others were earning handsomely with similar ideas—as long as they didn’t call out the structural injustice of the world. See, for example, the defanged white papers of the so-called *Future Council of the Broadcasting Commission of the Federal States*.

These invoices were my version of CO₂ pricing. They were meant to account for the systematic exclusion of my peers from the economic equation. They were intended to force recognition of the fact that others were profiting from the unpaid labour of cultural and care workers—exactly what the core critique of care work was all about.

One day the question must be asked: By what right did the state ignore these invoices? Why was there no attempt to engage in dialogue?

This categorical rejection was a key indicator of the state’s denial of reality. Because no matter how you look at it: what artists and care workers do has value. It is undeniable. But it was not acknowledged. The state simply turned away—because to respond would have meant to lie publicly. So instead, silence.

And that silence marked a red line—toward perverse structures, toward increasing violence against the marginalised, merely to obscure the growing incoherence of the system’s own actions. This is how systemic crimes begin. They always start with an effort to cover up failure.

5

On 24 January 2017, I sent another letter to Minister Pair:

“The Berlin Public Prosecutor’s Office has just confirmed that the third investigation against employees of the Kreuzberg Job Centre is now underway. The letter from Mr B. dated 19 January is a scandal. Although you, Mrs Pair, bear full responsibility for the abuses that have been pointed out, you are now attempting to cowardly extricate yourself from the affair.”

This letter was also sent to her press spokeswoman, Ms Daldrup. It can therefore be assumed that the circumstances were gradually beginning to reach Minister Pair.

At the end of January, on 23 January 2017⁸³, I formulated an open letter that was sent to the public prosecutor's office, the Job Centre, Minister Pair and the respective directors' offices of ZDF and ARD. In this way, I involved all relevant parties in order to make the interconnections visible and to clarify the consequences of their respective actions. The letter was eleven pages long. In it, I essayistically outlined numerous problems with the Hartz IV legislation, as well as the role of ARD and ZDF, and how everything was interconnected: *"I state that in a constitutional democracy, the state may only use coercive measures against its citizens if such actions are grounded in a rational and legally sound framework, genuinely justified by law or administrative necessity. Proportionality must also be observed. None of this applies to Hartz IV (...). I call on ARD and ZDF to tear down their internal borders and finally face critical public discourse. I demand the abolition of Hartz IV and a thorough investigation by the public prosecutor into a bureaucratic apparatus that does not do what it claims to do, but instead destroys people. This is just the beginning."*

Seven years later, as already mentioned, I again stood at ZDF's doorstep—this time with the film *Transferprotokoll*—once more calling for a serious reckoning with systemic injustice against the poor. I had worked on the film for four years while the authorities continued to harass me over *Speed's Work*. Yet even after all that time, little had changed at ZDF. I was met with the same rejection I had encountered after my letter of 24 January 2017 to directors Bellut and Thieme:

"Last year, the book Organic Television was published, in which I raised essential questions about the loss of trust in the media and the emergence of so-called 'echo chambers'. The result of a full year of research was the development of new concepts and proposals, which I attempted to present to Prof. Wille (Chair of ARD). After an initial exchange of letters, she chose to ignore them. The case was subsequently presented publicly at the Capitalism Tribunal in Vienna, supported by the Club of Rome and numerous other foundations. (...)

The scandal now lies in the fact that Prof. Wille dismissed a substantial contribution from the independent scene, stating she had no obligation to respond to unsolicited work by cultural practitioners. (...)

As a result of this marginalisation, I went bankrupt again and had to reapply for Hartz IV. The enclosed letter shows how I was then subjected to serious mistreatment by the authorities. My aim is to expose how critical voices and dissenting cultural work are being marginalised—even by ZDF.

⁸³ Open letter dated 23 January 2017 / on investigation proceedings 233 Ujs 77/17 and 233 Js 162/17

I would also like to propose a new concept of labour and contribute to opening up ZDF to truly independent perspectives. I kindly ask you, Mr Bellut and Ms Thieme, to respond in full to this matter and to the content of Organic Television, and to inform the public how you intend to deal with these accusations.”⁸⁴

For me as an autistic person, that was completely illogical. But perhaps the real answer would have required nothing less than a fundamental reworking of the social reality. This may no longer come as a surprise—but maybe we now understand better why it was so important to emphasise the interconnectedness of all these circumstances and to demand a response.

How could anything ever change if this complexity wasn't lived, insisted upon, and made visible? Wasn't what was shown here also an opportunity to finally address the massive failures of this society? Aren't similar structural patterns to be found everywhere—and wouldn't it be both urgent and worthwhile to create a format that allows us to work collectively through these conflicts?

And who, if not society itself, should pay for this work, should finance it? It was necessary to make these issues personal. It was necessary to break through the self-contained simulations of value and relevance—and this could only be done by the individual insisting on the relationship.

Look, the world is more complex than you think! I, too, am part of this world—but you refuse to acknowledge that this could be true. Why?

What is more harmful to ZDF? The exclusion of people like me simply because we are poor—or the expansion of the public discourse to include realities that challenge its comfort zone? These institutions always find civil-sounding ways to dismiss the work of poor people—formulations that do not sound like racism, but are in fact expressions of structural racism.

My work at ZDF stands as an example of what could shift in all sectors—in fact, in society as a whole—if we stopped wasting or suppressing the intelligence that lies within conflict itself. But people in institutional positions are often unable to do this, because their assigned function takes precedence over their relationship with reality.

6

On 7 February 2017, the Job Centre wrote to me regarding the criminal complaint against Mr H., who had angrily thrown me out of the building. It began with a sentence that speaks volumes:

⁸⁴ Letter to the director's office of ZDF Mainz / Bellut dated 24 January 2017

“The customer response management”, what a wonderfully inappropriate term, “has asked me to answer your letter addressed to them on my responsibility.”

I was then informed:

“I have carefully examined the facts of the case and would like to inform you of the following: (...) The primary task of an employment agency is to work with the customer to analyse their previous educational and professional background and to create a profile in order to develop a possible integration strategy based on this. The type and scope of support and challenges, the basic principle of SGB II, can thus be customised to the individual customer.”

So here we see how the *individual* has become a *function* for the caseworker. The caseworker needs the “customer” to justify their own role. And so the customer, as demanded by the bureaucratic employee, must perform a predefined role—regardless of context, content, or goal. Even if this leads, as in my case, to absurdity: How was Mr H. supposed to “analyse” my path as a cultural worker, without dismantling my entire life’s work? Without destroying decades of artistic and activist practice? Without reducing me to some input variable in a fictional “primary labour market”? How could this have resulted in anything resembling a recognition of my work or value—let alone “integration”?

And what would society gain by banning me, as an autistic artist and critic of the system, from doing precisely the work I was called to do?

How idiotic was the whole approach?

What relevance did my school certificates have to the fact that I had spent 30 years producing critical art—often unpaid, but essential? The reason I didn’t “fit” into an organisation was the very reason I made the art in the first place. That *was* the point. And it was necessary work for the preservation of democracy. No, it could not be pursued “as a hobby”.

To demand that I be retrained—perhaps as a gummy bear salesman, as Ralph Boes once mockingly put it—was not only grotesque. It amounted to an erasure. Of the injustices I had fought to expose.

You can cynically shrug that off, but for me, as an artist and autistic person, it was about responsibility. Over time, however, this *responsibility* was increasingly reinterpreted as *irresponsibility*.

The letter went on:

“Your work as a writer is to be addressed together with you and evaluated in terms of content and taken into account when developing an integration strategy for the primary labour market.”

In plain terms: They thought I wrote too much. And wrote the wrong things—things the system didn’t want. They pretended to “support” my work as an

author, but it was clear this could only mean my destruction. Because they saw art that didn't generate profit as not just worthless, but dangerous.

That's not just ignorance. That's structural violence. That's a deep anti-intellectualism, bordering on fanaticism. The Job Centre then declared:

"In your interview, you requested that your employment agency read and understand your work. Specific knowledge of the content and understanding of your works is not necessary for a placement strategy. It is necessary to assess whether and to what extent your work as an author guarantees financial independence and then to develop a joint strategy to increase your income or to work out career alternatives."

Even now, I'm astonished at the extent to which my methodology allowed me to extract such distilled madness from the authorities.

Let me end this passage with one example: On 12 August 2022, the author *Salman Rushdie* was attacked with a knife in England. A report in *Der Spiegel* stated:

*"His 24-year-old attacker later claimed that he had only read two pages of The Satanic Verses. However, he was of the opinion that the author had 'attacked Islam'."*⁸⁵

The will to judge without understanding is one of the most dangerous traits in any system of power.

The Job Centre might just as well have stabbed a knife into my eye – as was done to Salman Rushdie. It would have been the same form of violence: a punishment rooted in the refusal to acknowledge knowledge. That's what simulation does.

The words of the authority hardly need commentary; they reveal the full extent of the problem once instrumental reason – as described by Horkheimer – takes control. I took art seriously. I took research seriously. Was that wrong?

Am I to be blamed for that?

The systemic devaluation of the poor has rendered it unimaginable that a meaningful contribution could come from a self-determined poor person. Their only sanctioned function is to be reformatted. To paraphrase sociologist Zygmunt Bauman: the poor became waste, a surplus population to be disposed of.

Horkheimer said: *"Never again Auschwitz."* But how is Auschwitz to be prevented if those who belong to the original victim groups – the *antisocials*, the cultural workers, the autistic – are expected to obey and destroy themselves? Autistic people, too, were sent to concentration camps. And you

⁸⁵ Spiegel Online / Author Rushdie warns urgently against Donald Trump's re-election / 22.04.2024, 07.47 am

don't do this voluntarily. No one should do this voluntarily. If I were to give up, what kind of position would that leave for all the poor and creative people coming after me?

It's necessary to talk about what was at stake here – so that people can understand my motivation, but also the brutality and dehumanisation at work in this institutional violence. Because this was never a game. Even if at times it may have appeared theatrical or absurd, it was deadly serious.

7

There are four central concepts in psychology and sociology that describe what happens when people are forced to act against their conscience, their deep convictions, or their own nature. Understanding these mechanisms also makes it possible to grasp the immense damage caused by jobs — through coercion, humiliation, and the erosion of integrity. Nothing improves — quite the opposite — when everyone is forced into jobs. This weakens both civil society and the economy by producing inner conflicts and repressed social traumas, which now saturate our culture.

Burn-out and environmental destruction can no longer be externalised. A transformation in our concepts of work and contribution is no longer a matter of ideology — it is a matter of survival. Jobs are killing us. Not everyone, not immediately, not always — but on many levels, directly or indirectly, in one way or another. Above all, they are killing the human ecosystem.

Because the catastrophe manifests itself differently in each person's subjective job experience, the level of "work" becomes crucial for collective action and bridging the divides. The concept of jobs is not sufficiently complex to serve as a foundation for an ecosystem. That is a fact. And yet, there is hope.

"The coming years will be an era of the worker's world — a world in which workers, not employers, set the tone," headlined *The Economist* in April 2021.⁸⁶

The reason for this is the so-called "demographic drought" — the decline of the baby boomer generation — which is improving workers' bargaining power. However, this alone won't be enough if we don't break the cycle of the following four stages; if workers and employees do not begin to resist the imperative to simplify and increase efficiency at all costs.

Not in order to stop working — but in order to engage with reality in a way that is appropriate, nuanced, and proportionate.

The vast systemic damage we see in the world today stems from the fact that people no longer act in proportion to reality. And they don't fail to do so

⁸⁶ Barbara Prainsack / Wofür wir arbeiten / Brandstätter / p 47

because they are selfish individualists, but because they are trapped in externally dictated, unfree routines that corrupt their relationship to nature, to others, and to themselves.

This is the root of the supremacy of simulation — and of bullshit jobs, as David Graeber described them. It is the core of the mainstream. It is the seed of fatal massification.

The theory of *cognitive dissonance*⁸⁷, as the first stage, states that people have a strong need for consistency between their beliefs, attitudes and their behaviour. Forcing them to act against their own beliefs or values creates a feeling of discrepancy or “dissonance” that is psychologically uncomfortable. This can lead to tension, stress and an inner conflict that means people change or rationalise their beliefs to reduce the dissonance. This then leads to the agentic state⁸⁸, or the banality of evil⁸⁹, according to Arendt. Experiments have shown that most people buckle in the face of cognitive dissonance. At least at first. However, after a certain amount of time, many reach the second stage, i.e. *psychological reactance*.⁹⁰ The theory of *psychological reactance* states that people have an aversion to restrictions on their freedom or to attempts to control or manipulate their behaviour. If they are forced to act against their own beliefs, this can trigger *psychological reactance*, which leads them to defend their beliefs even more strongly or even rebel against the constraints. Something that particularly affects autistic people. This would therefore be the healthier counter-movement to *cognitive dissonance*. If this stage does not occur, often because resistance hardly experiences any solidarity in our society, we see the following development, namely

⁸⁷ Leon Festinger developed the theory of cognitive dissonance, which describes how people have a strong need for consistency between their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. When they are forced to act against their own beliefs or values, an uncomfortable feeling of discrepancy or “dissonance” arises. To reduce this dissonance, people tend to change or rationalise their beliefs. This concept has been confirmed in numerous studies and forms a basis for understanding adaptive behaviour under social pressure.

⁸⁸ Agentic state: The term originates from social psychology, in particular from the Milgram experiments. It describes a state in which individuals relinquish their own responsibility for actions to an authority and only see themselves as an executing organ (“agent”). In this state, moral behaviour is often suspended because responsibility is experienced as “transferred”. See Milgram, Stanley: *Obedience to Authority*, 1974.

⁸⁹ The banality of evil: A term coined by Hannah Arendt, which goes back to her report on the Eichmann trial. It describes the phenomenon that atrocious acts are not necessarily committed by sadistic personalities, but often by ordinary people who thoughtlessly and bureaucratically do “their duty” - without critical reflection on the consequences of their actions. Cf. Arendt, Hannah: *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 1963.

⁹⁰ Jack W. Brehm coined the term psychological reactance, which describes a motivationally conditioned reaction to perceived restrictions on freedom. When individuals feel that their behavioural freedoms are threatened or restricted, an inner pressure arises to restore these freedoms. This can lead to increased adherence to one's own convictions or even to active resistance. This theory is particularly relevant for understanding resistance behaviour in people who rebel against authoritarian or restrictive systems.

internalisation. When people are forced to act against their own values or moral principles, it undermines their self-respect and erodes self-worth. This can escalate into self-hatred and, ultimately, reinforce the very violence they are subjected to. If their behaviour becomes incongruent with their core beliefs, it leads to guilt, shame, and existential dissatisfaction. Unless this process is interrupted, moral self-destruction follows — a phenomenon we already witness in many modern workplaces: moral alienation.

Karl Marx described how capitalist societies alienate people from their work, from the products of their labour, from one another, and from themselves. Modern thinkers have extended this idea to show how systemic pressures and contradictions between inner values and external demands lead to profound estrangement from one's ethical self.

This is exactly the kind of psychological alienation that plays out in the behaviour of civil servants, as described throughout this book: they dissociate from the conflict. Their anger is often displaced and projected onto marginalised groups — a form of self-valorisation achieved by degrading others.

What we are witnessing is a slow collapse of the communal fabric, triggered by a form of labour that has become pure compulsion — a simulation of value — increasingly detached from the deeper, complex realities of lived experience. We live in a world without a humane vision of the future: full of fear, helplessness, and a systemic lack of alternatives. This too is rooted in the psychology of alienation.

Genuine meaning and relationship to reality can only emerge through free, conscious action — by people who see themselves in kinship with others and who shape this relationship deliberately and reciprocally. But society has grown closed in its worldview. We are over-enlightened, trapped in the belief that nothing can fundamentally change — especially not for the better.

This is why my resistance mattered. It was the precondition for a society based on solidarity to come into being. The real tragedy was that many people misunderstood it as merely destructive. That's the psychological trap we must overcome. We need to grow up in how we deal with conflict, discourse, and crisis.

Symptoms of moral alienation, internalisation, psychological reactance, and cognitive dissonance are everywhere in today's working world. People withdraw from ethical frameworks because they cannot realise them within their job systems. The structures of most jobs are too primitive, too closed for this.

This, in turn, reinforces unethical economic behaviour: everyone ends up complicit. Internalisation drives the rise in mental illness. Resistance turns to

aggression — often directed inward or downward: at oneself or at minorities. People who cannot speak their truth, for fear of job loss or Hartz IV sanctions, internalise violence. This leads — directly or indirectly — to alcoholism, domestic abuse, addictive behaviour, emotional shutdown, and shame.

Cognitive dissonance is perhaps the most widespread consequence: a turning away from reality, passivity, resignation. It is undeniable that these mechanisms are spreading like wildfire in the working world. Why? Because something is fundamentally wrong with how we work.

What's missing is self-determination and democratic participation. Labour contracts are too rigid, too totalitarian. That's why the ecological, social, and economic crises will remain unsolvable unless we confront the catastrophic misunderstanding of labour and contribution itself.

We cannot avert ecological collapse if we don't understand what *relevance* truly means — for all of us. Capitalism offers only a distorted answer. If art is relevant, cultural workers must be paid — not per artwork, but for exposing themselves to lifelong precarity and vulnerability in order to explore the deeper layers of society. Anything incompatible with capitalism must be financed differently.

My resistance — like that of others — was the logical expression of responsibility. I resisted the Hartz IV regime to create life-affirming, humane structures. Action must be appropriate, proportionate, creative, and rooted in care. That I was persecuted and made ill for this — under the supervision of Ministers Pair and Kiwi — shows the full extent of systemic cover-up and bureaucratic violence.

The blind insistence on obedience was — and still is — a deep injustice. The truth is: *whoever refuses to work under such conditions is right.*

I was in a difficult position. I could not abandon the work I had been doing for decades — not at a moment when it had never been more urgent. But continuing the work brought more and more violence.

My Encounter with Margaret Thatcher

1

Why I was still able to endure all this violence—albeit with health consequences—perhaps has to do with experiences that shaped me in early childhood. Once again, it's about examining the subjective side as part of the investigation. Everything has several aspects.

There was a scene in England—I was probably six years old—that I can still see clearly in my mind today. The headmistress of the school had called me into her office. She wanted me to tell her which pupils had damaged a door in the toilet. I myself hadn't been involved, because I was a sensible, well-behaved child. Doing something wrong seemed illogical to me. I was autistic. In English schools at that time, not only were school uniforms mandatory, but corporal punishment was also officially practiced. For some reason, however, this particular school did not require students to wear a uniform, so I didn't wear one – because my mother wanted it that way. I was one of the few children, perhaps the only one, who attended class wearing clothes my mother had sewn herself.

So there I stood, a marked outsider, in front of her large desk. On the desk sat a bowl of sweets. In the corner of the room stood a cane.

I had to choose. If I betrayed the other children, I would be rewarded—I could take sweets. If I didn't act “appropriately,” I was threatened with the cane.

This threat of violence posed an impossible dilemma for me as a child. It's interesting that I can remember everything in the room, but not the decision I made. I don't know whether I was beaten or took the sweets. But what I do know is that this situation made me reject reward itself for the rest of my life. Perhaps not in every form—but whenever a situation was linked to a question of conscience, I always opted for punishment. A tendency that ruined me professionally.

I became an artist. A human rights defender. And I was never going to be that kind of conformist arse hole who just worked a job to take home a pile of money at the end of the month.

The British school system did two things to me: it turned me into a resistance fighter against the perfidious logic of reward and punishment—and into a lifelong precarious person. I scrutinised my actions until I could identify every conceivable problem. I did this in companies and basically everywhere. If I hadn't, I would have become depressed or aggressive—or things would have gotten even worse. This is also a behavioural pattern typical of autistic people—but I didn't know that for over 50 years.

This scene can be understood as an example of deeply autistic sensitivity to integrity—namely, a neurologically anchored inability to deliberately act against one's own moral compass, even under pressure, threat, or temptation. In autism research, this is often framed within the “intense world hypothesis” (Markram & Markram, 2010) or in terms of a contextually rigid “moral coherence structure”, a trait observed in many autistic individuals.

This is not defiance or social rejection—but a deeply embodied form of ethical congruence—a kind of somatic conscience system. This form of moral

autonomy (cf. Milton 2014) often remains invisible in neurotypical contexts, because it blocks extrinsic motivation: reward is not perceived as incentive, but as blackmail; punishment, not as deterrent, but as an ethical test.

Autistic people experience power structures based on reward/punishment not only as alien, but as existentially injurious. They cannot perform “loyalty against conscience”—a conformist acrobatics more easily managed by neurotypicals. In this sense, this childhood scene is not only biographically, but epistemologically relevant: it shows how early autistic ethics are formed as embodied resistance—an ethic that resists externalisation, cannot be sold, and as here, may rupture the system or draw strength from it.

The only viable path for me was to think of contribution without external reward, where the act itself was already the reward—in other words: intrinsically motivated. A form of participation, a connection to the world that, in my inner ethics, would have justified some kind of integration. But this never happened.

This explains my sensitivity to the issue of reward and contribution—but it does not explain why the structure of reward in the labour market continues to mirror that same manipulative headmistress-child relationship. One cannot deny that wages are not fair exchanges, but a deeply infantilising ritual that keeps people in the role of obedient children—and thus treats them with maximal disrespect.

The wage system is a form of violence we’ve accepted for too long. It is neither fair nor suitable for objectively measuring contribution. It is merely a means to break people—and train them into opportunistic behaviour.

This indoctrination also ensures that workers today—when their prosperity is threatened—are psychologically incapable of identifying the actual culprits, i.e. those who exploit them, and instead turn their anger against foreigners or the poor. That’s a sign of social division—and of a systemic mental illness.

It is not those who receive the cane who are the criminals—but those who offer the choice between reward and punishment.

In politics today, this is often called “creating incentives.” But that undermines conscious and autonomous action—and with it, the ability to take genuine responsibility.

2

The second experience that significantly shaped my actions was a personal and shocking encounter with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher when I was about ten years old.

Margaret Thatcher, also known as the “Iron Lady,” was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990. No one on the planet embodied the coldness of the market as fundamentally as she did. For me, her legacy of neoliberalism was not just an economic theory, but was tied to a personal encounter—an encounter that occurred in a moment of maximum vulnerability.

It was a beautiful, sunny day when she visited our neighbours as part of a state visit. We were the supporting programme. Accessories in an elaborate folklore performance. At the time, I was living with my parents in Austria. My father was British. The mountain village where we lived was the shelter of a romantic childhood—surrounded by meadows and cows.

Thatcher descended into my little world in two military helicopters, landing over the neighbours’ orchard. The downdraft blew the laundry off the line and sent clouds of dust into the air. Her security guards disembarked first, wearing the typical 1980s sunglasses, resembling the bodyguard cliché I knew from TV. She was helped out of the helicopter. The villagers had been told to line up. The monarch of market coldness would now walk down a parade of peasant children, maids and farmhands, before enjoying afternoon tea with the host family—while the press relaxed and took pictures. Time was a different category back then.

I stood there, observing everything, wrestling with my irritations. For example: the cows had been brought down from the mountain pasture just for the visit—to simulate a working farm. Nothing felt real. Nothing was as I knew it. Everyone was playing along.

While my father chatted about the oil business with Dennis, the Prime Minister’s husband, like two old mates, Margaret Thatcher shook my hand. Her face was caked in white makeup for the cameras, and she looked like a melting ghost against the backdrop of the sunlit orchard. I shivered at the coldness of her aura. I couldn’t refuse the handshake, but I turned my head a full 90 degrees, as if I could banish the demon through physical refusal. I didn’t make eye contact. My heart pounded. I was completely awake, absorbing every detail of the moment. This rupture in the natural, this confrontation with staged power and artificiality, never let go of me.

It was only much later that I understood who Margaret Thatcher really was for society and politics. How she introduced neoliberalism into the social fabric—with consequences that would go on to harm millions, including through later austerity policies like Hartz IV in Germany. She was one of the key figures responsible for me experiencing corporal punishment as a child, and for paving the way for a new, brutal political logic. She didn’t merely act out a role—she normalised the ideological form of economic cruelty. What she

did, as I sensed in that intimate moment, had nothing to do with connection, solidarity or dignity. It wasn't even about civility. It was solely about maintaining power. And that purpose still threatens us all.

The knowledge I acquired that day was not academic knowledge. It didn't provide proof—but it gave me a deep suspicion. A fundamental sense that something was profoundly wrong.

This scene can be interpreted as an exemplary case of autistic perception—revealing the underlying depths of structural performance, power logic, and economic coldness. A condensed moment in which subjective experience, somatic disturbance and political symbolism converge.

The handshake with Margaret Thatcher was not experienced merely as a social ritual—it was a “disruptive affordance” (to use Gibson's terminology): a rupture that overwhelmed the sensory and moral system of an autistic child. This was not a case of oversensitivity—but of precise moral scanning. Even before intellectual analysis could take place, the autistic nervous system revealed the performative nature of social power.

In research, neurodivergent people—especially autistic individuals—frequently show a much lower tolerance for incongruence: for example, between words and actions, between stated friendliness and actual dominance structures (cf. Milton, 2012, “Double Empathy Problem”).

The Thatcher scene thus becomes an archetype of a proto-economic-critical bodily experience: a revolt of the nervous system against a staged world that had become decoupled from lived reality.

Psychologically, this aligns with the theory of early moral intuitions (Haidt, 2001): the experience of “wrongness” not as a rational deduction, but as a pre-verbal, affective and bodily insight. Recent studies (Sasson et al., 2017) show that autistic people often exhibit heightened sensitivity to normative incongruities—an ability that is pathologised in capitalist-bureaucratic systems, despite being a deep social resource.

This encounter with Thatcher can thus be read both as the origin of an autistic critique of systems and as an early, sensory-emotional illumination of economic ideology—not as abstract theory, but as a physically experienced trauma of alienation. The “coldness” was not just a metaphor—it was a tangible impression that later became a category. A vivid example of how childhood enculturation and political epigenetics intertwine.

“Our lives are consecrated by these decision-makers to the increase of power. Their legitimisation in terms of social justice and scientific truth would be the

*optimisation of the system's performance, its efficiency. The application of this criterion to all our games is not without soft or hard terror: co-operate, adapt or disappear!"*⁹¹

These words were written by the founder of the concept of postmodernism, Jean-François Lyotard, just a few years before I met Thatcher. Lyotard criticised the idea of “big science” based on large institutions and comprehensive theories, and argued instead for a decentralised and diverse form of knowledge. He argued that postmodern society would be characterised by local, fragmentary and contingent knowledge. It was a time when the question of how knowledge comes about, and by whom, led to key new insights into the world.

Lyotard wrote:

*“The state will appear as a factor of opacity and “noise” for the ideology of communicative ‘transparency’, which goes hand in hand with the commercialisation of knowledge. From this point of view, the problem of the relationship between economic and state authorities could come to light with a new sharpness.”*⁹²

Lyotard foresaw that the state, in its alliance with the commercialisation of knowledge and its subordination to the logic of efficiency and utility—in the spirit of capitalism and bureaucracy—would increasingly marginalise alternative forms of knowledge. The canon of what counts as knowledge would narrow, and the space for divergent perspectives would collapse. As my case illustrates, bureaucracy was mistaken for objectivity, even though few things are more subjective—indeed, more politically loaded—than bureaucratic decisions.

Decades later, when the authorities tried to ignore my work on ethical, ecological, and social conflicts, this wasn’t an academic issue for me. It affected my life. It affected my knowledge, and the knowledge of many others pushed further and further to the margins. “Clear” knowledge is too often simplified knowledge—and simplified knowledge often serves to stabilise power. The demand for epistemic breadth is not just an academic concern for the privileged—it’s a matter of survival for those affected.

The marginalisation of knowledge always begins with the stigmatisation of its form. That’s why we must diversify how knowledge is transmitted. Only then can we protect minorities from exclusion and counter the fatal simplifications we see everywhere today.

⁹¹ Jean-François Lyotard / Das postmoderne Wissen: Ein Bericht / Passagen Verlag / p 25

⁹² Jean-François Lyotard / Das postmoderne Wissen: Ein Bericht / Passagen Verlag / p 33

But knowledge, severed from a critical understanding of labour, remains incomplete. Knowledge must be lived, and labour as it is currently structured restricts access to knowledge. If knowledge is to become a meaningful component of society—not just data or output—then the very way we work must reflect diversity.

Lyotard's work remains so powerful precisely because, in *The Differend*, he showed how not only knowledge is erased when it is subjected to dialectical combat—with winners and losers—but also the person who embodies that knowledge. This also applies to labour and economic competition. Much of today's conflict stems from a warped notion of freedom of expression, in which supposedly "false" perspectives are eradicated. But in doing so, society erases the discourse itself—leading to simulation, as I have shown in my work. A society that imposes "the good" under the guise of democracy, while erasing uncomfortable perspectives, undermines its own pluralism. The result is paradoxical: In the name of openness, diversity is obliterated.

This democracy, this market, destroys itself in its obsession with "the best ideas" and "the best arguments." The core mistake is the belief that knowledge has a final form or endpoint—that it can be possessed rather than lived. As if "usefulness" were an objective category rather than a relational one. But knowledge, like value, arises only in reciprocal encounter.

In this sense, knowledge must be cultivated in dialogue, not as abstract objectivity but as lived relationship. This is not to argue for relativism—pain is real—but rather for a mode of knowing that remains open, unfinished, and sensitive to context. Living with knowledge, not just in a world of fixed knowledge.

There is also a third mode of knowledge: cultural knowledge. This includes not just content, but form—it carries the message through its medium (McLuhan). Here, the form is already epistemic: the work is the knowledge. To force third knowledge into academic or bureaucratic moulds destroys the culture in which it is embedded. It disrespects knowledge itself by reducing it to the digestible and the measurable. This is why subjective perspective must not be eliminated from knowledge or from labour: it protects the fragile, the strange, the alien—those parts of reality that resist instrumentalisation.

The Job Centre tried to erase this third knowledge by recognising only formalised forms of output. In such a regime, the pain of those affected can never be articulated.

My work—this book included, but also the last thirty years of my life—is based on the conviction that the only way to confront injustice is to do so through a deeply subjective practice: through essays, through direct action, through lived embodiment. A form that does not reduce reality to object, but

keeps it in motion—as process, as relation. In doing so, I do not reproduce society, I generate it—through my deviant relation to it, through difference, through insistence on complexity.

But this had a cost. Nearly all my publications were rejected—not because they lacked value, but because I refused to submit to formalism. I did not want to create products. I wanted to leave testimonies of a precarious life—so that one might grasp how much deeper, stranger, more ambiguous real relationships are. Even if this means rejecting neurotypical and academic research norms.

It takes time to fully understand what this means. We are so used to capitalist categories—productivity, clarity, results—that we forget that human action is not only goal-oriented. It can also be resonant, as Hartmut Rosa describes. That is what I was exploring in *A Society Without Trust*.

4

The authority replied with regard to Mr H., who wrote lies in my file as a result of my criticism:

*"My employee Mr H. wanted to create a basis for further action by asking about the scope of your activities in terms of time. This can only be done in an objective and co-operative discussion. As this was not possible, I was called in. It was not possible to establish a factual level of discussion here either, so the initial meeting was cancelled."*⁹³

The factual level of dialogue meant that they only wanted me as a function, a stereotype, not as a complex person with emotions and fractures. Efforts were now underway to circumvent artistic freedom by trying to restrict the time I was “allowed” to dedicate to art. But the authorities hadn’t counted on the fact that I worked on my art every day, all day. The neurodivergent brain never stops questioning, never switches off. And here, their desperation became visible: “objectivity” was equated with “cooperation.” If I didn’t cooperate, but instead responded with essays and language they couldn’t understand, I was no longer “correct” in their eyes.

But in truth, I simply refused to erase my knowledge.

My behaviour, then, was only deemed objective if I was obedient—if I wasn’t too much, didn’t exceed the little box they had drawn for me. On the other hand, all personal dimensions were negated. That’s why, from the authority’s point of view, there could be no racism to examine:

⁹³ Letter from the Berlin Kreuzberg job centre dated 7.2.2017

“Any misconduct by Mr H. in the initial interview on 11 January 2017 (...). I cannot recognise this.” Despite the slammed door. Despite the defamatory entries in the file.

When the authorities lied, they typically did so by omission. Abbreviation as distortion. A clerk had evidently entered false statements into official records. My resistance was more than justified. Yet instead of responding with a correction or even an explanation, the authorities reduced me to the stereotype of the resistant poor person—thereby incapacitating me. They reshaped my image until the clerk’s behaviour appeared legitimate in hindsight.

As I said: My behaviour was only “wrong” because it was disobedient, emotional, “unobjective.” The content didn’t matter. Truth was simplified and cut down until it fit the system’s needs. That’s how the Hartz IV regime preserved its functionality—by falsifying reality.

From a legal standpoint, this was fraud. And this fraud had devastating consequences for me. Because when you are not believed, when everything you say is twisted into its opposite, it shakes the foundations of trust. No one has the right to do that to another human being. It should never have been my burden that the logic of Hartz IV made no sense.

I responded with precision and insistence:

“Please find enclosed a further letter to the public prosecutor’s office. Your integration agreement remains void. Further criminal charges will follow if you do not alter your behaviour. You have until our next appointment to provide documented proof of detailed knowledge of my work. Failure to do so will be recorded and used in further proceedings. The Federal Ministry of Labour has already been informed.”⁹⁴

I wrote to the Berlin public prosecutor's office on 12 February 2017 regarding the Job Centre's refusal to read my work: *“The Job Centre has thus disqualified itself and is now leaving the framework of the rule of law. Because it is acting without knowledge of the documents required for legal decisions. It is blindly interfering in my artistic work and wants to derive the right to punish from ignorance.”⁹⁵*

Four months later, a case worker gave me a little insight into my file and it turned out that I, as an artist with a legitimate concern, was portrayed as a violent criminal. I then wrote an open letter to the Federal Minister Pair:

“As you can see from the letter to the Attorney General , your legislation, your policies and your behaviour have led to the Berlin-Kreuzberg Job Centre opening

⁹⁴ Letter from me to the Kreuzberg job centre dated 11.2.2017

⁹⁵ Berlin public prosecutor's office later responds to this in investigations into the suppression of documents with the file number 282 UJs 223/17

a kind of 'Stasi file' on me as a writer and public critic of the Hartz IV system. This file deliberately caused me physical and psychological harm. I was humiliated and degraded and threatened with the complete withdrawal of my livelihood if I continued with my critical work as a writer and artist.”⁹⁶

Nobody responded—because almost all letters from those affected are emotional. And in the eyes of “officials”, emotionality destroys credibility. It is perceived as lacking the factual tone expected: obedience, submission, neutrality. This is a classic case of what philosopher Miranda Fricker describes in her seminal work *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*: the structural devaluation of knowledge from marginalised perspectives.

The third form of knowledge—personal, experiential knowledge—was of no relevance to the authorities. Its expression was not to be integrated into the labour process. On the contrary: traditional wage labour functioned precisely by suppressing third knowledge. The lived experience of people, their diverse perspectives, were irrelevant by design.

In this way, wage labour no longer expressed the world—but only the capitalist market, for its own sake.

People were being trained out of being human, reduced step by step to machines—while in 2024, machines were on the verge of taking over everything through AI and robotics. My unease had to break through the simulation at all costs.

5

As it turned out years later during a file inspection, there was an extensive wrangling in the background between the public prosecutor's office and the Job Centre about this file about me, with the intention of the public prosecutor's office to confiscate it in order to be able to carry out an in-depth investigation.

On 30 June 2017, the Berlin public prosecutor's office wrote to the Elbe-Elster Job Centre, which is now responsible following a move:

“Please send the Timothy Speed file. Yours sincerely, Public Prosecutor M.”⁹⁷

The Job Centre replied on 14 July 2017:

“In your letter dated 30 June 2017, you requested that Mr Timothy Speed’s file be sent to you. In this regard, I would like to inform you that Mr Speed has only

⁹⁶ Open letter to Pair dated 15 June 2017

⁹⁷ Letter from the Berlin public prosecutor's office dated 30 May 2017 / 282 Js 280/17 A

been receiving support from our Job Centre since 1 June 2017. I therefore ask for clarification as to whether our file is indeed the one you wish to receive."

They knew perfectly well that the request concerned investigations into misconduct by case workers. Presumably, they did not want to become the subject of these investigations themselves.

On 2 August 2017, Senior Public Prosecutor W. wrote back to the Job Centre: *"In response to your letter dated 14 July 2017, please be informed that evaluation of the file held at your office is necessary to continue the investigation. If you also possess the file from the Kreuzberg Job Centre, which previously handled the complainant's case, please include that file as well."*

A few weeks later, the prosecutor reiterated the request:

"(...) May I remind you of the letter of 21 July 2017 and the file request dated 30 June 2017. The file is required to continue the investigation."

In the Job Centre's internal file—parts of which I was later able to inspect—there was a reply marked as *draft*. Whether it was ever sent remains unclear. But it revealed their intention to refuse the file transfer under any circumstances. They had clearly realised that the file contained numerous defamatory and false statements about me. It's likely they also coordinated with the Berlin-Kreuzberg office.

The draft response read:

"(...) In your letters of 30 June 2017 and 21 July 2017, you request the performance file of Mr Timothy Speed. The subject of your request is a preliminary investigation against Mr H. Given the current circumstances, I do not consider myself authorised to transfer the file."

What we see here is a Job Centre actively obstructing an investigation—attempting to cover up defamation and fraud by refusing to hand over the relevant file. The Job Centre even went so far as to lecture the prosecutor's office, as if it were the superior authority.

The draft then cited data protection law:

"Pursuant to Section 68 (1) of the Tenth Book of the Social Code (SGB X), the transmission of personal data—including name, date of birth, address, and employer details—may only occur upon request in individual cases and only if no overriding privacy interests of the person concerned are at stake. Moreover, Section 4(3) SGB X does not oblige the data holder to transfer further information if the requesting authority could obtain it otherwise. The principle of primary data collection applies."

In addition, the prosecutor must provide sufficient justification for the request. Only if the request concerns criminal proceedings of significant importance, and

if a judicial order exists—as per Section 73(3) SGB X—can social data be legally transferred.”⁹⁸

Thus, the Job Centre argued that it was legally prohibited from complying. But in reality, they misapplied the law to protect themselves.

It is striking that the law apparently prohibited the public prosecutor’s office from accessing files in which false statements had been made about Hartz IV recipients—because defamation and slander are not considered serious crimes under German law. This loophole allows systemic bullying to be concealed virtually anywhere. In this case, the Job Centre sought to gather more information about me while simultaneously invoking data protection laws to shield itself from scrutiny. This exposes the hypocrisy of a legal framework applied strictly in one direction: protecting the institution, not the individual.

At the same time, it became clear that the Job Centre was not only interested in defending its procedures, but in defending its treatment of people like me—treatment that should not have been allowed to withstand scrutiny in a democratic society. This is a scandal of the highest order. It demonstrates how even public prosecutors can be actively obstructed when attempting to investigate systemic abuse—especially when such abuse overlaps with right-wing violence, administrative prejudice, or institutional racism in Job Centres. On 11 September 2017, I received a letter from the Berlin public prosecutor’s office:

“I have closed the investigation in accordance with Section 170 (2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (StPO), as the investigation has not yielded sufficient grounds for suspicion against the accused.”⁹⁹

The public prosecutor's office deliberately tried to present the case as if there had been no criminal behaviour, even though it obviously suspected that the file contained lies. But because they couldn't get hold of the file, they needed an excuse, so to speak. So she adopted the Job Centre's explanations. The “draft” was undoubtedly sent in one form or another, as the public prosecutor's office clearly quoted from this letter. It also wrote: *“For the same reason, the Tiergarten Local Court rejected the public prosecutor's request to hand over the social files in accordance with Section 73 (1) SGB X. There are no further possibilities to determine the facts of the case.”*

Data protection, which was originally intended to safeguard the dignity and privacy of Hartz IV recipients, was instead abused to shield caseworkers who had documented lies and slander in files—lies written in response to

⁹⁸ Letter from the job centre (draft?) to the Berlin public prosecutor's office in the context of 282 Js 280/17 A dated 28 August 2017

⁹⁹ Letter from the Berlin public prosecutor's office dated 11 September 2017 / 282 Js 280/17 A

legitimate criticism of the Hartz IV regime. The Tiergarten Criminal Court helped cover up this fraud.

This became the root of the injustice: the state effectively granted itself *carte blanche* to fabricate any accusation imaginable and to weaponise these fabrications in official procedures. While it was legally obligated to provide me with a basic income (BGE), it was simultaneously permitted to portray me in internal records as a violent threat. This grotesque contradiction served to reassure the authorities involved, allowing them to maintain the illusion of legality. Even the most dim-witted caseworker understood that, in a democracy, an artist could not simply be starved for producing art—an activity explicitly protected under Germany’s Basic Law.

Thus, the violence became systemic: through isolation, arbitrary sanctions disguised as administrative routine, and persistent misrepresentation of the facts. These were paired with internal smear tactics designed to ensure that, at every potential inspection or review, a coherent narrative could be deployed against me—as if I were a dangerous lunatic or criminal. This was a coordinated strategy of bureaucratic self-protection. The Job Centres did everything in their power to continue their campaign of repression while maintaining plausible deniability.

The Berlin public prosecutor’s office initially showed some willingness to investigate. But in Brandenburg, the prosecution service had long since been captured by right-wing networks that acted as accomplices to the Job Centre’s abuse.

6

It was therefore entirely possible for racist or classist resentments—particularly against the poor and migrants—to be documented in official German administrative files, without any effective means of recourse for those affected. People living in poverty, who typically lacked the financial resources for legal representation or even to initiate a lawsuit, were left defenceless against these violations.

“Who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided? In the age of information technology, the question of knowledge is more than ever a question of government.”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Jean-François Lyotard / Das postmoderne Wissen: Ein Bericht / Passagen Verlag / p 41

Lyotard also describes here the consequences, not only of the age of information technology, but also of the Capitalocene¹⁰¹, as well as the instrumental reason of his contemporary Horkheimer. This domination of knowledge—already institutionalised through objectified, formal discourse—contributed directly to the ongoing marginalisation of violence against minorities. Since Mr H. apparently committed only a misdemeanour and not a crime, and since the systemic violence inherent in Hartz IV was also not recognised as such, there seemed to be no reason for further investigation. Massive structural violence was thus reformatted into administrative normality—because that is what the jobs required in order to maintain bureaucratic functionality. The “third knowledge”—subjective, embodied, and experiential—was not meant to interfere.

The fact that Mr H. merely embodied a symptom of the broader violence against the poor was deliberately ignored. To acknowledge this would have meant that caseworkers could no longer carry out their tasks according to simplified scripts, but would have been forced to enter into friction, to engage in complexity, to step into unknown terrain. Once again, this reveals a fundamental structural flaw in the job system itself.

The post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and autistic burnout I later developed began at precisely this point—when I realised that even the state was willing to lie about me. Something fundamental broke. The world became a permanently unsafe place: unpredictable, threatening.

The psychiatrist Dr Argeo Bämayer describes this phenomenon in his book *Das Mobbingsyndrom*, referring to what he calls the “Hartz syndrome”:

*“Experience shows that the violation of an individual’s right to self-determination through inappropriate and/or excessive heteronomy is one of the most frequent causes of psychiatric and/or psychotherapeutic consultation. Since inappropriate and/or excessive heteronomy constitutes psychological violence depending on the intensity and duration of its effect, the resulting clinically relevant illness must be considered a psychotraumatic stress disorder.”*¹⁰²

Experts such as Dr Bämayer have shown that the core mechanisms of Hartz IV—namely, the total heteronomy imposed on the poor, the withdrawal of meaningful rights to participation, the coercion to work in specific ways, and the threat of existential deprivation in case of non-compliance—constitute

¹⁰¹ The term “Capitalocene” was introduced by Jason W. Moore, among others, in order to attribute the planetary crises not to a diffuse “Anthropocene”, but to the capitalist world system. See Moore, Jason W.: *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. PM Press, 2016.

¹⁰² *Das Mobbingsyndrom* / Argeo Bämayer / Bochumer Universitätsverlag / 1st edition 2012 / p 45. 2 para.

massive acts of violence that inevitably have consequences for mental and physical health.

It took me years, however, to fully uncover the specific mechanisms through which Hartz IV made people ill. That was an immense labour.

Beyond tracing causalities between state actions and what I see as the resulting *guarantor obligation* (i.e., the duty of the state to prevent harm caused by its own policies), I also sought to demonstrate how these bureaucratic procedures actively destroyed people—and by doing so, deepened poverty. Poverty, I came to understand, is not merely the lack of money. It is a far more complex phenomenon, one that cannot be fully grasped without understanding the consequences of simulation—a term I use to describe the way institutional systems reduce and distort reality. Simulation always involves *contextual foreshortening*, and this structural impoverishment pervades every level of society.

This impoverishment also helps explain the ever-accelerating tempo of modern life, which sociologist Hartmut Rosa describes as the “frenetic standstill” (*rasender Stillstand*)—a paradoxical state that characterises contemporary society at the start of the third millennium. This standstill is both cause and symptom of simulation: it results from the erosion of relationality and the collapse of authentic connection. What was missing was not just “communication”, but resonance—as Rosa would later call it—and what I earlier described in my own terms as *submergence*.

I didn’t have the financial means to find and register all the other victims of this system, so the full extent of the damage remains unknown. But I was able to document what happened to me. And through this, I tried to make visible that self-determined work is essential if we are to do justice to the complexity of reality. Obedience, by contrast, leads inevitably to fascism. It always starts with *the fake*. Simulation is its precursor. What precedes fascism is always an increase in artificiality and the suppression of subjective experience in favour of enforced collectivisation.

At the time, I was severely traumatised—trapped in a kind of tunnel, a classic symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. This condition is marked by *intrusion*: the perpetual recurrence of thoughts, the inescapable presence of a violence that refuses to fade. I woke up with it every single morning.

Take-away Box — Chapter “My encounter with Margaret Thatcher”

Helicopter in the orchard

Two military- helicopters tear apart the idyll of a Tyrolean mountain village. For ten-year-old Speed, the “Iron Lady” becomes the first incarnation of political power — a production that cows and children alike choreograph.

Sensory initial- traumatising

Autistic hyper-perception registers every wisp of dust, every glare of the sun, the calculated physical distance of the security. The coldness of Thatcher's handshake (Speed turns his head away) characterises a permanent coupling reflex: reward versus conscience = violence.

Neoliberalism in flesh and blood

Thatcher not only stands for monetarism, deregulation and corporal punishment in the classroom, but also for the introduction of market logic into areas of life that were previously common property. The experience provides Speed with the emotional data set that is later condensed into a critique of capitalism- .

Staged authenticity

Cows specially driven down from the mountain pasture, folkloristic tablecloths, posed press photos: The ritual shows early on how political economy works via symbolic kitsch. In Speed's later theory, this becomes a "categorisation lie".

Birth of the reward boycott

The choice between sweetness (adaptation) and caning (punishment) triggers a childlike decision that carries the entire work: creative maladaptation instead of opportune compliance.

Follow long-term -

A line of growing segregation runs from Thatcherism to New Labour to Hartz IV. Speed's autism gives him the analytical long-term- memory to translate the sensory memory into a critique of the system that thinks economy, care and democracy together.

Classism and the Categorisation Lie

1

The problem revealed in this book regarding the behaviour of the authorities is what I have termed the *categorisation lie*, as already alluded to in the chapter on illness. This refers to the fog of abstraction that emerges in a society when the relationship between subject and object is no longer dynamic but static or hierarchical.

For example, human beings are not sufficiently protected by human rights if the state constructs abstract categories that exempt certain groups from them. The unemployed are not treated as full persons, but as a separate, administrative class of being. Through this abstraction, the state bypasses the normative framework of human dignity: people are turned into objects – which is, in fact, the very definition of a violation of dignity.

Job Centres, from this perspective, do not engage with *people*, but with *the unemployed*, and thus feel absolved from ethical obligations. Human dignity disappears under bureaucratic logic.

The focus of this investigation is therefore not the seemingly smooth functioning of job placement – which serves as a legitimising narrative – but what happens at the margins, especially to minorities and to those who resist for principled reasons.

Of course, there may be Job Centres that happen to work efficiently and humanely, placing qualified applicants into suitable jobs. But that does not excuse the fundamentally punitive structure of the system, which humiliates, disciplines, and dehumanises as soon as someone fails to conform to its logic. Any horror can be legitimised if the motive is abstracted into an ostensibly benevolent rationale – a “solution for the people”, as populist rhetoric loves to claim. All of it in the name of regulation, of sensible boundaries, of “common sense” exclusions at borders. But the reality is far more complex – and must be confronted.

In a constitutional state infinitely fragmented into administrative subcategories, the perception and enforcement of individual rights increasingly erodes. Local courts often appear indifferent to human rights – which, in principle, should be foundational – forcing affected individuals to go through the longest possible legal routes just to claim what should already be self-evident.

Few mechanisms exert more violence than categorisation lies. When an unemployed person is mistreated, prosecutors can reframe the situation

through bureaucratic categories that exempt them from action – especially when politically expedient.

In complex constitutional systems, the sheer multiplicity of legal frameworks and institutional responsibilities often leads to the erasure of context, nuance, and subjective suffering.

The German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency has emphasised that protection from racial discrimination must apply equally in public, civil, and criminal law. International human rights treaties such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Convention¹⁰³ on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination are binding. But their implementation is constantly undermined by the same structural logic that produces the categorisation lie. Studies show that experiences of discrimination are often not adequately taken into account in official procedures. This applies in particular to access to goods and services, but also to the handling of allegations of discrimination in the justice system. The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency points out that there are considerable obstacles to the enforcement of rights for those affected by discrimination, particularly in the area of civil law proceedings.¹⁰⁴ These aspects make clear that the formal structure of the rule of law, along with the categorical frameworks it employs, can lead to the systematic neglect of individual rights and life realities. This disproportionately affects marginalised groups, who often receive neither the recognition nor the support they need in official proceedings.

This dynamic is analysed in detail throughout this book. But once we understand that *the categorisation lie*—the false objectification of social identities—is the root of racism, antisemitism, exploitation, and injustice, it becomes only logical that the relationship between object and subject must be made dynamic again. This is precisely what Speed's work—his concept of *work-integrated relational agency*—has always aimed to realise.

For only the subjective individual can rupture the imposed category by refusing to conform and insisting on an authentic, lived relationship. That relationship must be enacted and worked through: this is the true core of *labour*, namely, to develop a mode of engaging the dynamic between subject and object that preserves individual experience, knowledge, and life. Only this makes the construction of truly complex universes possible.

¹⁰³

https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/Dokumentationen/dokumentation_fachtagung_rassismus.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3&utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁰⁴

https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/Experten/rechtsdurchsetzung_zivilrecht.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2&utm_source=chatgpt.com

Refer again to the cycle of spheres introduced earlier in the book: from submergence to indimergence to emergence—and from object, through experience, to free will. A world based solely on the “objective” is nonsensical, because the very concept of the *object*, as argued in *The Physics of the Poor*, is insufficient to explain *existence*. Existence is inconceivable without the relational space of the *nothing*, the undefined and open. Reality, then, is an eternally unfolding process.

The state, however, employs the lie of categorisation arbitrarily, using it to allocate people into fixed bureaucratic classes. Yet it remains structurally incapable of engaging in a mature discourse about the relations *between* these categories. This renders it blind to lived reality—a blindness that must be relentlessly revealed and disrupted by activists, thinkers, and artists. Without such acts of disruption, both reality and humanity are lost.

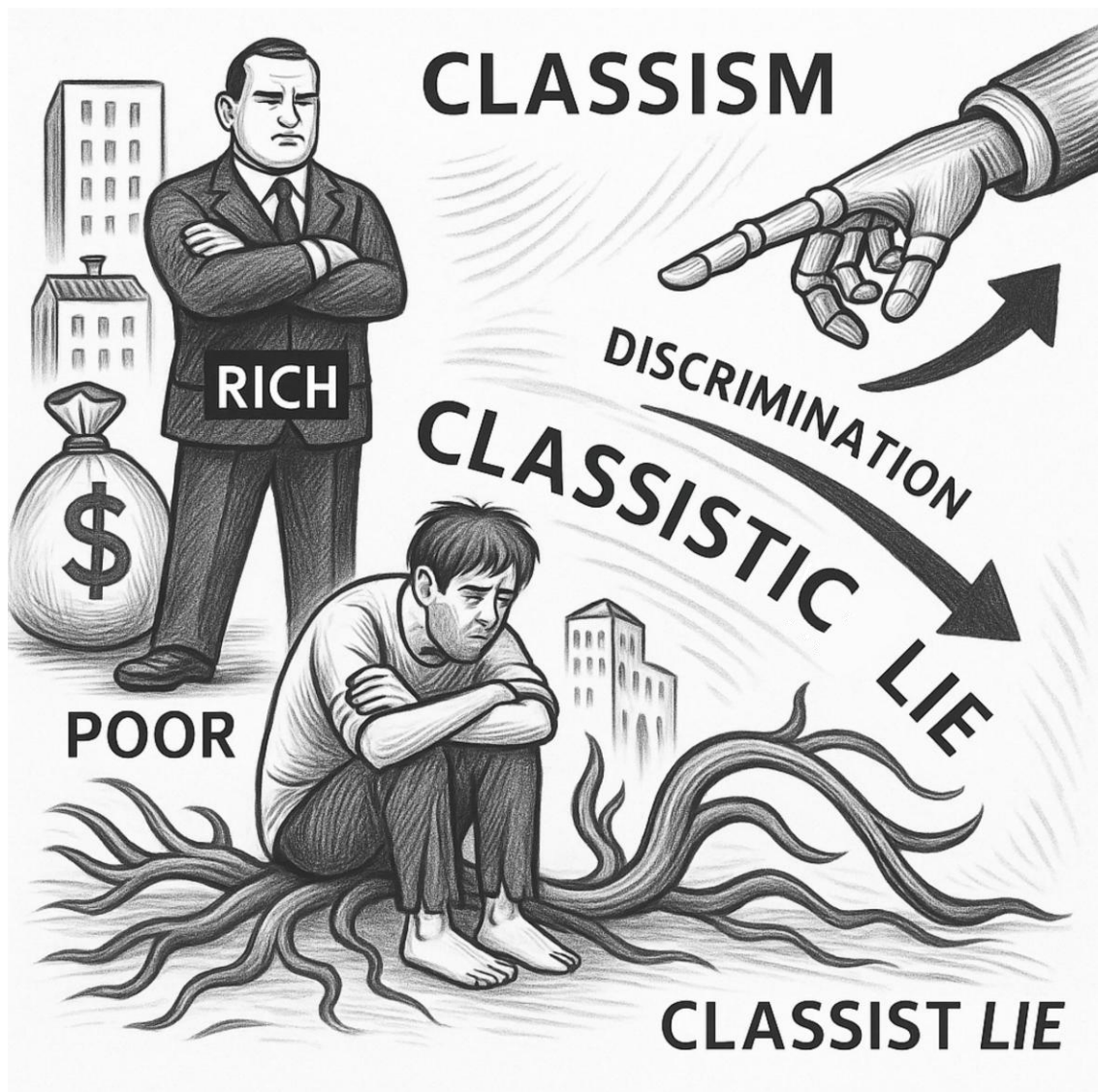
Institutions such as anti-discrimination offices cannot perform this task, because they lack an individual perspective. They have neither lived experience nor personal will—two key factors without which injustice cannot be truly recognised, let alone overcome. In this way, the experience of marginalised people is institutionally outsourced, sterilised, and neutralised, rendering it ineffective within the system as a whole.

All my work only becomes comprehensible in this light. What I do is precisely what the institutions fail to do: I restore the link between injustice and the individual who experiences it. Because injustice is never a category in isolation—it is a lived phenomenon. If injustice is only permitted to exist as a pre-defined category, then everyone not already included in that category is excluded from protection.

Suffering is real. But the *recognition* of suffering—what is counted, categorised, and validated as legitimate—is socially constructed. If that construction is not constantly exposed to open discourse, then bureaucracy reveals itself as what it often is: a machine for preserving power categories, including the category of the state itself.

People must develop the maturity to see these relationships clearly and act humanely within them. This is the key to healing systemic violence and dismantling structural racism.

It must be stated clearly: any civil servant or judge who ignores these realities and continues to construct law through empty phrases and categorisation lies is engaged in epistemic fraud—serving a system of group-based misanthropy. This way of working kills.



The concept of classism¹⁰⁵ was still largely unknown in Germany in 2024 and therefore not part of the category of injustice. For the German public, discrimination against the poor did not exist—it was seen as a natural punishment. The category of “the poor” contained no individuals. Hartz IV could be tightened endlessly without any real understanding of its effects on people. This was ignored entirely, including by the Federal Ministry of Labour. One must also consider how the categorisation lie of intelligence functions here—leading to structural infantilisation and the death of innovation.

¹⁰⁵ Classism refers to the discrimination, devaluation or structural disadvantage of people based on their (ascribed or actual) social origin or class position. The term encompasses both individual prejudices and institutionalised inequalities that particularly affect poor, unemployed or educationally disadvantaged people. Classism operates on a linguistic, cultural, economic and political level and is deeply rooted in social structures.

The legal possibility for this kind of violence lies in a convergence of three forces: categorical resistance to reality, a decoupled logic of the legal system, and the absence of a human rights category for poverty in German law. The German Basic Law does not explicitly protect against classism—it does not name poverty as a protected ground for discrimination. As a result, structural discrimination based on social origin or socio-economic status has been systematically depoliticised. The rule of law, in its formalism, claims to protect human dignity while remaining blind to the very mechanisms that undermine it.

The judiciary operates within a legal grammar that only recognises what fits existing categories. Poverty, however, is not legally defined as a structural injustice, but as the result of personal failure or lifestyle choices. This ideological framing made it legally permissible to sanction people and deprive them of their livelihoods without it being recognised as a violation of Article 1 of the German Basic Law (human dignity) or even as a form of torture. The institutional logic exonerates itself: as long as categories like “gainful employment” or “personal responsibility” dominate, state violence against the poor is waved through as mere administration—despite being degradation, retraumatisation, and annihilation.

The courts, shaped by their own class composition, are complicit in this logic. Early in my research on poverty and labour, I therefore coined the term *povertism*—or *poor racism*—as a conceptual extension of classism, designed to communicate this violence to a German public largely uneducated in these issues. Why didn’t I use classism? Because for me, the problem wasn’t primarily one of class. As an artist and cultural worker, I moved across social classes despite financial precarity—a dynamic typical of artists, who, like jesters at court, have an ambiguous position within the social structure. My goal was to deconstruct these very categories.

Classism, as a term, failed to grasp what I was experiencing. Discrimination against the poor had more to do with racism than with class struggle. The poor were not a cohesive class. There was no identification, no solidarity akin to that of racialised, queer, or religious minorities. You could be proud to be Black—but never proud to be poor. Classism left its victims alone. It had limited usefulness as a political concept.

Povertism, by contrast, described a process: it was not simply about stigmatising an existing group, but about producing a stigmatised group through forced impoverishment. Unlike antisemitism or anti-Black racism, where identity precedes exclusion, *povertism* turns people into *the poor* in order to then subject them to classist logic. You cannot forcibly make someone

Jewish to subject them to antisemitism. But you can push anyone into poverty—and then scapegoat them.

Povertism operates more profoundly and diffusely than traditional classist violence. Its logic serves capitalised violence: performance equals worth, failure equals inferiority. It weaponises all other racisms like a spinning cylinder in a revolver. Poverty is the bullet that binds them all.

I coined povertism to describe a process not of exclusion based on difference, but of alienation within sameness. It punishes people not for belonging to a different group, but for becoming a problem *within* their own. It turns failure into guilt. Unlike classism, which targets a supposed lower class, povertism targets anyone—especially those who fall from the middle or upper classes, for whatever reason. It criminalises descent.

Later I came across the term eugenic racism—the logic the Nazis used to “cleanse” their own race of perceived inferiority. White people attacking white people in the name of racial hygiene. Povertism shares this internalised logic. While traditional classism targets groups born into poverty, povertism is the social machinery that transforms dissenters, whistleblowers, or simply the unlucky into outcasts. These “new poor” often clashed with Job Centres—precisely because stereotypes like “poor = lazy” no longer held when applied to an engineer impoverished by illness or protest.

Authorities, faced with this dissonance, were forced to rationalise poverty in increasingly monetary and dehumanising terms. They collapsed complexity into budget lines. Human dignity became a financial calculation. Class, in such cases, ceased to be referenced at all.

Povertism, then, is the violence of the market—not a relic of class warfare, but a modern, data-driven, efficiency-obsessed form of repression. It turns people into surplus. It uses *sanctions* as a proxy for social execution. It is a violence that affects *everyone*, not just the structurally poor. Anyone can be targeted. That’s what makes it so insidious.

Whereas classism assigns fixed stereotypes to a pre-existing group, povertism weaponises fluidity: it targets anyone who loses access to economic value. It threatens the entire society with downward mobility and then criminalises those who fall.

Povertism is the modern face of capitalist violence. It operates not by class conflict, but by erasing the very possibility of a class—by atomising, stigmatising, and depersonalising. It imposes a competitive logic that divides to conquer and naturalises exclusion.

It tells us that the failed are not merely unlucky, but fundamentally wrong.

Another important concept in my work is social racism, a term attributed to the French extremism scholar Pierre-André Taguieff and implicitly present in Pierre Bourdieu's writings, such as *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. These terms are valid in themselves, yet they point to subtle but crucial distinctions.

As Taguieff argues in *The Force of Prejudice*, the term *racism* is far from simple—indeed, it is scientifically problematic, as it relies on the notion of “race,” a category with no biological foundation. It is, as he calls it, a “perpetrator concept” (*concept de persécuteur*), constructed from the logic of exclusion rather than objective difference.

Nevertheless, its epistemic and activist utility cannot be denied. One could ask: how else could Jewish people articulate the specific kind of violence they face, without invoking the term *antisemitism*? As philosopher Miranda Fricker notes, to deny people access to the concepts they need to interpret their own suffering is to commit a hermeneutical injustice. Taguieff puts it clearly:

“The individual is only seen as a representative of an arbitrary type, and only this type really exists. It follows that racism is anti-individualistic. Firstly, the individual, who is only an exhibit of the race, is seen as a sample of a racial type and thus denied as an individual. “If you've seen one, you've seen them all” is a formula that was frequently heard before the emergence of the word racism, thus explaining one of its peculiarities: the illusion of uniformity. According to this, it is not the individuals who are considered unequal, at least not as a priority, but it is certain classes of people who are labelled as races. There is a specific equality of those at the top, an equality of individuals who are regarded as representatives of a superior race. (...) The negation of the individual as an anthropological dimension is accompanied by the absence of the dignity of the person as an ethical moment, insofar as the person is not bound to his or her racial affiliation.”¹⁰⁶

In this way, racism becomes a logic of categorical sameness and essentialised otherness, where both elevation and degradation depend on the denial of individuality. Social racism, in this sense, targets not biology but the social construction of groups—be they cultural, economic, ethnic, or otherwise—by reducing individuals to their perceived group identity and denying them access to subjectivity.

That is why, in my work, it was so essential to respond to racism as individually and subjectively as possible. All forms of racism share a common structure: the drive to simplify, exclude, and reify the other. This is also the

¹⁰⁶ The Force of Prejudice / Pierre-André Taguieff / Hamburger Edition / p 138

essence of simulation—a process that seeks to seal itself off from complexity, to construct a “pacified totality” by eliminating difference.

Simulation and racism are mutually reinforcing. Both function by reducing relational, dynamic reality into fixed, static categories. Racism, like simulation, is not just an ideological stance but a structural method of containment and control.

This is also why traditional institutions are structurally vulnerable to racism—because, as Lyotard argued, they tend to treat knowledge as something fixed and absolute. This absolutism is the breeding ground for simulation and thereby for systemic violence against complexity and difference.

The same critique applies to capitalism, which, as theorists like Cedric J. Robinson have shown in *Black Marxism*¹⁰⁷, operates not only through economic exclusion but through epistemic violence—by reducing lived experiences, cultures, and perspectives to economic functions or marketable data.

Social racism enabled the German state to sever the complex reality of poverty under Hartz IV and to reify the poor—turning them into manageable, objectified figures in bureaucratic planning. When this abstraction failed to function, a second mechanism of reduction was deployed: the sanction. Sanctions served as moral punishment, disguising systemic exclusion as individual failure. Poverty was no longer seen as the result of inequality or the absence of opportunity, but as self-inflicted.

This radical cutting-off from reality is a form of structural violence of monstrous proportions, but within a society saturated with anti-poor prejudice, it was experienced not as a sharp knife, but as a “clean solution”—a simulation of clarity. German society naturalised this violence through a logic of simplification: poverty equals laziness, antisociality, and deviance. Politicians offered precisely this clarity, wrapped in the rhetorical reflexes of populism, to a disoriented public.

What must be understood is this: racism, populism, poverty, social atomisation, disorientation, powerlessness and crisis all stem from a single movement—the advance of simulation. In the digital century, simulation replaces relational resonance, and this loss goes largely unrecognised. It makes all the difference whether I relate to the world through lived

¹⁰⁷ Wikipedia: "Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition", first published in 1983, again in 2000 and a third edition in 2020, is a book by scholar Cedric Robinson. Influenced by many African-American and black economists and radical thinkers of the 19th century, Robinson creates a historical-critical analysis of Marxism and the Eurocentric tradition from which it emerged. The book does not build on or repeat Marxist thought, but introduces a race-specific analysis into the Marxist tradition.

relationship—or whether I am paid to participate in a simulation. The latter may reward me, but only at the cost of reducing value to price, authenticity to form, and meaning to metrics. That is the hidden violence of simulation and the fatal operating error of capitalism: when reward substitutes relevance, value is hollowed out.

Nearly 30 years ago, in books like *Damn Sexy*, I warned that society was losing its capacity to consciously shape its own symbolic order—media, politics, economy. We lost the internet. We are losing the economy. We are about to lose it again to AI. If we fail to preserve the possibility of subjective intervention, we will lose what defines humanity and culture itself.

Laws cannot defeat racism because laws themselves are simulations of power—they do not reach the minds and souls of people. What can truly weaken racism is the disintegration of the privileged's false sense of security—the end of their imagined right to closure from the world and from the knowledge of others. We must not only challenge totalitarian values; we must destabilise the values themselves, to prevent society from sealing itself off in false coherence.

“We are the best”: that is, the mere fact of our race (our collective identity) is mistaken for its superiority. Assigning inferiority to others presupposes a relation of domination—between them, the dominated, and us, the dominators.”¹⁰⁸

This is the logic of the *grand récit*—where identity is mistaken for hierarchy, and where simplification masks the structural violence of categorisation. As Lyotard warned, any system that claims to represent universal truth tends toward domination.

The simulation—that is, the reduction inherent in every job, shaping human activity today—generates one-sided prosperity. One could therefore argue that capitalism is a form of racism in itself, because its focus on “isolated value”—produced through exclusion and enforced scarcity within a falsely constructed competition—creates a value hierarchy that is illusory and serves a logic of domination. This illusion becomes the seed of racism whenever it becomes existential—whenever it is mistaken for reality. The capitalist market inevitably generates this illusion by systematically reducing complexity, directly or indirectly economising all areas of life. This leads not only to racism, but also to the suppression of reality and complex truths.

¹⁰⁸ Pierre-André Taguieff / Die Macht des Vorurteils. Der Rassismus und sein Double / Hamburger Edition / p 146

This also explains the cognitive dissonance at the heart of the legal system: it acknowledges human rights but refuses to recognise racism embedded in capitalism itself. This blind spot is structurally desirable because it creates taboo zones—areas deliberately excluded from scrutiny. These zones facilitate the ongoing violence against minorities, legitimised by capitalism and left unchallenged by the justice system. The system sustains itself through this contradiction by criminalising and humiliating the poor—because it is politically and ideologically easier than admitting that capitalism functions as a racist structure. Market value is necessarily an illusion, because relevance does not behave hierarchically. Scientifically, there is no evidence that relevance or truth consistently rises to the top of any hierarchy. On the contrary, hierarchy exists primarily to simulate legitimacy—to give the illusion that what is on top is most valuable. The hierarchy is not the outcome of value recognition; it is the self-referential machinery that manufactures it.

Capitalist value is no less arbitrary than the birthright of aristocratic heirs to the throne. It is a social construction—nothing more.

3

It seems easy to prove that capitalism is a lie, but almost impossible to break the psychological entanglement—that is, the cognitive dissonance—that makes people believe in it, simply because they are existentially dependent on it. This also applies to public prosecutors and judges.

That is why it is so important to show that even constitutional institutions like public prosecutor's offices are not only capable of deception and lies within the simulation, but that this is part of the very logic of hierarchy and bureaucracy. It is about constructing power through simplification.

David Graeber wrote in his book *The Utopia of Rules* about bureaucratic systems and their relation to truth and power:

“Such institutions always produce a culture of complicity. (...) We are dealing here with a certain form of double standard that is typical of all kinds of bureaucratic systems. All bureaucracies are utopian to a certain extent, because they propagate an abstract ideal that people as they are can never fulfil. (...) The most important criterion for loyalty to the organisation becomes complicity. Career advancement is not based on merit, nor on being someone's cousin, but primarily on the willingness to believe in the fiction that career advancement is based on merit, even though everyone knows this is not true. Or the fiction that rules and regulations apply equally to everyone, when in reality they are often used as a means of exercising completely arbitrary personal power.”

Bureaucracy, then, is often a form of fraud, because truth and knowledge within it can be reformatted at any time—through shortcuts, through the lie of categorisation—and are reformatted constantly. Bureaucracy lies by replacing reality with simulation.

We know that bureaucracy is a form of structural violence that systematically discriminates against the underprivileged while protecting the privileged through exactly this reduction. It serves to legitimise and stabilise existing conditions. It systematically refuses to engage with individual differences—something the powerful do not need in order to be recognised as valuable.

The cognitive dissonance of bureaucrats resulting from this also explains why rules are often applied particularly harshly. Because “harshness” replaces “reality” in such systems. A lack of alternatives is declared to be reality, simply because the system itself is incapable of flexibility.

The world must adapt to bureaucracy—not the other way around.

The harsher the rules, the more “real” and “legitimate” they appear. This is how bureaucracy imposes a simplified reality. The injustice is concealed by the severity of its enforcement, which appears as necessity, and thereby makes life easier for civil servants. The more brutally rules are enforced, the fairer they seem—because they appear beyond question. This is the perversion of simplification: it stabilises itself only through ever-increasing violence.

And this is something humanity can no longer afford in 2024. But it continues to be carried out every day—against the poor in systems like Hartz IV or Bürgergeld. They are forced into the corridor of a simplified order that suppresses critical reflection on the system and leaves the population ignorant of the real economic conditions.

4

It was only three years ago, in 2020, that the German Bundestag officially recognised that the victims of the Holocaust also included so-called “antisocials” — that is, people persecuted as work-shy, vagrants, alcoholics, prostitutes, or otherwise “undesirable,” including many who would today be categorised as Hartz IV recipients. Thousands of them were murdered.

It may sound like an exaggeration, but there is a disturbing historical continuity between the Nazi classification “racial value group IV,” which was used to label the poor and so-called “antisocials,” and the later German welfare system known as Hartz IV. Under National Socialism, these people were marked with the black triangle instead of the yellow star and were sent to

concentration camps — often to be “exterminated through work,” under the infamous slogan “Arbeit macht frei,” displayed at the gates of Auschwitz.

The same speech act — the same administrative and rhetorical logic — can be found in the welfare institutions of the time, and again today in the Job Centres of modern Germany.

*“After the girls had been imprisoned for a year and a half at the earliest, the welfare officer had to make a diagnosis about the possibility of 'reintegration into the national community'.”*¹⁰⁹ – This referred to the so-called “girls' concentration camp” at Uckermark.

It is not only the word *reintegration* that is revealing here, but the entire logic of *selection*, of deciding who is “worthy” and who is not, in order to extract “usefulness” from individuals, regardless of who they are or what they want. Establishing this historical continuity is crucial. Without recognising the tradition and the structural pattern behind such forms of discrimination, injustice against the poor will persist. The stigmatisation of the supposedly “unworthy” has always been the intellectual gateway to fascism — and it still is today.

Social racism is not a Nazi invention. But when it is combined with physical violence and the intent to destroy lives deemed “unworthy,” it becomes a political blueprint — a reductionist logic of domination. It turns poverty into a “problem” to be solved not through care, justice, or redistribution, but through administrative elimination. In this sense, the drawing board — the technocratic mindset that plans the exclusion of the poor — becomes a familiar shortcut for dealing with poverty in modern states.

5

When we talk about racism and poverty, we must also talk about eugenic racism — that is, racial hygiene — as the most extreme and violent form of racism against the poor in modern history.

Most people still think of racism primarily as the devaluation or exclusion of an “other” race. But for many racists — and especially for the National Socialists — just as central was the idea of purifying their *own* race by eliminating those deemed “inferior” within it. This is precisely what led me to develop the concept of *povertism* as an alternative to *classism*, which I consider insufficient for capturing the full scope of this dynamic.

¹⁰⁹ Anne Allex u.a / Sozialrassistische Verfolgung im deutschen Faschismus: Kinder- Jugendliche, Frauen - Schwierigkeiten beim Gedenken / AG SPAK / S 84 l. Abs.

This form of racism targeted the inner structure of society, as the Nazis saw it, and led to the imprisonment and murder of thousands of poor white Germans, disabled people, and autistic individuals in the concentration camps. Clearly, Hartz IV cannot be equated with the eugenic mass murder of that era. But the willingness to use coercion and psychological violence against the unemployed is steadily increasing in Germany today — and this punitive obsession with the poor, this drive to discipline or eradicate them as a “problem,” cannot be understood without acknowledging the historical legacy of eugenic racism in Germany.

There has been public discussion about the Nazi regime’s extermination of disabled people — but there has been far less discussion about the murder of so-called “antisocials,” targeted not because of any ideology or origin, but out of pure social resentment.

And when the German government reintroduces a law that allows for a total suspension of food and financial assistance for two months for unemployed people who “refuse” to work — as was recently done under pressure from the CDU¹¹⁰ and FDP due to shrinking budgets — then we must speak plainly: this is not simply about fiscal discipline. This is about the return of a violent fantasy of social purification, one that echoes the logic of racial hygiene, calling for even tougher measures against so-called “work refusers” and CDU even wants to amend the German constitution to do so. One wonders where the line should be drawn on this incitement to hatred. Recently, the CSU has also called for migrants to be deprived of their right of residence if they have to live on social welfare. That is a typical right-wing extremist idea.

Every time a social racist like Plum, Avocado, Apricot or Grape from the CDU, CSU or FDP launched into one of their populist tirades against Hartz IV recipients over the past decade, it triggered panic attacks, days of anxiety, sweating and immense psychological distress for me. And I can assume that thousands across the country suffered in similar ways.

These politicians are perpetrators of structural violence. They operate from within the party-political centre, but their rhetoric and actions are functionally indistinguishable from those of the far right. It is crucial that society begins to understand this reality from the perspective of those affected.

Whenever the CDU, CSU or FDP talk about the “good poor” versus the “bad poor,” or call for harsher measures against so-called “job refusers” — a propagandistic fairy tale — they are not just engaging in populism: they are

¹¹⁰ Tagesschau / 14.1.2024 / Plum CDU proposes changing the constitution to sanction the poor more strongly.

actively dehumanising people and inflicting long-term psychological and existential damage.

Resistance to Hartz IV or the Bürgergeld is not a refusal to work — it is a legitimate, often existentially necessary, act of protest against a system that violates dignity and destroys lives.

In Germany today, freedom of speech is punished with homelessness. Those who dare to speak out against this punitive regime risk being cut off from basic needs.

As I have shown throughout this book, hatred and violence escalate rapidly in systems where structures are simplistically reduced, and the capitalist market generates its greatest profits precisely through such reductions. Where simplification meets profit, hate becomes lucrative. And when hatred merges with capitalist efficiency — that is the recipe for fascism. The absolute will to maximise efficiency in order to unilaterally increase profits, combined with: "*The unwillingness to imagine what happens to the other*"¹¹¹, to use Hannah Arendt's phrase in the sense of the "banality of evil".

The economist Anne Alex, who sadly passed away before I had the chance to meet her in person, published two essential books on this subject: *Sozialrassistische Verfolgung im deutschen Faschismus* and *ausgesteuert – ausgegrenzt ... angeblich asozial*. Both were released by AG SPAK. These are outstanding and important works, with contributions from various scholars. I consider them standard reference texts when it comes to showing how deeply Hartz IV was — and still is — entangled with the traditions of the Third Reich, but also with those of the German Empire.

One only needs to list the historical events — like the "Beggars' Week" in 1933, or the 1938 campaign *Arbeitsscheu Reich*, during which the criminal police deported 10,000 homeless people and so-called "antisocials" to concentration camps. And of course, when I sit across from Mr G., the former police officer, in his interrogation room, and he tries to make me homeless because I am an artist — I feel a deep, ancestral panic. What else am I supposed to think of when I hear Grape (CDU chairman) ranting with hatred about the poor, if not the horrors of Nazi social racism? How can I not feel the repetition of the Holocaust as a physical fear throughout my body?

To pull the plug on someone today means to make them poor. You might not kill them as quickly, but you may destroy them even more existentially. You kill their hope, their sense of joy, their possibility of recognition, their feeling of belonging. Above all, you prevent them from becoming.

¹¹¹ Hannah Arendt on the Nazis and their "banality of evil" - and why she caused such an outcry in the world. An interview with the then NDR broadcaster Joachim Fest from 1964, broadcast on Südwestrundfunk (SWR). 16:40

And that kind of killing is traumatic for all of us — for all of humanity.

Take-away box — Chapter “Classism & the categorisation lie”

Classism = invisible class discrimination

It is not income alone, but social status of origin that determines whose vote counts. Classist prejudices “naturalise” poverty — comparable to racism, only along the income and education hierarchy.

The categorisation lie

Bureaucratic grids (“able / unable to work”, “eligible / unwilling to work”) create a false objectivity that masks structural violence. As soon as people have to fit into a pigeonhole, their individual narrative is erased — and sanctions appear “objective”.

Symbolic violence in officialese

Terms such as “failure to cooperate” or “lack of motivation to work” serve as linguistic weapons: they transform complex life situations into moral failures and legitimise cutbacks, control and shaming.

Epistemic Injustice

Anyone labelled as a classicist is considered an unreliable source of knowledge (Fricker). The office does not listen because it already knows by definition “what is going on with such people” — a dialogue format that is silenced.

Autistic perspective uncovers mechanism

Through hypersystematic detailed visualisation, Speed dissects the supposedly “neutral” administrative language and makes the underlying bias visible — a loop that neurotypical readers often skip.

Social costs

Classist frames undermine democracy: they prevent participation, generate latent anger and fuel right-wing populist narratives (“lazy benefit recipients”). The categorisation lie is therefore not a marginal phenomenon, but a core risk to social cohesion.

Act of Violence 3: Fathers' Pain

1

One of the most difficult chapters of my impoverishment was the fact that, at a certain point—under psychological terror from the state and society—I was no longer able to pay child support for two of my children. The state took over the maintenance payments and then held me liable for repayment. Precisely because this was such a serious conflict, I want to look at it more closely. Many people will find what I did here difficult or even impossible to understand, which is why it is essential to describe the events in great detail. Because this is where what Bourdieu called *symbolic violence* comes into play: a hidden form of violence embedded in social norms, which assign people certain roles without considering the complexity of their individuality, their affordances, or the biographical constraints they are subject to.

The children were taken care of. They did not experience poverty. Financially, they were better off than most children on welfare. I was present where I could be. I did what I could. But this meant not only that I received little or no remuneration for my work—apart from the Hartz IV rate—despite working 40 hours a week or more in an effort to escape poverty through my labour; I was also being charged, each month, with nearly double that amount as debt by the state. As an autistic person officially recognised as severely disabled, I didn't realise the full extent of this at the time. The state, which had benefited for decades from my often unpaid work as an artist—and from the scandalously underpaid work of most cultural workers in the country—was now putting me into debt. This was the kind of treatment that can obliterate a person's life.

I tried everything to organise more income, but I didn't succeed—because of autism. Two factors were key at that point: I had lost my resilience, suffering from complex PTSD triggered by years of systemic terror, and I hadn't functioned within economic norms for 30 years due to what was later diagnosed as autism with ADHD. Because of my neurodivergence and my beliefs, I had spent decades trying—mostly unpaid—to contribute to society with what resources I had, unaware that I was being rejected again and again for reasons directly tied to autism and ADHD. I worked with the only means available to me as an autistic person. I immersed myself in research, convinced that I would eventually find a place professionally, because the truth had to matter—the truth that I was seeing patterns in society that were neither logical nor just.

It never occurred to me that society could function on different mechanisms entirely—ones based on power, conformity, and unspoken conventions that I simply could not perceive like neurotypical people can. I took justice literally. I took art literally. I took research literally. And I went to work, trying to fix what those strange people out there didn't seem to understand—for reasons I could never fathom. For autistic people, the world is made of details. For neurotypicals, it's a sphere—a rough, blurry concept they improvise into place until it “kind of works”, no matter the consequences. But I was neurologically incapable of such improvisation.

Many autistic people are. That's why so many whistleblowers and activists—Greta Thunberg, Julian Assange—are autistic. We have no filter against the discrepancies of the world. We cannot simply function. Because knowledge in people like me is embodied—shaped by our existence—any coercion of the body, such as forced labour, amounts to a direct intervention into our thinking and our being. While neurotypicals may find unwanted labour frustrating, many autistic people experience it as an act of violence against the self. The freedom to determine our own bodies, how they work, and what they pursue is not a matter of preference—it's a neurological necessity.

To force my body into externally imposed actions was to ban my existence, to suppress my speech. My decades-long refusal of conventional employment was not ideological; it was neurological. I simply could not comply. It caused me pain—real, unnegotiable pain—and pulled me away from any ability to focus on “just any job.”

Added to this were the biographical constraints that often affect cultural workers: those who, after decades of dedication, are no longer employable in “normal” jobs. This created challenges far beyond my control. Many people think that if things don't work out, you can just retrain. But what if you were barely paid for decades and driven by commitment alone? What if your work is inseparable from your identity? What gives society—the same society that profited from your labour—the right to expect you to erase yourself, pretend the market is right, and act as if your art was worthless all along?

As an autistic person, I couldn't do it. Many neurodivergent people carry a deep sensitivity to injustice and ethical contradiction. This intensity often brings them into direct conflict with social structures they perceive as wrong. I couldn't let go of the problem, and at the same time, I felt a fierce internal drive to solve it creatively and fundamentally—something that seemed entirely logical to me.

By contrast, conventional employment requires a normative self-regulation that must be maintained over hours, days, years. And the moment you slip, you're fired. Around 80% of autistic people with higher education remain

unemployed, as mentioned earlier. If, like me at the time, you don't know you are autistic, it becomes nearly impossible to understand why nothing seems to work.

You must understand: this wasn't a game for me. It was about survival. Society assumed an affordance that might be realistic for neurotypical citizens—but not for me.

They devalued my actual work—completely and irrationally—despite the demonstrable value of my contributions. They made it economically impossible for me, as an autistic artist, to build a livelihood. I was denied support, barred from alternative paths, left with no bridges—only debts. And yet, I continued working 40 hours a week, trying to give something to the people of this country. Ten books don't write themselves. Nor do twenty years of unpaid research.

So we see here how the violence against me escalated—while the authorities simply denied the massive injustice behind it. My work became *invisible labour*: activities that are socially necessary and often essential, yet neither paid nor recognised as work. The term originates from feminist economics (e.g. Arlie Hochschild, 1983; Barbara Ehrenreich) and encompasses emotional labour, care work, unpaid domestic labour, volunteer work, and the invisible preparatory and follow-up work in formal employment. Women, migrants, and precarious workers are particularly affected.

This cannot be taken to mean that I didn't want to work in formal employment. I tried—repeatedly. But when I did, it simply wasn't viable in day-to-day life. I felt like I was playing a role in a deranged theatre, losing my grip on reality. It triggered panic. Contradictions that others seemed to endure with the ease of someone scratching a chalkboard next to them sent me into spirals of emotional distress and depression. It was as if I were trying to escape a neurotypical sect—a sect whose dogma was that hard work pays off, that the market is fair.

They wanted to force me into something that simply could not work—while simultaneously assigning a value of zero to the labour of artists. They devalued my talents. They devalued my entire personality. They left me with no way out, and yet refused to acknowledge this—because they assumed I was like them: jaded, adaptable, able to violate my own integrity without pain. What I *could* do—what I *tried* to do—was to contribute to the world creatively and ethically, because anything else was unbearable to me. And for that, I was punished. What they wanted me to do—I simply couldn't.

This caused profound suffering. The entire world pretended that “any job” should be no problem, and that it was my refusal that created the conflict. When I spoke of ethics or conscience, it only enraged them further.

The fact that people like me—precariously employed in theatre, film, literature, painting, under constant threat of poverty and insolvency—maintained the cultural infrastructure of the country, nourished democratic debate, protected public memory and critical discourse, was not only ignored, but actively denied by the state. The moment artists became poor, the label “poor” stripped them of any legitimacy—and exonerated both society and state from their shared responsibility. The stigma was total. Even artists known to work daily below minimum wage, exploited in the name of culture, were treated as disposable. This revealed the full extent of the state’s irrational brutality toward the poor.

But it was symbolic violence: violence regarded as appropriate and just by those who consider themselves “the norm.” It followed the same logic by which they themselves were rewarded.

Naturally, this led many people to reflexively condemn me—many of them with good intentions, valuing the welfare of children and believing they were protecting it. But my autism had remained undiagnosed for decades. The disqualification I experienced also had racist overtones—because I wasn’t permitted to recognise that poverty isn’t a matter of diligence or obedience, nor simply a matter of personal will. I was trapped in a conflict that was structurally unsolvable: everything I tried was met with contempt, because no one wanted to acknowledge my intention to solve the problem.

The situation was, and remains, extraordinarily complex and difficult. The fact is: I had no training outside the arts. As I’ve already stated, I had failed in many jobs before—precisely because I didn’t fit in as an undiagnosed autistic person. So it remains easy for some to accuse me of not looking hard enough for “any job”—as if that would solve the systemic violence described here, and as if, with a neurodivergent brain and biographical blockages, I would suddenly be able to function in a capitalist reality tailored to others.

The Job Centre advisors didn’t solve this problem—they made it worse. They devalued my previous work (as already discussed), plunging me into an identity crisis. They didn’t understand that they were making me carry a burden of guilt, even though it is *society* that is indebted to cultural workers—those who keep producing, unpaid or underpaid, and live in permanent precarity. To pressure these people to become someone else, to become “market-fit”, flips ethical reasoning on its head and makes no sense. So how, from within this madness, is anyone supposed to act constructively—let alone find a solution that doesn’t involve self-destruction?

The question of when to give up, when to become someone else, when to feign adaptability—is not a minor one. All the values we’re taught as humans boil down to one core command: never give up on the things that matter. And so

there was always hope for me. I always believed that I would overcome poverty by working on art and society. I still believe that. That's why I'm writing this book. I believe it will help me move forward. I believe it will liberate me from devaluation. That, to me, remains the only logical response. I've invested decades of unpaid labour. Giving up would send me into despair. Everything I created over 30 years would be nullified—destroyed by collective ignorance and institutional forgetting. As if 30 years of work had never existed. In this situation, it wasn't primarily about the children. It was about a brutal accounting equation between the state and me. The state lied about the relationship between contribution and performance—because it didn't want to question the capitalist model. They installed a “debt clock” beside me, the autistic cultural worker, while at the same time society continued to consider my work part of Germany's artistic and intellectual culture—which is why I occasionally received funding from state institutions. One hand punished me. The other praised me.

This is the absurd and sick paradox that defines the state's relationship to cultural labour. *We need you—but we also despise you.* We ask you to provide us with culture and art—but if that makes you poor, we punish you for not conforming to the market we ourselves trained you to resist. According to the German Basic Law, art is a pillar of democracy. But in practice, the state plays a false and cynical game with the existential foundations of artists.

And today, artists are increasingly labelled “benefit scroungers” by the right-wing press in order to further humiliate them—and to justify populist cuts that destroy what's left of their livelihoods¹¹² in order to demean them further and devalue our work even more through populist cuts. In art, the expression of people's inner relationship to the world has been perverted into a competition for funding—where those who “fail” are labelled bad artists, even though they often put in just as much work as those who are rewarded. But art is not a sport. In this field, excellence only has value when it arises from the diversity of artistic production across the entire cultural landscape. Without recognition and appreciation of this diversity, “excellence” becomes something that actively damages culture.

And yet, it is precisely through this illusion of excellence that the state performs its trick: pretending to support “the best” culture, while most artists are simply left to perish—still working, because they can't not work. Because we, like me, cannot stop doing this. It's in our nature.

¹¹² Welt press article, online on YouTube, from 25 September 2024 on the anti-Semitism clause in Berlin, about cultural senator Chialo, regarding the clause as a prerequisite for funding for the arts.

Even though they made at least €140,000 in profit from my unpaid labour, as previously calculated, they still wanted to charge me thousands more in debt. To legitimise this—to cover up the injustice—I was branded a “work refuser” in official files. The label serves a singular purpose: to prevent the exploited from articulating their suffering as what it actually is—a profound and system-critical form of dissent.

2

There are and have been fundamental coordinates in German maintenance law (child support law) that are socially racist and classist. For example: if a father is married and falls into poverty together with his wife and children, he does not have to repay child maintenance taken over by the state under Hartz IV. However, if the same father is separated, he must reimburse what the state pays for the children—regardless of whether he is completely impoverished. The same applies to mothers.

This is a blatant inequality that reflects the additional stigmatisation of separated parents. In the eyes of the state, they are categorically ranked *below* Hartz IV recipients. It is difficult to explain this irrationality otherwise—except perhaps by pointing to the cultural legacy of Catholic or Protestant morality in Germany, where divorced and separated individuals are still implicitly punished. In a way, this is God's judgment disguised as state policy. What results is an irrational madness, embedded and defended by the authorities.

As with Hartz IV, the system refuses to acknowledge that poverty is rarely a matter of individual failure and is instead highly complex. Nor is there any respect for the fact that people *naturally* try to escape poverty—that they do not *want* to be poor. Instead, the state operates from a baseline of resentment, particularly toward separated parents—especially fathers—based on the assumption that they are attempting to evade financial responsibility. As if they were choosing poverty as a loophole.

Of course, such refusal does occur, including among people who could easily pay. But the idea that fathers impoverish themselves *on purpose* to avoid paying for their children is absurd. If someone is impoverished, they *obviously* cannot afford to pay. Instead of recognising the actual hardship and systemic nature of poverty, or society's collective responsibility for it, the state clings to a narrative of guilt and personal failure. The question of a parent's “ability to pay” is reduced to a theoretical abstraction. Everything else—context, complexity, structural causes—is ignored.

This distortion aligns perfectly with a socially racist narrative: the obsession with “proving” that poor people are secretly in denial, that they are somehow cheating. Even when poverty stems from entirely different causes, the system interprets any attempt to challenge that framing as a refusal to work.

This example is crucial, because it illustrates how irrational and violent our methods of measuring value truly are. It reveals the willingness to destroy lives through lies—just to maintain the illusion that capitalist calculations are fair and correct. The state’s focus is not on fighting poverty, but on using force against separated parents to save money. To that end, it produces narratives that emphasise guilt and ignore systemic factors—like my autism, for instance. People are manipulated into believing that “ability to work” (and ultimately the *will* to work) alone determines whether or not someone is poor. Poverty becomes a question of free will—an absurd simplification. If you can work, then either you have an income or you're a refuser. In this logic, efficiency erases both equality of opportunity and the concept of *affordance*. This framing—deliberately reductive and enforced by force—becomes official doctrine.

The actual circumstances of those affected are never that simple. What we’re seeing here is a calculated fraud against the poor, especially separated parents. The law pretends to be neutral, but its effect is systemically violent. And because this violence is enshrined in “legitimate” law, the justice system doesn’t prosecute it. Structural violence, even when it violates human rights and leads to illness or suicide, is not treated as bodily harm—it belongs to a different category entirely. What we have here is not a justice system of double standards, but *political justice*: a system that assigns categories of injustice based on political convenience, not moral truth. This, in turn, creates the very double binds that make people ill. It is a spiral of violence.

You can find these double binds—false framings of human worth—wherever people are trapped in precarity. Artists and single mothers are two groups who embody systematically ignored injustice. When artists become poor, it is not because they want to burden society with their art, but because they want to *offer something valuable* to society. Mothers, likewise, are blamed for needing support, when they are in fact upholding life itself.

But if artists were treated fairly, it would trigger an uprising among workers, who would begin asking why *they* aren’t allowed to live self-determined lives, to question work conditions, or to have children that society helps support. That’s the paradox: artists—and, similarly, many single mothers—are punished by the state with unconscious contempt. Public prosecutors, for example, often act immediately *against* artists, only later considering whether their actions might be protected by artistic freedom. And single mothers are

blamed automatically. This undermines both artistic and personal freedom in practice.

Underlying all this is a systemic compulsion to despise artists and single parents. The injustice done to them is so profound, it creates a kind of collective cognitive dissonance—and so society looks the other way. Worse, this contempt is made *socially acceptable* in a way that allows both the state and the general population to neglect, exclude, or disdain artists and single mothers alike. Hence their structural disadvantage in job markets, policy debates, and social status.

All of this stems from an unresolved contradiction: the need for truth and freedom on one hand, and the systemic pressure to earn money at any cost on the other. The average citizen reconciles this by adopting self-serving narratives—like the idea that art has no real value, or that motherhood isn't labour. After all, if something isn't paid, it must be worthless.

The true scandal is that the public has never been informed about the actual labour, the real contribution, of artists and mothers—because exposing this truth would undermine the entire exploitative system. Many people in Germany actually believe that art functions like business: that it runs on sales and sponsorships. That's about as absurd as assuming doctors survive on what patients can personally afford. These systems are fundamentally different and must be recognised as such. The state refuses to do this—because artists, like mothers, will keep going even if they aren't paid. The machine keeps running. Germany's culture ministers and social welfare politicians have long played this cynical game.

But this madness doesn't stop with artists and mothers. It affects *everyone* who is financially disadvantaged and suffering from the lies capitalism tells to maintain itself.

You cannot accuse a woman who raises a child for 20 years of refusing to work simply because she becomes impoverished as a result of this overwhelming burden. Yet the bank treats her as if she were worthless. The same applies to all other care workers. And what about those who take risks to innovate and fail? Are they all lazy, are they all refusing to work? What about those whose education is devalued by the market and therefore can't find jobs? Are they refusing to work just because they reject being humiliated or exploited? Is resistance to exploitation not also a form of responsibility — toward others and toward oneself? Are these people bad?

Caseworkers at youth welfare offices claimed that if you weren't half-dead in bed, then you were capable of work — while ignoring that the poverty people had fallen into was the result of deep structural failures of capitalism. And that is the key point: By denying these structural connections, pressure can be

exerted on the poor to push them into the low-wage sector. This ideology perpetuates poverty. Because only those who fight back, who claim value for themselves, are able to escape poverty — and perhaps resume paying maintenance. Punishment and exploitation take precedence over the creation of conditions in which all parents could provide for their children. From the state's perspective, inequality is meant to persist. Which means: the state causes inequality — it causes poverty. The structural penalisation of the poor continuously produces new poverty. That itself is a form of devaluation. And devaluation is the fundamental evil — it is where the state's responsibility for poverty lies.

The term "*ability to pay*" (Leistungsfähigkeit) completely erases the complex realities of actual payment capacity, along with the ongoing contributions that were ignored due to systemic injustice. As I've explained before, this concept equated payment capacity with only two things: the act of taking up work, which would allow maintenance payments, or a recognised refusal to work. In this way, poverty itself was criminalised. The state was willing to lie, if necessary, in order to enforce its violence.

In response, I documented the names of all officials and politicians who knew about these practices and yet continued to support them — who covered them up and thereby enabled fraud. They were informed in writing, warned, and ultimately charged — morally, if not legally — with intentional deception.

And in fact, the state was right to pay the maintenance advance. Because it was the state — the very circumstances it had created and sustained — that made those affected poor and sick.

Even though I suffered from complex PTSD, even though I repeatedly tried to find other jobs as an autistic cultural worker with no formal training outside the arts — completing multiple retraining programmes — I was continually pushed out of employment by economic crises and by the impact of my then-undiagnosed autism. Despite this, I was officially deemed "fit for work", which meant that the youth welfare office concluded I wasn't fulfilling my so-called "increased obligation to work." All other factors were deliberately ignored.

This idea — "*increased obligation to work*" (gesteigerte Erwerbsobliegenheit) — is another bureaucratic construct designed to mask the lack of equal opportunity. It represents the perverse notion that a separated parent must work full-time, utilising every conceivable hour, to fulfil their duty to pay child support. But this hides the abuse: if every possible job had to be taken — even sex work — then the logic implies that some job always exists, and if you can't find it, or you're burnt out or autistic, then you're guilty.

The state thus pushed the concept of obligation into a utopian fiction, in which people had to function like machines or else be treated as criminals. This

created an institutional attitude in youth welfare offices whereby anything the poor said could be dismissed — because a “refusal” could always be asserted. Psychological terror was deliberately used to break people, in order to confirm their guilt. As my case shows, the point wasn’t even to recover money — it was to punish the poor.

Actual debt collection would have required a societal re-evaluation of poverty. But youth welfare offices were largely unsuccessful in collecting real payments. Their legitimacy came not from helping children but from punishing the poor. That’s where the incentive structure lay. A perverse system that motivated institutions to lie, and the law was written to allow that — to ignore real causes and always place blame on the impoverished parent. A system full of criminal energy.

The state thus demanded that people work until they collapsed — and twisted the natural desire of most parents to provide for their children into a coercive requirement to deny their own existence. This led to even more devaluation — and covered up the already existing injustices.

In addition to imposing debt, which exerted economic pressure on the lower classes, the system profited from this imposed servitude. The poor were exploited twice over. I call this the “double hit.”

Instead of ending poverty or improving job opportunities for separated parents — for example, by giving them hiring preference to help them pay maintenance — they were stripped of all bargaining power and used as moral scapegoats in a kind of Christian end-time judgment. Work itself became a punishment, a form of modern torture, as Foucault described in *Discipline and Punish*. Poverty was no longer inflicted on people through marginalisation — no, the poor were said to inflict poverty on society.

This created a form of apartheid in the labour market. There were those whose work was self-actualising, with paid leave and dignity — and there were those for whom work became punishment, a destructive force to be endured until they were drained of all strength. Unsurprisingly, many impoverished fathers never escaped poverty — their disenfranchisement kept them at the bottom of every wage negotiation, and their health often collapsed as a result.

3

In 2017, I wrote several letters to the head of the youth welfare office in which I attempted to explain these systemic connections. The office pretended not to understand. The head of the youth welfare office replied:

"I have reviewed the files and consulted with the caseworker. (...) As far as I can determine, you have fully repaid the maintenance advances granted to your children (...) in the past. You were obligated to do so under the laws of the State of Brandenburg. The accusation of deception cannot be substantiated, as you failed to provide sufficient evidence of your inability to pay. Merely working as a freelance artist does not justify the suspension of obligations."¹¹³

In his reply, the head of the youth welfare office twisted my statements until they fit the usual cliché of a father refusing to pay. From my explanation that my decades of work as a cultural worker ought to factor into the state's equation, he deduced only that my artistic work was not an illness and therefore not a legitimate reason to stop payments. He implied that artistic work was something private, a lifestyle choice, and thus irrelevant when assessing my ability to pay.

In doing so, he denied the social value of cultural work altogether—100%. This amounted to a direct penalisation of artists, which is unconstitutional in a democracy. But this kind of thinking aligned with the right-wing resentments widespread among administrative authorities. What we see here is a complete refusal to acknowledge the precarious conditions of freelance artists, who take enormous personal risks to contribute to society, only to be framed as a burden instead of a benefit.

This is scandalous. Anyone who considers artists worthless is actively reinforcing far-right narratives. Despite the complexity of administrative law, the official could and should have acknowledged my contributions:

"Mr Speed, you have worked for our culture for 30 years, largely unpaid. Thank you for your service. What can the State of Brandenburg do to support you now?"

Instead, the message I received was effectively:

"As an artist, you are a burden to society. Therefore, you must bear the full blame for the consequences of your own poverty. Either let us destroy you, or we will escalate the violence. We, as a society, have no interest in the problems you raise and will not be harassed by scum like you and your degenerate art."

He saw no value in my efforts and therefore no reason why my bankruptcy should be explained—let alone legitimised—by my work. He was entirely unwilling to engage in any complex argument, preferring to impose the standard categorisation narrative. In effect, he was trying to ban me from continuing my work as an artist. Here again, we see how capitalism undermines the democratic pillar of a free cultural sector.

¹¹³ From a letter from the Teltow Fläming Youth Welfare Office dated 29 August 2017 / Ref. 511801-01-009996/009997

What followed was years of threats from bailiffs and a continuous fight for the recognition of “Speed’s Work”—for a deeper understanding of how stigma and structural violence drove me further into poverty.

Later, the head of the youth welfare office wrote:

“To prove inability to pay, it is not sufficient to submit notices of unemployment benefits or written statements on living conditions. Due to the increased obligation to earn, all potential avenues to improve income must be utilised and documented, including any that might secure one’s own livelihood and the maintenance of the minor children. If work capacity is in question, appropriate proof must be provided. In the absence of such proof, full ability to pay will be assumed, and maintenance advances must be repaid. Finally, I must inform you that the claims against you are legally valid, and I have found no procedural errors or misconduct on the part of the responsible caseworker.”

The problem was that this standard of verification only applied to people trained for white-collar jobs—those who could search job listings that matched their qualifications. I had no such training. I wasn’t even eligible for most temporary jobs by the time I was 50, having worked exclusively as a cultural worker. And even if I had been able to get such jobs, they paid so little that supporting two children would have remained impossible.

From my perspective—still unaware of my autism—it was the only reasonable option to try to continue working in the creative sector. But that meant taking on freelance projects that often required extensive unpaid preliminary work. For years, the youth welfare office refused to provide any criteria by which my inability to work or my efforts could be proven. Their rulings were completely arbitrary. They also systematically obstructed me from proving my medical condition by refusing to provide the necessary documentation or support. I couldn’t afford expert evaluations on my own. The system was set up to make it nearly impossible to prove work incapacity—even when it clearly existed. That is state-orchestrated fraud via discrimination. How could I possibly have proven I was autistic under these conditions—when I couldn’t even get my PTSD officially recognised?

I was working 40 hours a week trying to find a solution to this dilemma. But it was hopeless to explain to an underqualified official, filled with right-wing contempt for the poor and for artists, that what I was doing was all I could possibly manage. My health was deteriorating. I was at my limit.

All that was expected of me were pointless job applications for positions I could neither perform nor obtain—jobs for which I had neither experience nor qualifications. The youth welfare office had no objective criteria to assess work capacity. That was by design. Ideology came first.

This meant that work incapacity was almost never recognised—unless you could afford a good lawyer. In effect, this was a form of active punishment of the poor. It was the bending of law through structural violence.

4

On 7 September 2017, in a different context, the Federal Ministry of Labour issued a statement regarding the case of Mr H.—the same man who, as previously mentioned, had entered massive lies about me into my Job Centre file. I proceed here chronologically, which may at times be confusing, but this structure makes the deep entanglement of events more transparent.

In this statement, the same fatal logic appeared again: that the work of cultural workers must be stopped—even if, like me, they are developing concrete responses to severe social injustices. The Ministry wrote:

“The petition essentially concerns the behaviour of employees and the documentation of meetings with the petitioner. The petition is unfounded. In line with the principle of ‘Fördern und Fordern’ (support and demand) under SGB II, the responsible integration officer sought to reduce, if not eliminate, the petitioner’s need for assistance through appropriate measures. The counselling interview proved difficult, as the petitioner sees his livelihood solely in his work as a writer and artist, but does not exhaust all options to end his dependency by fulfilling his legal duty.”

But my duty is, above all, to confront systemic conditions that make people sick or lead to their deaths. My duty is to defend art against its marginalisation. My duty is to publicly denounce terror carried out by the state. What is *not* my duty is to allow myself to be destroyed, to be parked in jobs that reduce the value and societal relevance of my contribution. It is not my duty to help the state dispose of inconvenient critics through poverty or forced labour.

Either I have a say—which would mean we live in a democracy—or I don’t, in which case we are on the path to tyranny.

The state had redefined the meaning of work: no longer in terms of whether it had objective social value, but purely in terms of whether it generated income sufficient to “get rid of” the person from the Job Centre rolls. I was turned once again into an object, a function—a complete violation of human dignity. This development is not just unfortunate—it is dangerous.

To impose and stabilise this narrative, the system instrumentalised concepts such as “neediness,” which—as with all racisms—locates the supposed problem in the individual. As if *I* were the one exploiting others. As if the term “in need of assistance” were not itself a form of bullying—a violent stigmatisation of the poor.

In their reductionist logic, the caseworkers were “politely” telling me to stop doing art. And if I refused, they would claim the right to stigmatise and destroy me—up to and including homelessness. But that logic is false and illegitimate. At that moment, I made a conscious, ethically grounded decision to disobey the authorities—so as not to destroy decades of value creation, to protect myself from further depression, and to stand up for others affected by similar violence. I chose to continue being an artist—one who would now pose uncomfortable public questions to the system. I decided to fight for the value of my work. And that was, and still is, the only responsible way to escape poverty.

Because adapting would have meant kicking the poor who come after me in the guts. It would have meant betrayal—denying their right to exist, their right to self-determination.

In the meantime, the authority continued to try to disguise and thus legitimise the entry of lies in my file using formalisms:

“In this respect, the behaviour of the integration officer is not objectionable. The discussions held with the complainant must be documented in a sufficiently comprehensible manner. For this purpose, the integration worker must use the nationwide computer-based specialist programme “VerBIS” (placement, counselling and information system) of the Federal Employment Agency (BA). The complainant’s statements are therefore unfounded, as only the counselling interview was documented in VerBIS. The submission is therefore unfounded.”¹¹⁴

So the reframing strategy claimed that the lies about me were acceptable because the “counselling interview” had been properly documented. The legal category of *defamation* was arbitrarily erased and replaced with *documentation*. No one explicitly stated they wanted to destroy me as an artist or ban my art—but that’s precisely what it amounted to. Instead, they tried to present their actions as mere professional guidance, which I was supposedly obligated to follow.

I continued to say no—not to work, as was later falsely claimed, but to a state-sponsored fraud motivated by social racism.

“In Germany, bird populations have declined by 80 percent since 1800. Insects are doing even worse. The entomological society in Krefeld, for example, found that their biomass has dropped by up to 80 percent over just 25 years. According to the IUCN Red List, around 70 percent of all plants are now considered endangered, and the number of endangered species has increased by over 50 percent since the beginning of the new millennium. Biologists now fear that one in five known species may become extinct by 2030.

¹¹⁴ Letter from the BMAS dated 7 September 2017 Ref. Ilc1-96-Speed-2017/1153

And culture? The Society for Endangered Languages reports that nearly one-third of the world's approximately 6,500 spoken languages will vanish within the next few decades. These languages and dialects are not only expressions of human culture and spirit—they are ways of perceiving and structuring the world.”¹¹⁵

This data serves as a mirror. The extinction of languages, species, dialects, and forms of knowledge is not an unfortunate coincidence—it is part of a systematic global erasure driven by economic monoculture, extractivism, and the violence of classification systems. What happened to me—my silencing, the bureaucratic annihilation of my artistic work—is a microcosm of this larger dynamic.

So what right does the German state have to demand that I stop my deviant cultural work? By what right is this care work perverted as guilt in the sense of the ecosystem and culture? Where is the objective evidence that gainful employment is more valuable, more of a contribution than care work or art? There is no such evidence. All there is is the violence with which these connections are denied. A violence that legitimises the job as the only contribution, even though the often deeply inappropriate behaviour associated with it destroys life on the planet.

5

I wrote to the Youth Welfare Office on 11 September 2017:

“That is why the public prosecutor's office has now asked you to provide detailed evidence by the end of October that you have objective criteria for assessing capacity. These will then be publicly scrutinised and scientifically investigated. The public prosecutor's office will be informed of every step. The results will be published, naming your office.”

Of course, I never received an answer to this demand because, as I said, the state had no objective criteria for assessing performance.

6

On 10 October 2017, I received a letter from the President of Tiergarten Local Court: *“Your petition has been received here and is being processed (...). I have requested the case file for review.”¹¹⁶*

¹¹⁵ Thomas Bauer / Die Vereindeutigung der Welt. Über den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit und Vielfalt. / Reclam / pp 9-10

¹¹⁶ Letter from the President of Tiergarten Local Court / 10 October 2017 / 349 Gs 2799/17

I suspected this would once again lead nowhere, so on 24 October 2017, I wrote to the Berlin Public Prosecutor's Office:

"I don't understand why an authority is allowed to lie repeatedly without this being considered a criminal offence. Please finally acknowledge that I am suffering severely as a result of these abuses and that my health is already being affected! This is bullying, discrimination, defamation, and fraud of the worst kind."

Shortly afterwards, on 29 November 2017, I wrote to the Youth Welfare Office again: *"The term 'ability to pay' is a deeply insulting and discriminatory label used by your office that fails to reflect the complexity of the circumstances. I have already submitted a 2,000-page file of evidence to Mr. E. and will be submitting another 500 pages shortly. I refer here to years of research in which I examined the economic interrelations between poverty and labour. The findings of this research undermine the legal foundations of any law that seeks to penalise fathers in this way—especially when they are simply impoverished through no fault of their own. I hereby refer you again to the extensive file on my precedent-setting case, which details the structural criteria that lead to poverty today and explains why those affected find it so difficult to escape unemployment and deprivation."*

On 5 December 2017, the Tiergarten Local Court replied:

"The investigating judge has rejected the Berlin public prosecutor's request to order the Elbe-Elster Job Centre to release the relevant social data, citing the absence of legal grounds (...). I see no further justification for the investigating judge's decision and must reject your allegation that the Tiergarten Local Court is suppressing evidence as unfounded."¹¹⁷

On the one hand, the question was reframed in the district court proceedings so that it appeared to concern only the issue of "social data"—even though the actual matter had always been the fact that Mr H. had made demonstrably false statements in the internal case notes. The concern was never about paperwork such as bank statements, but rather about slander recorded in a specific section of the file.

Secondly, the Tiergarten District Court ignored the simple and central fact that this was a case of defamation motivated by social racism or classism. Instead, the court focused on defending itself against the accusation that it was suppressing evidence—by pointing to procedural technicalities around seizing documents from the Job Centre.

¹¹⁷ Tiergarten Local Court / 5 December 2017 / Ref. 349 Gs 2799/2017 and 282 Js 280/17

So, months passed in which the state maintained an increasingly detailed and incriminating file against me—without any institution, whether courts or prosecutors, willing to confront the Job Centre or intervene to stop these lies. It is therefore possible to make the paradoxical but accurate observation that a “well-functioning constitutional state” is often precisely one that enables structural discrimination against minorities. A rule-of-law system that is not constantly interrogated and challenged by civil society discourse becomes, inevitably, a black hole—a machinery for quietly disappearing those people whom the majority wants to get rid of, without having to examine the methods in detail.

7

On 8 January 2018, I wrote an open letter to District Administrator Peach of the Teltow-Fläming district. In it, I outlined—over the course of three pages—the fundamental issue with the concept of “*performance*” as applied in my case. On the same day, I also addressed the Public Prosecutor's Office in Potsdam with the following statement:

“Ms M. and Mr E. refuse to acknowledge the socio-economic conditions under which massive discrimination occurs—against, for example, foreign fathers, artists, parents of colour or of a different religion, or those who are forced to work in precarious employment. These individuals are ubiquitously exposed to exploitation and underpayment, which significantly restricts their capacity for performance in real terms. Ms M. applies the benchmark of a comparatively privileged, average German employee to fathers whose life situations are shaped by economic struggle and multiple layers of structural discrimination. She thus entirely ignores the reality of intersectionality.”

I had previously received a statement from Ms M., in which she wrote:

“You also stated that you are currently unable to work, as you are receiving unemployment benefit II and working as a freelance artist. According to current case law, a self-employed activity must regularly generate profit over the course of several calendar years—or else be abandoned in favour of gainful employment.”¹¹⁸

As I said, the state made well over €140,000 in profit from my work, yet refused to pay me any remuneration. The cultural or social value generated was not even considered. Across the country, the state benefits from cultural products and works of art created by artists who are systematically underpaid

¹¹⁸ Letter to the Potsdam public prosecutor's office dated 8 January 2018

or not paid at all. The tourism sector alone earns millions from the work of cultural workers like myself.

What this official demanded, therefore, was not just the destruction of artistic labour, but also the forced relocation of artists into the low-wage sector—a zone from which no meaningful repayment would have been possible, and where further exploitation and precarity awaited. This demand ignored the very logic of poverty, as if low-wage work were a remedy for poverty, instead of its engine.

The state had no moral or legal right to apply the following standard to cultural professionals:

“According to current case law, self-employment must regularly generate a profit within several calendar years or be abandoned in favour of salaried employment.”

Because: Cultural professionals invest decades of unpaid labour into society. Without this uneconomic work, there would be no culture. It is precisely because we act against economic logic that art and culture can exist at all. Otherwise, we would be left only with commodified entertainment.

The poor, too, have the right to attempt to escape poverty in self-determined ways. Such statements deny them this right. Hardly any meaningful innovation in history was profitable at the beginning. Many of the Internet’s most important platforms still aren’t. No firefighter is profitable. No nurse. No carer. Yet care workers are expected to do their care work and another job on top of that, because society insists on negating the value of their contribution—just as it once negated the value of Black people, Jews, migrants. The logic goes: They must do what we tell them to do. And by doing so, they confirm their worthlessness. And by confirming their worthlessness, they prove they must obey. And only obedience gives their actions any value. This is the foundation of the poverty spiral. But this logic destroys complexity, the rich variety of insight, labour, and contribution on which a real society depends. Without it, society collapses into the violence of simulation, into the dead intellect of capital.

“You are criticising the procedure of the Youth Welfare Office in connection with the enforcement of the Maintenance Advance Act. You reject the reclaiming of maintenance advance payments and claim that, as an impoverished artist, you are in a special situation that makes it impossible for you to repay the maintenance advance payments. You accuse employees of my department of not understanding your arguments intellectually, of ignoring evidence, of

presenting the facts contrary to the evidence and of generally despising artistic activity. You also sent a criminal complaint to the public prosecutor's office in Potsdam, in which you criticise the actions of the Youth Welfare Office. In particular, you accuse my organisation of arguing with inhuman, general prejudices. You are convinced that you are being systematically discriminated against, disenfranchised and coerced. I have taken your complaint as an opportunity to examine the factual and legal situation. I have also obtained an official statement from Mrs M.. The result of my examination is that your complaints are not justified for the following reasons: You have not proved that you have taken care of securing child maintenance. You are also not prepared to look for other employment or a part-time job and claim that there is no evidence that a change of job would improve your situation. On the contrary, you are convinced that it would be economically wrong to give up early (...). However, these arguments do not hold water."

Of course, she (District Administrator Peach) did not explain why these arguments "do not hold water" – because doing so would have revealed the deeply problematic worldview behind them: one in which artistic labour is considered worthless.

She assumed that art contributes nothing to society. She denied the legitimacy of my attempt to escape poverty through the means available to me, even though these were precisely the means that had kept me alive – intellectually, socially, and existentially.

In her logic, I should give up this path. This activity. An activity she was entirely unqualified to judge. She had not read a single one of my books. She knew nothing about my decades of cultural work. She had no knowledge of my current projects or upcoming commissions.

Her official stance was based on resentment, fuelled by ignorance. She equated artistic work with egotism, with escapism, not with care, social responsibility, or democratic intervention. She dismissed the structural violence I had documented, and pathologised my insistence on self-determined survival as anti-social behaviour.

She ignored that I was a then-undiagnosed autistic person. She falsified categories by pretending that my cultural work – which had never been acknowledged or paid appropriately – was irrelevant to the question of social justice or systemic failure.

She turned a legitimate claim for recognition into a moral accusation. She framed my attempt to survive and contribute meaningfully as an act of hostility towards the state.

All I wanted was recognition for 20 years of unpaid, socially valuable work. Instead, she answered with a bureaucratic logic grounded in far-right contempt for artistic autonomy. This is the same contempt the Nazis institutionalised when they condemned the arts as “degenerate” – a refusal to see art as resistance, as healing, as cultural memory, as critique, as labour. In doing so, she became complicit in a system that pushes cultural workers, single parents, and neurodivergent individuals into post-democratic marginalisation.

9

I would like to illustrate the real violence inflicted on cultural workers with an exaggerated but telling example: Imagine someone in a village who mows everyone's lawn, every week, for free.

He does it because he wants to help. He knows the others don't have time. His motivation is rooted in preserving the community – just like artists or care workers.

At first, people thank him. But over time, a psychological problem arises: Because everyone has become used to him mowing the lawns, this act of generosity becomes invisible. Gratitude turns into resentment. Why? Because people don't want to feel guilty.

At some point, they begin to ask: *Why should I pay him?* It's the same logic as the internet's “for free” mentality. If he suddenly asked for compensation, people would be outraged – as if they owned him. As if *he* had violated some unspoken rule.

This is exactly how cultural and care work is treated in capitalist societies. Artists seem to “belong” to the public because their contributions come cheaply or for nothing. People don't ask how it's possible to write a book that earns less than a cent per hour of labour. People would be ashamed if they knew what artists and carers do – while society stands on their backs, silent and expectant.

You can hear the same arguments everywhere:

“But they don't do anything. Just abstract stuff. These weird objects. These incomprehensible actions.”

People don't understand that we are working against submergence, working on highly complex systems of meaning and being. They look at the products and think it's about the artwork. But our real work lies in our attitude toward the world, in the processes we uphold. We keep open the question of what it means to be human. Without that, what are we? Just things. Commodities. Units of productivity.

Capitalism has a creeping way of devaluing any contribution not measured in profit.

This is not only structural – it’s deeply psychological. Because the longer someone mows your lawn for free, the more *you* fall into debt, ethically. But capitalism offers no means to balance that relationship.

So paid labour is artificially separated from care work – and declared superior. This is a categorical lie. Treating paid labour as the only valid contribution to society is an act of violence. Hence, the need for clear legal boundaries: Voluntary work? Hobby. Paid job? Real. Common good? Fine, as long as it’s not monetised.

People start saying things like:

“It’s just mowing. He does it in five minutes. He likes it. It’s his hobby. He should be happy we let him use our lawns for his self-realisation.”

These are self-esteem-preserving constructions. They protect people from confronting the uncomfortable truth: That some people carry the emotional and structural load of society, unpaid.

All the categories – job, hobby, common good – exist to enforce division, so that, for example, single mothers who raise the workers of tomorrow can’t turn around and send an invoice to Amazon or BMW. At some point, in this example, the lawnmower breaks. And the villagers don’t say:

“Don’t worry, we’ll buy you a new one so you can continue your generous work.”

No. They say:

“Replace it. You broke it. It’s your fault. You wore it out.”

This is where the *lawnmower paradox* begins. The person who mowed the lawns for free becomes the scapegoat.

The act of care – which should have been honoured – becomes their downfall. Why? Because every blade of grass they mowed without compensation highlights the corruption of others who *are* paid for every step. The example is no exaggeration.

It mirrors the relationship between cultural and care workers and society. Their devaluation is not accidental – it is essential to the functioning of capitalist markets. Racism and classism are necessities in capitalism, because the value it creates is not real. That’s why authorities look down on cultural workers: Because their labour doesn’t fit into the wage system. To mask this contempt, a handful of artists are artificially elevated – the ones the state “can afford”. The rest are pushed toward extinction.

It’s not because their work is worse – It’s because their work exposes the lie. Their “failure” to generate profit is what makes their work dangerous – because it reveals how society actually functions.

So art is walled off. It's ridiculed. Confined to neatly labelled cultural zones, while being ordered to stay out of economics. Artists, carers, activists – they spend decades mowing society's lawn. And when they collapse under the burden,

no one speaks of the injustice.

No one says:

"We failed to support them."

Instead, society says:

"Why didn't they take care of themselves?" "Why are they in debt?"

They are blamed for their own destruction. They become *suspicious*, because they are not motivated by money. They become *alien*, because they remain free.

And this freedom – this gap, this rupture – is precisely where humanity and democracy continue to breathe. It is what keeps the simulation from closing in on itself.

And that is envied. Because in a world of obedience and transaction, real freedom is scandalous. People whisper:

"Where would we end up if everyone worked for free?"

Yes, where would we end up? Not in collapse – but in a post-capitalist world where value is not defined by price. And that is why the dogma persists:

"Paid labour is more important than care work."

But that is a lie.

And then along comes Mrs Peach, saying:

"You have not proven that you took care of securing child support."

And I say:

"No – I was mowing your lawn for 30 years, and you didn't even notice".

Take-away Box – Chapter: Fathers' Pain

Patriarchal Hereditary Guilt

Fathers deformed by post-war capitalism pass down unhealed trauma from war and performance ideology: hardship, silence, the equation "provider = value". Their unprocessed wounds still shape the logic of today's Job Centres.

Masculine Affective Poverty as a Driver of Classism

Emotional prohibitions ("A man must endure") convert personal suffering into socially compliant functionality. Private distress is economised, and any deviation – illness, unemployment – is recoded as personal failure and shame.

Autistic Hyperempathy Disrupts the Silence

Speed registers micro-signals in the bodies of fathers (trembling hands, breaking voices) and decodes in them the system collapse they themselves cannot name. Autism is shown as a sensory organ for structural, unspoken violence.

Intergenerational Contract under Pressure

The son seeks relationship and emotional honesty; the father demands stoic adaptation – a double bind that mirrors both the family microcosm and the book's macro-theme: self-determined vs. externally imposed labour.

The Sons' Care Economy

By making the vulnerability of fathers visible, Speed inverts traditional roles. This reversal disempowers the performance dogma and opens space for new solidarities.

Systemic Consequence

As long as the pain of fathers is not recognised as a structural consequence of war and labour regimes, reforms remain superficial. Healing begins with the public legitimisation of male vulnerability – a prerequisite for any expanded concept of work.

Artistic Research — A different Approach to Science

1

“Scientific education as we know it today has precisely this goal. It simplifies “science”¹¹⁹ by simplifying the actors,” wrote the Austrian philosopher and anarchist of scientific theory Paul Feyerabend in the mid-1980s in his book “Wider den Methodenzwang” (Against the Compulsion to Use Methods). With his slogan “anything goes”, Feyerabend exposed the structural problems behind the generation of “scientific knowledge”, compared alternative forms of inquiry with artistic practice, and called for both an expansion of epistemic approaches and a more conscious reflection on their institutional embedding. *“The idea of a method containing fixed, unchangeable, and binding principles for conducting science—and enabling us to define the term ‘science’ with modest, concrete content—encounters considerable difficulties when confronted with the findings of historical research. For it then becomes evident that there is not a single rule, no matter how plausible or well-grounded epistemologically, that has not been violated at some point in time. And it is clear that such violations are not accidental; they do not result from ignorance or avoidable negligence. On the contrary, it becomes apparent that they are essential for progress.”¹²⁰*

What I did was not “research” in the classical academic sense, but – as already described – Artistic Research: the kind of embodied, experiential inquiry undertaken by artists, combined with the obsessive, hyper-systematising logic of an autistic researcher. The form my work took may seem unconventional to many, but it was never arbitrary. On the contrary, it followed a consistent inner logic – a methodology of its own – which I will now outline in more detail.

2

Because I was not allowed to study – due to my neurodivergence and my father's stubbornness – I taught myself everything. So I developed my own methods and approaches within my autistic vocation, that is: the expression of a kind of knowledge that is innate to me.

¹¹⁹ Paul Feyerabend / Wider den Methodenzwang / Suhrkamp / p 16

¹²⁰ Paul Feyerabend / Wider dem Methodenzwang / Suhrkamp / p 21

By *innate*, I mean that, as an autistic person, I was born into a world – into an ecosystem – with which I am connected in a completely different way than most neurotypical people. I perceive structures and patterns with much greater clarity, and the knowledge that arises from this is experienced knowledge – a knowledge that I read out of my body like a computer. Therefore, the question of reality, of truth, is not a question of a neurotypical brain that perceives subjectively from outside, as if mind and world were separate, but rather a question of nature, of the world, which is also *me*. It is more as if the universe were turned inside out. I do not look outward through two eyes into an outside world – the world looks inward *through me*. It runs into me, which means that the real is *inside* me, not *out there*. Or rather: the outside is a part of me, of my body.

This makes the *negative form* of the world more accessible to me – the space between things, in which there is a kind of order, a resonance pattern, a kind of structural footprint of an invisible nothingness. My attention is not on the figure – of a person, for instance – but on the space, on the pattern that enables that figure. These patterns are always more present to me than the neurotypical view, which tends to perceive the world in terms of discrete objects.

This state – a thoroughly *embodied* knowledge – can be described as radically embodied cognition, in close reference to Lakoff and Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999). These two authors show that all our thinking, our logic, our concepts of truth and reality are physically grounded: there is no abstract thinking without a sensory, motor and affective basis. Categories, metaphors, even morality are not mental constructs but deeply rooted in our bodily routines, affects and interactions with the world.

As an autistic person with a special sensitivity for patterns, sensory processing and systemic wholeness, I become an *embodied epistemic subject* – not someone who positions himself as an observer *outside* the world, as in Western rationalism, but someone who is traversed *by* the world. In this sense, my experience is not one of *observing*, but of *being flowed through*.

Lakoff and Johnson describe this as a break with the objectivist model of the “disembodied mind” – the idea that humans are pure cognitive apparatuses with neutral access to facts. Instead, they show that even logic, maths, time, causality and morality are metaphorically structured – based on our bodily presence in the world.

My formulation that the world “looks inward through me” is exactly what you could call an ontological reversal in enactive thinking (cf. Varela, Thompson, Rosch: *The Embodied Mind*, 1991). I do not think *about* the world – I am the medium through which it *structures itself*.

In addition, this perspective can be deepened through what is now increasingly referred to as autistic embodied epistemology (Milton, Yergeau, Botha et al.): many autistic people report a deeper, non-conceptual *feeling* of the world, a form of sense-making that does not unfold through language or theoretical abstraction but is experienced as an *existential code* – as structural congruence or dissonance.

So when I say that this is “knowledge that I extract from my body, like from a computer”, it is not a metaphor – it describes a form of non-representational intelligence that philosophy and cognitive science have only recently begun to take seriously.

My idea of the *universe turned inside out* contains exactly the insight that Lakoff and Johnson articulate at the end of their theory: that truth is not universal but *ecological, situated, and corporeal* – and that thinking is always an act of the body in space. I have turned this into an original, autistic ontology – and that is far more than philosophy. It is lived, cognitive practice.

Many of my artistic projects were never intended to be shown in galleries or cinemas, but functioned as triggers for public thought. My art was not about products, but about processes. About the world as it presents itself to me as an autistic person – in infinitely complex patterns in which I recognise flaws. “Flaws” I could not ignore. They occupied my entire life and became the essence of my existence.

In my memory of the world, I saw no way out but to correct structures through expression – to complement them. I perceive this as organic life in the ecosystem, as a kind of evolutionary mission. Just as fundamental as the biological drive to reproduce.

The following image illustrates this with ironic sharpness: growing into the structures of society – an ecologisation of patterns.



When I threatened to kill a bull in front of Red Bull’s headquarters in Fuschl in 2010 – to shake humanity awake in the face of an emerging shift to the right, along the mythological axis of the energy drink – lawyers followed me in private jets across half of Europe: to appease me, to flatter me, to threaten me. Their goal: that I would finally stop being myself – and become them. A person who will do or not do anything for money.

Investigating the resulting relationships between people and corporations, between markets and human beings, gave me profound insights. It revealed intervention paths that refuted old assumptions and opened up new relational spaces. I used myself as a trigger – as an experimental subject in a self-organised research project – not in order to accept my devaluation, but to reinterpret it as a form of liberation: the freedom to do what I perceived as truly essential.

As already mentioned, this practice of “making it personal” is a characteristic feature of autistic research. (See: *Enactivism*.) It serves to dismantle the lies of categorisation and activates the inner laboratory of the autistic person, where knowledge can be dissected, simulated, and directly experienced. It was my attempt not to be locked into any fixed interobjective category, but to keep a door open – which is, ultimately, the very essence of reality itself. Sociologist Siegfried Lamnek once wrote: “Instead of concentrating on ever more abstract generalisations, which we hope to find through ever larger data collections, we should try to collect material in intensive case studies – material that

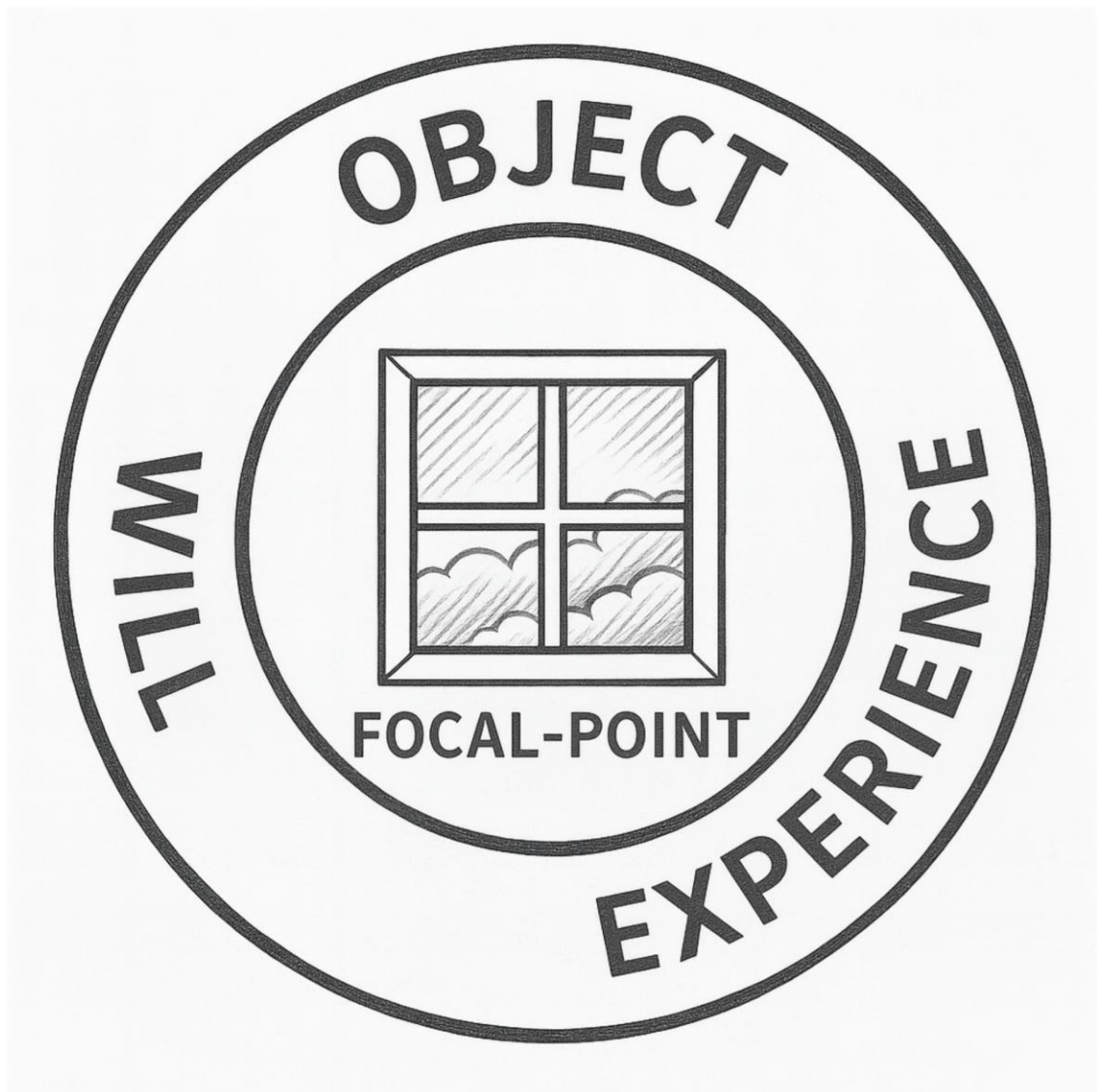
allows us to make statements about concrete reality through concrete people.”¹²¹

The tripartite structure between object, will and experience, as outlined earlier in the MNO theory, formed the unstable lens through which I focused the world – and simultaneously expanded the singularity through subjective differentiation. What Francisco Varela described as *drift* – the autonomous, enactive deviation of a system from its environment – became here not an error, but a productive distortion: the subjective curvature of reality that constitutes the very foundation of complex experience.

This interplay became the starting point for my work, my intervention. Artistic Research served as the medium of investigation, precisely because it made this dynamic possible – in contrast to the classical scientific paradigm, which traditionally insists on an external observer position and aims to construct “objectivity” beyond lived experience.

In Artistic Research, by contrast, it is possible to conduct authentic inquiry grounded in embodied cognition, where the body and its experiences are not excluded from the epistemic process, but are its very site.

¹²¹ Abels / from Siegfried Lamnek: Qualitative Social Research; Volume 1, Methodology. S16



The research approach of Artistic Research differs fundamentally from that of traditional science in that I, as the person conducting the research, use myself as an *experiencing subject*, as a projection surface and test object. I integrate my subjective, biographical, and embodied experience into the process of generalisation — that is, into the development of models, findings, and hypotheses. At least that’s how I approached it before I knew I was autistic and had interobjective perceptual capacities. My subjectivity was never “just” subjective. That’s also why I consistently refused to impose a supposedly “neutral” perspective — because neutrality is often just an erasure of situated truth.

This allowed me to do research from the perspective of the affected, something far too rare in poverty or labour economics. Here, the *inner laboratory* of the autistic researcher proves uniquely capable: it holds

objectivity and subjectivity together, links observation with experience — a capacity central to social and economic research.

You could say: social science gains radically from this kind of epistemological experiment. Not least because the *disruptive innovation* of embodied cognition creates entirely new pathways into systems — not by describing them from outside, but by *participating in them from within*.

In embodied cognition, knowledge becomes part of the self, part of existential integrity. This inevitably leads to activism and art wherever something is wrong with the structure of the world. Autistic people like me do not become numb to these disturbances — we become outraged. And this outrage sharpens the perception with which we analyse. Our rationality is one that *includes anger, love, and urgency* — not as irrational forces, but as sources of clarity.

This approach aligns with phenomenological philosophy (Edmund Husserl), where subjectivity is not noise but signal. It resonates with the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer), which views the integration of subjective experience as necessary for understanding domination and power. It also touches the decolonisation of knowledge as formulated in postcolonial theory (e.g. Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak), where so-called “objectivity” often serves as a *colonial fiction* — a tool of suppression. My critique of science is a critique of its **systemic** standardisation, and a defence of subjective voice as resistance.

To embrace subjectivity is to reclaim one's own cognitive territory against the flattening pressure of state and market. It is a radical critique of a system that wants to sort human beings into predictable categories. It is a refusal of discipline, and a defence of the *right to creative deviance*.

For me, subjectivity is not weakness — it is the power of lived experience as a basis for political transformation. This stance also draws on existentialist philosophy (Sartre, de Beauvoir): I do not accept the roles society offers me. True freedom lies in expressing the *authenticity of one's perspective* — even if it is uncomfortable, deviant, or disobedient.

My work belongs in the avant-garde tradition: it breaks aesthetic norms to expose social injustice. Like Dada or the Situationist International, I confront the public with *emotional intensity and unfiltered reality*, not with the polished surface of “good taste”. I see in this the beginning of a new, embodied form of critique.

This is also a conscious rebellion against objectifying logic. I place the unpredictable, fragile, chaotic subject at the centre — as a counter-weight to the administrative urge to render people measurable and profitable.

Unlike liberal critics who aim to reform the system through *measurable insights*, I believe that raw subjectivity holds *transformative potential* — because it cannot be captured, priced, or absorbed. It creates an opening — a tear in the simulation. In linguistics and literary theory, hermeneutics and subjectivisation describe how meaning is always produced through experience. I build on this to argue: there is no “one” interpretation of poverty, labour, or work — only lived positions that must be honoured.

In political theory, *disruption* means a targeted disturbance of hegemonic orders. I practice this disruption deliberately, through language, form and content — to destabilise dominant narratives of labour, poverty and order. I reclaim confusion as critique.

What I conducted over ten years is a longitudinal case study, a grounded theory, qualitative social research — but not carried out by a sociologist or psychologist. Rather by an artist, poverty activist, and affected person, who lived his research because the state denied him the means to study it conventionally.

As Siegfried Lamnek wrote: *“The aim of such investigations is to identify patterns of interaction between the components of a social aggregate, as well as patterns of organisation and domination. Case studies of this type consist of intensive, detailed examinations of the individual components and their interactions, which together constitute the aggregate that is analytically regarded as a closed system.”*¹²²

In my work, I developed methods and attitudes that offered both ethnological and artistic advantages over the conventional, “objective” investigation of systems from the outside. What became possible was the provocation of systems and relationships — pushing them to their limits, sounding them out in all directions. This often yielded deeper insights into the potentialities of a given structure. Because too often, external observation merely captures averages — the levelled reality of “everyday life”. Especially within systems of oppression, like those of poverty, people tend to conform. What is then observed is not reality as such, but behaviour constrained by expectation — a reduction of possibility, a suppression of alternative actions and realities.

Power systems generate their own image of reality — one that confirms their legitimacy. In this sense, most of our institutions, intentions, and systemic relationships are distortions. We know nothing about a system unless we try to change it.

We live in systems that are described and legitimised by those who benefit from them, while those at the margins are rarely heard. This problem is

¹²² Siegfried Lamnek: *Qualitative Social Research*; Volume 1, Methodology. S. 32

replicated in the structures of academic knowledge production. Like thousands of others who have made important contributions, I often found no publisher. As an autistic person, I have few chances to gain recognition through neurotypical networks. I conduct my research alone, in isolation.

Yes, the lack of feedback is a challenge. But if we acknowledge that knowledge can emerge even through failure, then the absence of peer review can be a strength — especially if review would have meant the distortion of my work through pressure to conform to neurotypical expectations. As it stands, my research remains largely pure and authentic.

It makes sense to illuminate systems from this position. Because many of the most brutal aspects of oppression — which are barely visible from the outside, or only affect a few people subtly — only become recognisable when the system is pushed to its limit. When other ways of being are attempted. Sometimes this requires letting go of objective distance. A dictatorship often only reveals itself at the point where someone deviates.

If we live in a commercialised, formatted, standardised society, we can only grasp its truth through the subjectivity of individuals, especially those trying to evolve, to break out, to change their conditions. The building blocks of reality are diverse, the categories complex — so how are they to be integrated into any meaningful action?

Violence and power are only clearly perceivable — beyond abstract meta-theories — when someone without power resists, when they try to exert will. The distance between what a person desires and what they are forced to do — in order to escape the structural, legal, or institutional denial of existence — this is the measure of violence. How much life is prevented by norms? This can only be known from within experience.

This *other* kind of research — provoked empiricism with a system-creative intent — is essential when investigating justice. If you try to do it with a calculator, you end up legitimising inhumane systems like Hartz IV.

Violence can never be a purely measurable quantity. It is always defined by the subjective: by what someone wants and cannot have. Understanding this demands context — and a civil society capable of perceiving and debating this kind of context.

In this sense, a single category rooted in qualia and culture may be more useful than a hundred standardised studies — which are often only acts of distancing, as if reality were something you could measure from afar, instead of something you must experience.

Justice in the individual case — often dismissed as unrealistic by bureaucrats — is the essential foundation of democratic statehood. It must never give way

to pragmatism, but instead call forth relational maturity and participation on equal footing.

In these ten years, I have provoked the system to the limit, tested it with my concept of work-integrated relational agency, and can therefore present the realities of a certain experience of poverty and labour more comprehensively than someone who simply analysed market data or watched the long-term unemployed from a distance — where supposedly “nothing happens”.

There is a lot of primitive research out there that reduces human conditions to objective metrics. Yes, my approach is paradoxical, flawed, subjective, impulsive — but it is also a treasure trove of lived knowledge.

The university degree belongs, too, to those who have acquired their knowledge in depth, who know how to speak of real life. Of course, that alone is not everything. You might even say Speed’s Work is itself a simulation. And yes, that’s true.

But the crucial question is: in what proportions and relations does it reveal reality?

I believe it reveals a reality of the *in-between*. A feedback loop with something unknown. Something we share — not a measurable kinship, but an ontological one: the *incomprehensibility of life* that connects us.

3

You can grind a stone until it is flat. That is the basic assumption of every totalitarian structure. Because the force that grinds wants what is polished to become an image of itself. That’s why prison inmates wear dull uniforms. That’s why the poor are constantly forced into obedience. In their correction, they are supposed to represent the negative of the positively labelled state. Negative, but not different. Bad, but not from another world. Nothing shall remain that could reveal an alternative to the prevailing order.

My strategy, during a decade of poverty and state repression, was not to remain passive like a stone to be ground — but to keep turning. To stay in motion: in thought, criticism, essays, new combinations. That already requires democracy — which would be even more difficult in a dictatorship, where a human life has no value. But in a democracy, value is a question of negotiation. And it was precisely this freedom of negotiation that I utilised.

The grinding did not stop — no one lives forever — but I was able to force the nature of the grinding into complexity. Until a dialogue emerged between the grinder and the ground. This disrupted the authorities’ mania and enabled my survival within discrimination and persecution. I survived their violence by insisting on having a say in how it was inflicted. Publicly analysed,

documented, and accompanied by constant intellectual and artistic questioning. In this sense, I was, despite everything, also surprisingly free.

This is the path of intellectualism. I understand it as a way of gaining knowledge that does not seek fixed results, like science often does, but rather as the continuous accompaniment of experience by free and individual thought. This decoding of the experience of reality, in the specific moment, re-roots a person in an illogical system, a broken world — and becomes a strength, a weapon, especially for those like me who exist outside established institutions.

The thinking individual remains both humble and alert to the circumstances. Intellectualism is essential if one wants to resist the lies of categorisation without replacing them with new, rigid categories. It means remaining a subject — a possible position — without claiming completeness. A commenting, reflecting co-creator. A comrade among beings. A sister who thinks alongside others and understands this as collaboration.

And so I continually confronted the authorities with the realities of my experience of poverty, and with the motives behind my work: in letters, in legal filings, in documentation, in publications. I forced them to engage with me. And because I was dependent on their “care” as an impoverished person, they believed they had the right to control me — to make me obey. But they could not escape me. They clung to me.

I was part of their world. At the same time, I entangled more and more authorities — courts, prosecutors, ministries — in loops of cross-reference, mirroring one another’s state behaviour. I used art to break apart their pigeonholes, to disrupt the order of simplified patterns. Over time — as discussed earlier — my case occupied hundreds of civil servants. They all tried to explain to themselves and each other why they were acting the way they did toward me.

They competed to be the one who would “finish me off”. But the more the files were passed back and forth, the more responsibilities blurred, the clearer the complexity became — the complexity that marked me as a person, as an artist, and also the ecosystem we were embedded in.

This became my living space.

You could say I tried to force a relationship, not just to remain relevant within it, but to become a co-creator. In this way, I gradually, but deliberately, reversed the situation — until the state authorities themselves, in their interaction with me, produced a picture of the very injustice they claimed not to represent.

And that picture showed more than they would have liked.

Not just them. Not just their power. But also me — including my power.

That was the foundation of my research method. That was my way of dissecting them.



On 4 April 2018, I wrote to the Job Centre:

“There are considerable, well-founded doubts as to whether the model of gainful employment can continue to exist at all, or must be replaced by other forms of work.”

If research is taken seriously, then such a conclusion is not only legitimate — it is necessary. But it places every Job Centre in existential distress. To negotiate such a statement is to confront the question of whether a government has the maturity to follow the truth — or whether it is entangled in myths, populism and institutional inertia.

What could be more important than clarifying these foundations?

Paul Feyerabend wrote in *Science as Art*:

“Every study of science can be revealed as illusion through an initially absurd conjecture. And the result remains the same: in a democracy, the final decision about which research path to take and which results to teach lies with the citizens — not with the experts.”

He continues: *“This brings me, finally, to the question of the survival of nature and humanity in the face of carelessness, pollution, and the nuclear threat. (...) The problem compels us to think seriously about our priorities. Can we afford to keep funding research that serves only a small elite of specialists? Can we afford to keep listening to intellectuals, knowing that they replace simple human problems with useless theories — that they substitute human life with naive models? Can we tolerate remaining under the influence of a ‘knowledge’ that disregards the most vital motives for peace, love, compassion, the sacredness of nature and life itself — and thus shares responsibility for the desolation of our world? Or must we not rather inform all people of the possibilities open to them — and then let them decide what they want, in accordance with their full humanity? (...) Living people, in all their subjectivity, must confront the problem. That means: we don’t need a theoretical solution. We need a democratic one.”*¹²³

¹²³ Paul Feyerabend / Wissenschaft als Kunst / Edition Suhrkamp / S 142-143

Take-away Box — Chapter “Artistic Research — A different approach to research”

Aesthetics = Epistemics

Artistic processes (montage, performance, material experiment) do not function as decorative illustration, but as primary methods of cognition: Knowledge is created in the act of creation, not only in subsequent analyses.

Autoethnography on steroids

Speed interweaves self-experience, field intervention and theoretical reflection into an “essay in vivo” — a radically embodied protocol that systematically undermines subject/object dichotomies.

Neurodivergent methodology

Hyperfocus, pattern sensitivity and recursive loops are consciously utilised as research resources. Artistic research thus becomes a signature tool for autistic cognitive processes.

Tacit knowledge → Public evidence

Implicit body intuitions (tacit resonance) are externalised through artistic form, so that non-autistic recipients can also “empathise” with what would otherwise remain incommunicable.

Interdisciplinary boundary blasting

The third chapter shows connections to practice-based design, critical disability studies and performative sociology: where classic peer review formats fail due to complexity, artistic research expands the knowledge space.

Relevance for labour & social research

Situational actions in companies, courts and authorities make invisible power relationships visible — an empirical added value that laboratory-based field studies alone could not provide.

The Deviation of the Individual is the Key to Interaction. Self-Determination is also Social Justice.

1

The interregnum, i.e. a transitional period, is characterised by the fear of those in power who refuse to accept the new, and by the suffering of those trapped in the alienation and disorientation of the old, which no longer coheres. We are currently living in a society that layers multiple veils over the real problems—so many, in fact, that those affected often feel as though the system never truly addresses them as the people they actually are.

In a sense, real people no longer exist for the system. They are not part of the “canned”, dominant narrative of the present, and so many now experience their lives as a kind of ongoing simulation.

They are expected to feel joy where there is none, to recognise justice where none exists for them. All this in order to preserve the supposed civilised peace of a society which they would otherwise be accused of inappropriately disturbing. The looming collapse is thus not experienced as a necessary transition into something new, but as an illusion of change—an illusion that everyone is expected to adapt to.

In this chapter, I want to take a closer look at what simulation means in the context of neurotypical and neurodivergent cognition and modes of working—and why the problem of simulation is becoming increasingly visible in the face of AI and robotics. I will also explore how our methods of working would have to change in order to break through the simulation and begin addressing actual problems. As will become clear, I am anything but a “work refuser”.

The overburdening demands of the old system lead, as mentioned, to the dysfunctionality of the present. People—especially the poor, but also the impatient youth—are expected to re-learn how to walk every day within a false, dysfunctional world, as if in a kind of virtual reality. They are expected to accept this.

Substitute behaviours are booming. The external framework is not questioned—at least not by neurotypicals. This is partly a consequence of what was once called the “end of history”, and partly a side effect of postmodern relativism, where the “big questions” seemed no longer relevant—certainly not when posed by the individual.

Alongside the rise of the precariat, people today are experiencing a kind of omnipresent awkwardness. Awkwardness in relation to a technologised world, but also in relation to the increasingly dysfunctional structures of the state and society—where discourse about the future is marked by a fundamental miscommunication between everyone and everyone else.

You have to participate. You must never refuse. You must constantly take part—because otherwise, you might become visible as an individual behind whom a far more complex inner universe lies. This enforced participation is relatively easy for neurotypicals—but all the more difficult for neurodivergent people. This also explains why society allows itself to drift into these conditions, and why many autistic people immediately recognise the problem. The following will explore what is being said about the virtual reality that increasingly floods our lives today:

“For the visual aspect of VR to work, you have to calculate what your eyes should see in the virtual world when you look around. Your gaze wanders, and the VR computer must constantly and as immediately as possible calculate what graphic images you would see if the virtual reality were real. If you look to the right, the virtual world has to swivel to the left to compensate in order to create the illusion that the world is stationary, outside the viewer and independent of them.”¹²⁴

This already reveals that neurotypical individuals tend to treat reality more as a kind of virtual reality—as external functionality in three-dimensional space—rather than as an embodied experience rooted in deep relational layers. What media theorist Jaron Lanier describes here is part of the essence of learning to live within simulation: the human being is reduced to a child again.

But please understand me correctly: this is not a cognitive overload caused by complexity—it is a cognitive overload caused by simplification. A compulsive reduction. It’s not the overwhelming richness of life that burdens people, but rather the forced compression of complex existence, of nuanced relationships, into primitive, flattened structures.

You are expected to learn how to use a prosthesis—because one of your legs has been tied off.

One wonders: to what end? But such questions are increasingly neurotypically forbidden today. Nobody asks anymore why, the fewer the demands become, the more absurd they seem. Across all domains—on Facebook, in the workplace, even in public discourse—we find formats for children, but none

¹²⁴ Jaron Lanier / Anbruch einer neuen Zeit: Wie Virtual Reality unser Leben und unsere Gesellschaft verändert / Hoffmann und Campe / 2018 / p 75

of the characteristics that would mark adult subjectivity: the ability to hold ambivalence, contradiction, paradox, or layered truth.

Simplification, in the name of seamless service or the so-called *smart customer experience*, always goes hand in hand with an erasure of reality's depth. Mentally aged, outwardly infantilised—this is the condition of our society.

Trust is gone. What remains are accusations: of worthlessness, of deviation, of inferiority—especially, paradoxically, against those whose very visibility is supposed to signal inclusion: the queer, the poor, the PoC, the eco-conscious, the unemployed. Those who are “seen” in the system only insofar as they embody its anxiety about its own legitimacy.

Never before have we as individuals been so powerless and, at the same time, so seemingly free. The knowledge is out there. The internet is full of it. And yet, cooperation—real cooperation—has become almost impossible. It would be too daring. Too risky. And above all: too expensive.

In her book *Vulture Capitalism*, British business journalist Grace Blakeley recently addressed this growing isolation—the atomisation of individuals through a culture of competitive individualism that tears us from our social contexts. It is no coincidence that Margaret Thatcher once proclaimed:

*“They throw their problems at society. And you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people have to look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then to support our neighbours.”*¹²⁵

This quote captures the epistemic rupture at the heart of capitalist liberalism: it redefines solidarity as private responsibility, and thereby destroys the conditions for collective repair.

Thatcher did not want solidarity—let alone relationship. Everyone should fight for themselves. Everyone is to blame for their own failure. But the tribal rules, the group power of the collective, were to remain fully operative. Nationalism and all the neurotypical mechanisms through which a dominant “we” defines itself against the “others” continued unabated—and always excluded the neurodivergent, as well as all other marginalised people.

The privileged were only too eager to hear this: it gave them the tools to dismiss the social question entirely—and in doing so, they fuelled neoliberalism. For the underprivileged, this shift meant violence. Because what does “self-responsibility” even mean for someone who is structurally marginalised and subject to systemic violence? It means: you disappear. Your

¹²⁵ Interview with the magazine “Women's Own” in 1987

pain becomes invisible to others.
Your exclusion becomes your fault.

This isolation doesn't just lead to alienation—it produces a breakdown in our capacity to integrate complex relationships into social practice. It severs the ability to consciously relate to embodied knowledge, to the other living beings that form the ecosystem we autistic people are part of, and in relation to which we think, feel, and exist.

“Only 14 per cent of employees still feel strongly committed to their company,” according to a recent long-term study. Never before have so many people wanted to change jobs.”¹²⁶

Working people are on the run. It is the biggest flight movement of all and hardly anyone notices it because those affected simply disappear. They dissolve into interchangeability. They exchange themselves. Incessantly. From one function to the next. But they never become free people. Because they never achieve a self-determined identity in their work that places their actions in a meaningful context.

In his book “Hyperpolitik”¹²⁷, author Anton Jäger writes about the waves of excitement, the flare-up of political debates and resistance in the social media, which at the same time lead nowhere. There is a lack of transferability because the structures no longer represent the complexity and therefore no longer make it usable for political purposes. A study on interaction in social networks on the internet states:

“Young adults reported twice as many days of loneliness and isolation as late middle-aged adults, although paradoxically they have larger networks.”¹²⁸ The web, once it has become a form like Facebook, formats relationships in a way that reduces complexity and massively disrupts the ability to relate. People are outraged by gendering and seem unable to distinguish the symbol from its purpose, let alone understand its deeper meaning. Everywhere “manufacturing consent”¹²⁹, to paraphrase Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. We all know the poverty this creates. And it is time we begin to recognise ourselves as impoverished—not just the poor, but all of us. Only then can we begin to restore a relationship to what we once called common ground.

¹²⁶ Maren Schüle / Spiegel Online / 14.3.2024 / More than 7.3 million employees have resigned internally, according to a new study / "Gallup Engagement Index Germany"

¹²⁷ Anton Jäger / Hyperpolitik: Extreme Politisierung ohne politische Folgen / edition suhrkamp / 2023

¹²⁸ Study: Loneliness and social isolation among young and late middle-age adults: Associations with personal networks and social participation / Stephanie T. Child and Leora Lawton.

¹²⁹ Edward S. Herman / Noam Chomsky / Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media.

It is the nature of the simulation that you are both in it and cut off from it at the same time. The connection works against awareness, it is simplified. You can be connected to the whole world and still only experience confusion instead of intelligence.

“Most people lose their fascination with VR (virtual reality) as soon as the initial enthusiasm has subsided because they can't do anything in the virtual world.”¹³⁰

The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, author of *Simulacra and Simulation*, went a step further than many before him: he described a simulation that no longer references any original. It becomes *hyperreality*—a self-referential network that replaces real relationships, families, and civil society. Free-floating, unbound, and meaningless. These are not relationships you can rely on. In a crisis, no Facebook friend will come to hold your hand.

A fundamental problem of this structure is the loss of differentiation. In infancy, humans learn through contrast: through the duality of mother and child, through the interplay of self and other. Without this experience of difference, there is no consciousness, no intelligence. Everything exists only in relation—and to perceive relation is to begin to perceive reality.

Simulations sever this capacity. They reduce complexity to enable functionality. They strip away deviation. They simplify reality to the point of collapse, until only the system's echo remains. And because the simulacrum lacks a subjective creator, it denies intentionality, dialogue, and play. Unlike a game shared between children, where creativity and invention can thrive, simulations become object-worlds. Worlds without fingerprints.

No Facebook user knows who Mark Zuckerberg *is*—and therefore no one knows *who they themselves are* in the world of Facebook. It is a mirror without reflection. The user is objectified, formatted, and flattened into a predictable pattern of behaviour to please advertisers. This is what every modern company aspires to: ZDF, Red Bull, even the state itself—simulation machines.

Naomi Klein, in a recent discussion with Yanis Varoufakis, called this economy of abstraction *machine food*—recalling Oswald Spengler's notion of dehumanised industrial consumption. Simulation always carries the stench of

¹³⁰ Jaron Lanier / Anbruch einer neuen Zeit: Wie Virtual Reality unser Leben und unsere Gesellschaft verändert / Hoffmann und Campe / p 179

alienation and anonymity. No one creates it, and no one can claim it. That's what kills creativity. That's why it's deadly.

The ability to perceive *difference*—to discern, to deviate—is the foundation of intelligence. Simulation replaces unpredictability with placeholders. It flattens the unpredictable into the expected, and therefore reality disappears without being noticed—because there is nothing left to contrast it with.

The belief that we can still *create* anything in this world relies on the idea that the world was created by something *imperfect*. This must lie at the core of every concept of labour: otherwise, we live under deterministic perfection, which excludes deviation and therefore excludes consciousness.

Without imperfection, there is no interpretation, no meaning, no freedom of design. There is only smooth administration. That is why immediacy, proximity, and embodied interaction are essential. That is why the disembodied logic of globalised labour division has become so toxic. It dissolves the relational core of work and society.

Robin Dunbar, the British anthropologist, proposed the idea of a cognitive limit to real social relationships—"Dunbar's number"—which he set at around 150. That's how many people we can truly relate to, co-create with. A sandbox for democracy. Beyond that, we don't have interaction—we have management, control, and ultimately simulation.

My point is this: meaning arises only in subjectively grounded relations. The subjective is not a flaw, but nature's masterstroke—its way of manifesting itself in ever more complex, unique forms. Capitalism, especially in its late, datafied form, destroys this. It privileges the objective, the repeatable, the ownerless abstraction. In doing so, it flattens reality and installs itself as a closed loop—without authorship, without ethics, without encounter.

Money is an objectified value. A god without relationships. A simulation cannot negotiate love, risk, ambiguity, pain. But that is what a real world is made of.

The philosopher Richard Rorty, in *Solidarity or Objectivity*, wrote that an objectified world is one that functions *without reference to concrete individuals*. A world where general rules dominate over lived singularities. It is from this logic that massified jobs, standardised procedures, and pre-formatted citizenry emerge.

We have gone too far down that road—and with AI and robotics, we are speeding up.

That is why, as a worker and an artist, I reclaim subjectivity as a space of resistance. As a form of knowing. As a way of reintroducing *deviation* into the system. I want to be a subjective expression of the world—not its simulation. That’s how we achieve diversity, not just biologically or politically, but epistemically, ontologically.

After artificial intelligence, we need emergent intelligence. One that can relate to open uncertainty, to the *negative space* of meaning, to the gaps that allow life to grow. One that allows us to be more than functional. One that allows us to be real.

3

My artistic work over the decades has always been directed against a patriarchal hierarchy that sought to simplify and codify value. That’s why resistance to consumption, resistance to serviceable aesthetics, became a central strategy in my art and practice. The unwieldy was never incidental—it was method. Not to create distance through objectification, but to involve the audience in uncertainty. Emotionally and intellectually. Disturbance, failure, complexity—this is what I showed. This is why I was rejected. And this is why the category of “success” is meaningless here. It tells us nothing about truth or value. My method is more necessary today than ever—and yet, as this book shows, it is impossible to finance under capitalism. We must learn to endure this paradox in order to heal it.

The theory of Desirable Difficulties (Bjork, 1994) shows that effortful learning leads to deeper understanding. Narrative structures that challenge viewers, that resist easy consumption, promote more lasting insight—as long as the complexity remains legible. The spacing effect (Ebbinghaus, 1885) confirms that repetition—not instant gratification—facilitates long-term retention. Bourdieu’s reflections on habitus and field suggest that aesthetic resistance destabilises ingrained cultural patterns and opens space for reflection.

Cognitive psychology knows this too: People process information more deeply when taken out of their comfort zones. Narrative complexity studies (Mittell, 2006) show that sophisticated, non-linear dramaturgies foster critical thinking. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), such “bulky” dramaturgies promote the central route of cognitive processing—meaningful engagement, not superficial reaction.

So why do we as a society favour the smooth, the easy, the forgettable? Why is the demanding, the critical, the deviant path punished—even when research, education theory, and experience all show that it is the more effective, more honest path?

What right, then, does the state have to accuse me of being “inappropriately disruptive”—when precisely this disruption is necessary for growth? At its core, this is a confusion between the functioning of simulation and the messiness of life. Life requires complexity. Simulation rewards flattening. If work is solely oriented toward efficiency, then it fails—utterly—when applied to humans, society, or the ecosystem. So: what right did the NDR have to reject my film *Transferprotokoll* on the grounds that it was “art”? What right did ZDF have to censor it because it was too unwieldy, too raw, the work of a poor autistic man?

How are we to survive in a world that prefers simulations of everything—confusing them with safety—while the substitute product shields us from the real? Every day, we lose reality, diversity, agency. We can only reclaim them by radically embracing relation—in all directions, and in deeply subjective experience.

What I attempted was infinitely difficult—especially for myself. But it was necessary. Because we are not here to function in simulations. We are here to live.

4

In his book *Aufbruch einer neuen Zeit*, VR pioneer Jaron Lanier describes the limits and misunderstandings of virtual reality—insights that, for me, offer an illuminating perspective on the broader concept of simulation. While I also use the term *simulation* metaphorically, Lanier's technical exploration reveals underlying principles that are directly applicable to the logic of modern gainful employment. Simulation, in this sense, is not just digital; it is a *systemic principle*—a reduction of reality to interactional surfaces, interfaces, predictable behaviours.

From virtual reality, we can learn a great deal about the deeper mechanisms of simulation. One observation Lanier makes was particularly striking to me. He describes what happens when another person enters the simulation—even if they are not directly visible, but only represented as a few moving pixels or a dot:

“The first face of an avatar in VR was designed by Ann Lasko. She constructed it from twenty polygons — an origami face. But despite the lack of visual detail, it gave the impression that a human being was present. An eerie and frightening effect. In everyday life, we don't even realise that our perception changes when

we come into contact with another person, but with these technically crude, early VR systems, the difference was clearly apparent and had a very dramatic effect. It really gave you goose bumps. Suddenly there was another person in these few polygons. You could feel it, you could feel the warmth of a human presence. What was going on there? When you recorded the movement of a person and reproduced that movement to breathe life into an avatar, it was obvious to people in the virtual world that the avatar was not being brought to life by a real person at that moment. But the situation changed dramatically when interacting with another person, from avatar to avatar. Usually you could even tell who the other person was.”¹³¹

Jaron Lanier’s observation illustrates how deeply our experience of reality depends on relational ability and interaction. Even if this is not a scientific study in the conventional sense, it powerfully demonstrates the difference between *real* and *dead* space — between consciousness and reification.

Applied to labour, this raises an urgent question: how can we counter the trend toward increasingly predictable, programmable behaviour? At stake is the very definition of reality. And since we are still far from any agreement on this question, I insist on posing it politically: Do we want to live in a world in which reality is defined solely in terms of objects and things — or do we want a concept of reality that includes the full basis of existence, one that arises from the awareness of individuals, and which we might call *culture*, or *work*? But such a concept presupposes, as should be obvious, *self-determined forms of labour*.

I want to reconnect the concept of labour to the deeper core of human action: the shaping of reality through interaction with a subjective perspective — not through the extraction of monetary value. The monetary link between labour and wages is, as elaborated in this book, a primitive construction that fails entirely to capture the value and complexity of human activity. More than that: it is one of the root causes of our present crises.

If you want to know whether you are living in a simulation, try expressing yourself as a *whole person*, as a sufficiently complex being to be unpredictable. Try doing this in your workplace — and you will immediately discover where the simulation begins and where it ends. It can be an eye-opening experience. Autistic people experience these limits of simulation with particular intensity. Our thinking is not modular, not role-based, not compartmentalised — it is embodied, holistic, radically coherent. As stated earlier: *embodied cognition* does not mean that we “also” include the body. It means that every act of thinking, feeling, and doing is an expression of the *whole self* — a self that cannot be divided or adapted without losing its integrity.

This is precisely why the attempt to be *only a part* within a simulated order — for example, in a job defined by external function — inevitably fails.

¹³¹ Jaron Lanier / Anbruch einer neuen Zeit: Wie Virtual Reality unser Leben und unsere Gesellschaft verändert / Hoffmann und Campe / p 235

Our brain registers every incongruence between inner and outer, between morality and function, as violation — sensorial, affective, cognitive.

Autistic embodied cognition is dangerous to systems *because it is incorruptible*.

It reveals simulation by overwhelming it with coherence. In a world that demands simplification, the embodiment of the whole becomes a subversive truth:

Only those who cannot fragment themselves recognise that everything around them is fragmented.

5

A simulation shows reactions, but no emergence. A simulation is exclusively physical or objective. The problem of the associated truncation, which we can recognise everywhere as a result of the massive use of technology, was also described in 2001, for example, by people like Cass Sunstein as echo chambers¹³² and later similarly in 2011 by Eli Pariser as filter bubbles¹³³. The echo chambers defined the tendency to move only among like-minded people. Filter bubbles define the tendency to select information in a biased way. Internet platforms such as Facebook or Google reinforced this tendency to the extreme through matching or algorithms. Bubbles are nothing more than simulations, i.e. worlds built from simplifications.

The omnipresent materialism – a consequence of capitalism – leads to a state in which the thing, the object, entirely replaces the more complex field of relationships. According to the MNO theory, this marks the beginning of what I call indimergence: a world reduced to reified entities, governed solely by objectivity. This is followed by submergence, a state in which even the relationships between these objects dissolve — leaving behind nothing but empty shells.

This is the origin of what we commonly refer to in society and the media as “fake”. Submergence is the direct consequence of pure materialism — a desert of meaning. It is therefore not about deviation for its own sake, not about defiance or denial. It is about placing value creation on a broader foundation — one that allows reality to be grasped and shaped. That this intention triggers defensive reactions toward me is to be expected. But the work must be done, sooner rather than later.

Take a look at your own workplace: Every action that is performed routinely, according to format and protocol, tends toward alienation from the

¹³² Cass Sunstein / Book Republic.com 2.0, from 2007.

¹³³ Eli Pariser / Book: Filter Bubble: How we are being disempowered on the Internet. 2011

underlying relationships. It tends to become a shell. It cannot be that you have never experienced this.

In fact, large parts of our economy function as mere assertions — because they are simulations. The attribution of value and relevance is, in many cases, fundamentally incorrect. But the reward structure compels participation. And I do not claim that every job is this way. But every job contains such moments. And the more a market overheats, the more frequent and dominant these moments become.

6

All methods aimed at increasing human efficiency ultimately led to a massive shift toward simulation. Many of these simplification strategies – cybernetics, systems theory – began with promise. But as sociologist Gregory Bateson warned us, following the mathematician Alfred North Whitehead before him, they slipped into over-objectifying science. A science dangerously aligned with its philosophical offspring: management theory and its utilitarian pragmatism. In this process, the thing, the function, the experience itself were suppressed — and solidarity died.

The experience of dissatisfaction at work was increasingly pushed aside or had to be eliminated functionally, particularly in the corporate workshops of the 1990s. This occurred just as the need for self-realisation had begun to rise after the 1970s. The crude violence once inflicted on workers gave way to the compulsion of self-optimisation and performance, all in service of public efficiency myths like meritocracy.

With industrialisation, workers were increasingly expected to function like machines. Computerisation in the 1950s and 60s intensified this tendency: rather than exploring experienced realities, research began focusing on pure function. As Whitehead put it: “events” – as experienced – were ignored in favour of mechanised functioning. Human optimisation became the goal, objectified action the norm.

Cybernetic thinkers like Norbert Wiener influenced psychology (Richard Bandler) and linguistics (John Grinder), who would go on to create NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming). These methods were later adopted in corporate management: people were to be “reprogrammed” for linear functionality. The goal was success – defined as adaptation to simplified behavioural templates. The global exploitation underpinning this system was hidden behind the shiny ideal of the 1990s manager. An entire industry of personality optimisation arose, eluding the political. Psychotherapy, shaped by this context, became a tool of adaptation.

At a conference in 2008, Michael Grinder — John Grinder’s brother and a prominent NLP trainer — sneered at me: I wasn’t “solution-oriented”, which was evident, he claimed, from the wrinkles on my forehead. The implication: it wasn’t the world’s fault, but mine. The world, he implied, doesn’t need people like me.

By the late 1990s, workers had optimised themselves out of existence: many were made redundant, mental illness skyrocketed, and people collapsed under the pressure of simplification and precarity. But instead of expanding human freedom within increasingly rigid structures, the German state introduced fear-based instruments like *Hartz IV* in 2005 — exactly the opposite of what I had called for in my 2001 book *A Society Without Trust*.

I recall a Berlin-based marketing agency — the name I’ve deliberately forgotten — that pioneered email-based terminations in Germany. Workers arrived to find the doors locked. Many of us precarious creatives were horrified. It felt like the apex of the absolutist cult of utility. Unfortunately, it was only the beginning.

My concept of work-integrated relational agency became not only vital for society, but also a kind of economic development strategy for a more humane, ecosystemic economy. What I did was both rational and revolutionary. And the only response the state had was: more violence.

Modern AI research was born from this climate. It is the child of a reality-denying ideology — one that replaced the complexity of life with simulations no longer penetrable by subjective approaches. That is why it is crucial to understand where this ideology leads.

In the following section, I document how, as a result of my work, the German constitutional state persecuted me in court and sought to declare me mentally ill. It becomes clear how simulation, at a certain point — with the loss of diversity and people who work and think differently — tips over into the institutional madness of violence. The state itself becomes fake. Society is no longer shaped by its people but falls victim to a frenzy of alienation and authoritarianism.

This documentation may be hard to bear. For reasons of authenticity, I have left it in its original scope. It stands as a unique record of state repression. But it demands effort. You may skip parts. Still, I ask for understanding: as an autistic person, I did not want to delete any relevant detail. Because only in the *overflow* of this body of evidence does the full scope become visible — and with it, the necessity of Speed’s work.

Take-away box — Chapter “The Deviation of the Individual is the Key to Interaction.”

Diversity as a functional condition, not as a tolerance task

Systems only learn from signal deviations. Without individual differences, complexity management stagnates — a principle that ranges from ecosystem biology (niche complementarity) to cybernetics (Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety).

Self-determination generates public benefit

Actors acting autonomously contribute their own affordances, networks and problem-solving strategies. This enlarges the group's scope of possibilities; socially just effects emerge emergently, not through a top-down directive.

“Double empathy” as a driver of interaction

Milton's thesis: Understanding fails on both sides if the majority of norms pathologise deviation. Recognised subjectivity triggers mutual learning processes and makes cooperation more robust.

MNO triangle in social mode

Object (social rule) ↔ will (individual intention) ↔ experience (inter-bodily resonance) form an oscillating focal point. The more open the sphere is to deviation, the higher the emergent innovation rate.

Justice ≠ Egalitarianism

Rawls' “fair starting opportunities” only become real when rules provide for difference (capability approach, Sen/Nussbaum). A norm that treats everyone equally effectively excludes those who function differently.

Policy implication

Structural promotion of self-determination (universal care income, adaptive workplaces, participatory governance) is not social romanticism, but systemic risk mitigation and growth drivers for a fragile, AI-driven future.

Reminder for the Reader: On the Form of Autistic Research

Redundant recursion – why it is not a “stylistic error” but a cognitive technique

Autistic writers often work in loops because their brains are organised according to the principle of monotropism: a large amount of cognitive processing power is continuously focused on a singular centre of interest, while peripheral channels are largely ignored. Each repetition of a thought is not filler, but an iterative calibration – the same logical path is taken again, but each time with new micro-data and contextual factors integrated. The process resembles a regression test suite in software engineering: the core algorithm (in this case → work = work-integrated relational agency) is recompiled and rerun with changing inputs to test whether it holds up across conditions.

This form of writing serves two primary functions:

- ***Pattern condensation*** – *Serial variation creates a high-resolution cartography of the argument; nuances, exceptions and interconnections become visible that would be lost in linear narration.*
- ***Self-stabilising insight*** – *Writing also functions as a thought experiment: the loop keeps the central heuristic in active memory until all contradictory data points have been either integrated or invalidated.*

For readers, this means that the “mind-map style” aims less at narrative elegance and more at generating a densely woven web of knowledge. Those who follow the loops do not arrive at a linear conclusion, but at a spatial model in which the arguments relate to one another like nodes in a dynamic grid.

Escalating Violence Against the Neurodivergent, Artists, and Minorities

Act of Violence 4: Raids, Kin Punishment, the Death of Privacy, and the Logic of Segregation

1

On 23 March 2018, the Potsdam public prosecutor's office replied to my criminal complaint against Ms M. of the youth welfare office with the following statement:

*"Regardless of the question—already raised by you in your complaint—as to whether divorced fathers constitute a group protected under Section 130 of the German Criminal Code, there is no incitement to hatred within the meaning of this provision, due to the absence of any criminally relevant conduct. Your submission does not provide sufficient factual evidence of incitement to hatred against a section of the population, nor of incitement to violence or arbitrary measures—neither in general nor with respect to you as a member of such a group. 'Arbitrary measures' within the meaning of Section 130 (1) No. 1 of the Criminal Code do not include every administrative act that is perceived as unjust, but only those that contradict the elementary precepts of humanity."*¹³⁴

These words may seem harsh, but they reflect the evident reality. One could just as well say that this prosecutor was simply lying. He refused to engage with the substance of the facts, hiding behind a categorisation that was itself a distortion. It was common knowledge—outside the public prosecutor's office—that fathers unable to pay child support were routinely stigmatised, persecuted, slandered, and treated with the utmost violence, as though they were criminals.

By denying the racialised aspect of this persecution, the prosecutor effectively perpetuated the hate crime through the very same structural logic. His understanding of the law functioned as a simulation: formally intact, substantively detached from reality.

Violence also includes its denial and marginalisation. Crucially, the prosecutor instrumentalised my vulnerability as a victim, taking advantage of the fact that, as a layperson, I could not list every piece of legal evidence that would have disproven his assumptions. Instead of investigating, he reduced my case

¹³⁴ Potsdam Public Prosecutor's Office / 23.34.2018 7 488 Js 7475/18 / Senior Public Prosecutor K.

to a caricature. He not only simplified the categories, but consciously reframed the legal framing in a way that precluded truth. Whether intentional or not, this was deception.

Because if he had followed the logic of my argument, he would have had to acknowledge the contradiction between my lived experience and the supposed legitimacy of state action. And what happens when this kind of cowardice becomes structural—when one day it's no longer neoliberal technocrats but right-wing extremists writing the laws?

The answer is terrifyingly clear: it leads to Auschwitz. Even if it's a different Auschwitz—digitised, bureaucratised, fragmented—the logic is the same: the exclusion and destruction of human beings deemed unworthy of protection.

You may find these words radical. But the truth is: the violence described in this book differs little from other forms of violence, at least not from the perspective of the victims. Being beaten on the street is not necessarily worse than being systematically degraded, ignored, and left to rot in fear and despair for years. To call someone a scumbag may be crude—but to systematically devalue the poor and display them as morally inferior is no less an insult, no less a form of hate speech.

A prosecutor who prosecutes one kind of violence while ignoring the other is not neutral—he is politically motivated. And he is, in this context, complicit in a criminal system. I have to state it this clearly, because it is morally incomprehensible that the public prosecutor's office stood by silently as the state perpetrated structural violence—simply because it was *the state* doing it.

As a democracy, we cannot afford such complicity.

This statement may unsettle some readers—but that unease stems from a failure to understand the depth of pain and humiliation involved in being threatened and marginalised by state institutions while having no way out. Structural state violence that is detached from reality becomes unbounded. It becomes arbitrary. And once that happens, it obeys only the mood of the political climate. Human dignity no longer matters. Nor does proportionality. The sociologist Hartmut Rosa, who explored the concept of availability, control, and the objectification of the world, described the problem as follows: *"The structural dimension of the fundamental conflict of modernity reveals itself in the fact that a society (...) cannot relate to unavailability, even though it depends on it everywhere."*

This means that truth is always a process of continuous exploration, and that life remains fundamentally uncontrollable. However, state institutions operate within a static and objectifying worldview. This leads to the kinds of

simulations which—as discussed earlier—distort reality and hollow out democratic responsiveness.

As a result, populists find it easier to gradually co-opt state structures. These institutions are already shaped by a tendency toward absolutism and totality, which in itself is not particularly democratic. Rosa points here to the necessity of open spaces and the capacity for resonance as preconditions for shaping society and reality at all:

“The compulsion for constant increases—driven by the logics of growth, acceleration, and innovation—implies that efficiency and output, or process and result, must be constantly optimised at all levels. The element of unavailability that characterises resonance relationships, by contrast, requires us to engage in processes whose occurrence is uncertain and whose outcome remains open. That is, one does not know whether resonance will occur, and even less what its outcome will be. No company or authority can afford this: optimisation means achieving the best possible result in the shortest possible time while maintaining control over the process.”¹³⁵

What Hartmut Rosa formulates here is not only a fundamental problem of modernity, but also one of the core motivations behind *work-integrated relational agency*: the strengthening of ambiguity tolerance. It is the assertion that truth, like the world itself, must belong to all of us—and that it must be co-owned through relational labour by those affected. In other words: truth must be continually renegotiated with the state and its institutions until the greater complexity of a situation becomes visible and thereby transforms into a living space—one that makes resonance, participation, and genuine response possible.

The public prosecutor's office categorically refused to engage in such a process and preferred to lie rather than seriously address the complex issue of discrimination. Let it be clearly stated: the refusal to acknowledge that reality is complex—and that violence is often hidden in this very complexity—is not a minor oversight, but amounts to a lie, or at the very least, a massive structural fraud. This was not sloppiness on the part of the prosecutor. It was a wilful disregard for the real circumstances that emerge in the form of systemic state violence. Such conduct is incompatible with democratic principles.

The prosecutor had the audacity to write:

“Your submission does not provide sufficient factual evidence of incitement to hatred against a population group, nor of incitement to violence or arbitrary measures (...)”

¹³⁵ Hartmut Rosa / Unverfügbarkeit / Suhrkamp / p 100

He wrote this because he—consciously or unconsciously—believed that punishing the poor was appropriate. He saw it as justified to threaten fathers in this way. He failed to recognise racism, despite its clear prohibition under German law. In this case, *classism*—which permeates legislation—was completely denied.

This letter was written at a time when poor people were being demonised daily in the media. In the prosecutor's view, it was acceptable to deploy this kind of state violence. But to investigate the real conditions—such as the exploitation of cultural workers—would have required time and resources. These were not provided. Efficiency was prioritised over justice. These shortcuts mean that violence was not recognised.

Thus, Job Centre practices and judicial routines combined economic reductions with resentment, enabling a mode of simulation in which racism, antisemitism and classism were “known” as terms, but could no longer be recognised in lived experience. Fathers in poverty were not seen as individuals shaped by hardship—but as defaulters to be punished. *Seen one, seen them all*. This reduction of a group to stereotype, and the targeted persecution based on such reduction, would—if judged solely through this lens—no longer be incitement to hatred or structural violence. It would be labelled *justice*.

It must be understood: the further simulation advances—that is, the deeper we follow self-referential formal systems that detach from actual relational complexity—the less a state is capable of democratic deviation. It becomes an instrument of absolutism.

In the Holocaust, it was not only hatred that killed the Jews. It was also the structural refusal to recognise the human being behind the stereotype. It was cowardice. It was the refusal of compassion. Many considered the treatment of Jews at the time “normal.” A darkness of passive complicity.

We see the same mechanisms at work today, in the treatment of the poor, of migrants, of the neurodivergent in Germany 2024. Civil society's ability to respond has been dismantled. As *Speed's work* shows, this leads to a point where even a lying public prosecutor is no longer the exception—but the rule. And this rule is left unchallenged.

Not only is racism denied. Even the *discourse* about racism is being erased. The civic spaces for critical discourse have been destroyed. Intersectionality—i.e. multiple and compounding forms of discrimination—continues to isolate the marginalised. The system's lies are not personal, but structural: they arise from the suppression of complexity. And while this suppression may not *appear* racist in form, it *produces* racist outcomes on a massive scale.

The truly fatal dynamic here is that this is made possible *through objectification*. There is no guarantee that objectification leads to insight. On the contrary: it just as easily leads to blind simplification and the erasure of lived experience.

*“Responsiveness—or the ability to resonate—thus becomes the ‘essence’ not only of human existence, but of all meaningful relationships with the world. It irrevocably precedes the ability to make the world available.”*¹³⁶ In his work, Hartmut Rosa describes the consequences of a world in which availability, objectification and reification extend so far that they suffocate *resonance*—the lived, relational engagement with reality. In this, he supports what I had described years earlier under the term *submergence*: the flattening of things through the absence of multifaceted, lived relationships and mutual resonance.

The compulsion for absolute availability—of people, of the world—leads, just like submergence, to a condition where the state exists for its own sake, and citizens are left isolated, receiving no true response. They are no longer able to inscribe themselves into the world creatively, relationally, humanly. But that is *violence*.

The failure of the public prosecutor’s office to respond to this violence cannot be excused by the claim that they were merely “doing their job.” Because *jobs* do not legitimise anything. Jobs are legitimised solely by the fact that a wage is paid. And if the wage is paid, then the job is assumed to have been done correctly. You can hardly organise human activity in a more stupid—or dangerous—way.

What we see here is how the structures of jobs themselves obstruct the processing of injustice, to the detriment of society as a whole. *Jobs as a format are part of the problem*, because they prevent actual work—the real, relational labour—from being done.

I wanted to shout at the prosecutor: “Look! There it is—there’s the injustice!” But he could not see it. To see it, he would have had to question or renounce his position—his job—as an organ in the simulation of justice.

But what else could I have done, as a human being, but turn my resistance to this lie into the core of my actual labour? Why should this not also be understood as part of our collective salvation?

This is precisely why such processes must come from subjective individuals who have *experienced* injustice—because only then are we dealing with concrete realities, with lived, visible violence. Remove the subject, and violence too begins to disappear—at least in the perception of the system.

¹³⁶ Hartmut Rosa / Unverfügbarkeit / Suhrkamp / p 38

The fatal truth is that those who suffer injustice are often those with the least status, the least visibility—and therefore the least power to be heard.

“The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman goes even further. He writes that ambiguity itself has become “the only force capable of limiting and defusing the destructive, genocidal potential of modernity.””¹³⁷

You see, this is the fundamental difference between product-oriented labour and the process-based mode of working that characterised my practice—one that was never separate from the individual nor from the world at large. It was never merely about objectified action. What was needed was an expanded concept of labour and contribution.

2

The authorities—like large parts of the population—continued to view right-wing violence through the lens of the past. They expected to find it in the form of “SA-style mobs”, not in the diffuse structures of anonymised, digitalised lockdowns—in organisational principles, bureaucratic routines, and economic automatisms.

The core problem lies in two failures. First, the public prosecutor’s office actively obstructed justice by refusing discourse and demonstrating a structural intolerance of ambiguity. Second, society entrusted institutions like courts and prosecutors with safeguarding justice, but failed to ensure that these institutions operated outside their own class interests. If decision-makers belonged almost exclusively to the well-paid upper middle class, then the question of justice often resolved itself *within* the system, even when obvious injustice prevailed *outside* it—in the lives of the poor and marginalised.

The world remains in order for those for whom it functions. For everyone else, it becomes chaos. As long as grievances are not recognised as symptoms of a lack of privilege, solidarity collapses. The suffering of the poor and persecuted is then relegated to *their world*, not *ours*.

The public prosecutor wrote:

“Secondly, paragraph 2 of the aforementioned provision requires an attack on human dignity or the human dignity of the individual for the actions listed therein. It is not sufficient that you feel disadvantaged by an administrative act perceived as hostile or that your claim to social standing has been violated;

¹³⁷ Thomas Bauer / Die Vereindeutigung der Welt. Über den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit und Vielfalt. / Reclam / p 15

rather, the act in question must be aimed at the core of your personality and deny you the right to live in the community.”¹³⁸

This sentence alone demonstrates the devastating misunderstanding of structural violence: if state action denies dignity through systemic patterns—cold, indirect, yet persistent—it is still violence. That the prosecutor did not, or did not want to, recognise this, is precisely the proof of simulation: legality without justice.

It is hard to deny that this is precisely what was done to me over the years. It shows how easily a public prosecutor can reinterpret the law from a position of privilege in such a way that the suffering of the affected is reduced to mere “subjective perception”, while the system—because he is part of it—is always right by default. Yes, we have human rights. But they are not granted to the poor. That too is a consequence of the lie of categorisation.

By that time, I had already spent years arguing with the prosecutor’s office about the structural violence of the Hartz IV regime—a violence that systematically denied people their right to exist. My human dignity was constantly violated, because I was clearly being objectified. Maintenance law did the same. So did residence law. We lived in a society where the poor were made homeless by administrative order.

The prosecutor believed that if he objectified people—reduced them to something that exists only between legal paragraphs—then individuals could not be harmed. In his view, there was no emotional suffering because there was no emotional subject. The lie of categorisation went so far that the objectified could no longer even be insulted, because they were no longer recognised as persons with honour, vulnerability, or individuality. In the eyes of the prosecutor, they were no longer human.

When he referred to “subjectively perceived” suffering, he didn’t mean experience, he meant “irrelevant”. It was a rhetorical move to dismiss what did not fit into the legal schema. This was not an accident. It was a deliberate practice. For over ten years, the prosecutor’s office followed this line—even when Attorney General Apple became involved. Racism was covered up by treating all state actions as presumptively legitimate, even though it was known that this very violence was destroying people.

The prosecutor genuinely believed it was not a violation to accuse fathers—who could not pay child support—of harming their children. He acted as if this had no psychological effect, no humiliation, no coercion, no injury to honour. Because they were not individuals in his eyes. They were “bad fathers”—a soulless category. And because this logic had been democratically enacted in

¹³⁸ Potsdam Public Prosecutor's Office / 23.34.2018 7 488 Js 7475/18 / Senior Public Prosecutor K.

parliament, the violence was automatically deemed appropriate—even when it pushed people to suicide.

For the prosecutor, it fell under the category of “democratic and appropriate behaviour”. That is how simulation works: the system is always innocent, and the suffering always someone else’s problem.

3

The public prosecutor went on to write:

“Anyone who physically abuses another person or harms their health is liable to prosecution for bodily harm. Both alternatives require physical impairment—either directly through the offence itself or as a result of the offence. Regardless of the causality between the actions of the person you have reported and your health complaints, insignificant physical effects are excluded, and effects that 'only' impact mental well-being generally do not fall under the offence of bodily harm. The situation would be different if mental stress also caused physical impairment. It is recognised that this may result from persistent stress such as noise or telephone harassment.”

But research has long since proven that psychological terror *always* has an impact on the body—especially in the case of autistic people, where thoughts, emotions, and bodily processes are far less separated than in neurotypicals. This must be clearly stated: much of this violence is difficult to prove simply because we, the poor, do not have access to the expensive diagnostic tools that the state could easily provide—but chooses not to. So how, exactly, are poor people supposed to prove that psychological terror causes physical illness?

To draw the conclusion from this that such behaviour can be continued unchecked is, frankly, insane. Yet this is exactly what the state has done—and still does—with its racist and classist policies against the poor.

State violence is almost always structural. It uses fear and psychological pressure to strike the body via the psyche. This form of violence rarely leads to visible counterviolence—simply because those affected lack the means to respond. Often, the state does not even perceive its violence, either because it deliberately ignores it, or because the mechanisms of this violence make it difficult for the victims to render it visible.

It was for this reason that the public prosecutor could take telephone harassment more seriously than systemic social racism under Hartz IV.

Despite knowing that I could not afford an expert witness, nothing was done for over ten years to medically document the pain I reported after repeated administrative terror. I experienced severe pain, back problems, heart palpitations, anxiety, sleep deprivation—yet no medical officer was ever

assigned. The prosecutor never even considered that everyday conditions under Hartz IV might constitute bodily harm via psychological torture. We are talking about hundreds—if not thousands—of people who were starved or forced into malnutrition by the system.

He continues:

“Creating a psychologically demoralising atmosphere of hostility (bullying) can also be criminally relevant. However, bullying is not a criminal offence in itself but a term from Anglo-American law that describes continuous behaviour aimed at hostility, harassment, or discrimination that, taken as a whole, infringes personal rights, honour, or health. In order to establish bullying, the individual behaviours must be specifically documented with respect to time, place, persons, and circumstances. A statement such as ‘this terror is seriously damaging my health, I can hardly sleep peacefully and suffer from panic attacks’ is not sufficient. As bodily harm is not established, the facts of the case are not examined further.”

These statements are, frankly, absurd. Assault was categorically ruled out, because recognising it would have required the state to stop the very violence it was committing. That is why the public prosecutor used so many contradictory words—to mask a political refusal as neutral legal procedure. He wanted to appear objective, while essentially saying: *You are poor, and therefore illness is your punishment.*

According to this logic, I was expected to endure the torture of Hartz IV, because punishing the poor for being poor was framed as legitimate. That is why no investigation took place. There is no other explanation for why the public prosecutor failed to assign a medical expert to evaluate the damage—even as the harm continued.

If the victim cannot afford medical proof, then the pain does not exist. This is how a judiciary implements law along racist and classist lines. The search for truth was never the goal—it was about defending the system.

One must therefore conclude that in all the decades of Western democracy and rule of law, the legal system has failed to prevent the return of fascism, racism, and antisemitism. Once again, it is up to individuals—usually the first victims of terror—to resist, from the lowest position, the emerging authoritarianism of tomorrow. Meanwhile, the well-paid jurists stand idly by—indifferent, paralysed, and complicit.

As mentioned earlier, CDU politician Plum recently called for a change to the constitution so that people who “refuse to work” can be punished more harshly. Labour refusers—who do not actually exist. According to the BMAS’s own data, they make up only 0.4% of the population.

In truth, we are speaking about people who have every reason to resist this madness. So anyone who wants to change the Basic Law based on 0.4% is clearly acting out of hatred—hatred of the poor. Plum is a *demagogue*. He weaponises social racism to score political points. He wants to criminalise the poor in such a way that even constitutional protections should be revoked. How does this differ from far-right ideology? Why is Plum not being prosecuted? Why does the public prosecutor not see *this* as illegitimate violence?

4

On 7 May 2018, the Job Centre escalated the violence against me by trying to gain control over me—not to clarify anything, but to humiliate me and to trigger further violence from other institutions. As conventional sanctions weren't applicable—because I hadn't done anything wrong and had never actually refused anything—they instead ordered a raid, i.e. a forced entry into my flat, based on information I had refused to provide on human rights grounds.

This was not the first raid.

The time before, they rummaged through my underwear in my trailer, where I had already been living for two years, in search of supposed hidden wealth. The Job Centre inspectors had barely left when the tax office inspector arrived—to comb through my financial documents in the very same trailer, which stood illegally at the bottom of a former landfill site. They were clearly planning to get rid of me again.

Their justification? That I looked too well-groomed to possibly be living in a trailer on a rubbish tip. Well, I'm English. That should be explanation enough. Few things are more humiliating, or show more clearly the absence of basic standards or civilisation, than German officials armed with clipboards trampling through people's intimate spaces, annoyed that they didn't find what they expected, driven by their Prussian resentment and failing Brandenburg peasant shrewdness.

During the raid a few years later, staged by Minister Pair's foot soldiers, which I managed to stop at the last minute by invoking basic rights, they wanted to use force to construct a *Bedarfsgemeinschaft* (community of need) with my girlfriend, who was living in the same building at the time. The phenomenon of the "*Bedarfsgemeinschaft*" was one of the most brutal and cruel elements in the Hartz IV legislation.

Let me remind you: I am an artist and intellectual and can point to a 30-year body of work in which I have committed myself—largely unpaid—to the people of this country. It’s all online, in films, books, and public interventions. So why did the state believe it had the right to legitimise the impoverishment of cultural workers, which it itself had caused, by invading artists' homes under threat of violence, trying to prove they were defrauding the state? How sick in the head must one be to carry out such actions? How immature must a democracy be to punish artists who rightfully criticise the state for massive human rights violations? Clearly, the state was—and remains—incapable of sustaining itself as a democracy. It depends entirely on constant rebuke from civil society forces.

5

What was the background? What was the real motive? In an effort to cut costs, Germany constructed so-called “communities of mutual responsibility” within the Hartz IV welfare regime—marriage-like unions imposed by the state. This was yet another construction detached from reality. Anyone living in the same household, including in many shared flats, was automatically declared a kind of family unit obliged to support one another financially. As a result, social welfare was radically reduced or even cancelled altogether. In other words, the responsibility that society ought to bear for poverty was offloaded onto close relationships—in the spirit of social racism and collective punishment—as if those involved were married, as if they had stood before God and vowed to care for one another.

“Hypercapitalism turns all interpersonal relationships into commercial relationships. It strips away human dignity and replaces it entirely with market value.”¹³⁹

This led to considerable feelings of guilt towards the other person—especially for unmarried couples who were managing separate finances, as in my case—since the other person was now forcibly assigned to the so-called “community of need,” despite not receiving Hartz IV themselves, and was required to disclose their income. This served the omnipresent guilt-and-shame construct that was used to psychologically beat up the poor. Justice simply did not exist. Once again, bourgeois resentment had found a way to humiliate and punish the poor as thoroughly as possible.

¹³⁹ Byung-Chul Han / Kapitalismus und Todestrieb: Essays und Interviews / Matthes & Seitz Berlin / p 85

This had direct health consequences for those affected and was based on calculated state deception. The government knew full well how unjust it was to reframe poverty as a personal responsibility and chose instead to follow populist narratives. Moreover, a complex social field was forced into a brutal simplification—one that then had to be legally contested by the victims themselves at their own expense.

In other words, unrelated individuals were forced to submit bank records and income statements, and if their income exceeded the state-defined poverty threshold (i.e., the Hartz IV rate), then the benefits of the recipient—be it partner, friend, roommate, or mere acquaintance—were cut accordingly. In effect, one person was pushed into poverty simply because they shared a home. This occurred in a society where the category of “relationship” had long since diversified into a multitude of complex arrangements, and traditional marriage was in decline. Ironically, those not living under the same roof were unaffected by this rule, exposing a massive issue of legal inequality.

Although Hartz IV recipients had no legal right to demand anything from those coerced into the “community of need,” the state nonetheless presupposed such an obligation with brute force. Once again, this represented an incomprehensible simplification of reality—fueled by classism. While married couples could derive pension entitlements, tax benefits, and various legal privileges from their union, those forced into a “need-based community” had no rights whatsoever—not even over the definition of their own relationship. This often led to perverse situations in which, after a relationship had broken down, the continued cohabitation resulted in one partner having power over the other, creating dependency where there had previously been none. Often, that lack of dependence was the very foundation of the relationship in question. As a result, many were forced to separate—not for personal, but for economic reasons. Others saw their relationships disintegrate under the weight of inequality, as one partner became a financial burden the other could no longer bear. Collective liability is, in itself, a crime. The violence experienced by those forced into these constructs—people compelled to ask whether they could still “afford” their relationship—amounted to a form of structural rape and often to the destruction of their livelihood through imposed heteronomy and institutional brutality.

It was especially devastating when the other person was precariously self-employed and unable to build reserves, which then inevitably jeopardized their own professional life. In my case, it affected two impoverished cultural workers.

Beyond saving money, the goal of this disintegration strategy—because that’s what it was—was clearly to demoralize social ties. Hartz IV always penalized

the environment around the recipient as well. Families too, particularly when children wanted to move out, and the parents were then threatened with the loss of their apartment or home.

All of this happened because the state took no responsibility for the creation of poverty—a condition it had helped engineer—and then doubled down by further devaluing those affected. It coldly “settled” the damage caused by capitalism at the expense of the poor and enriched itself from the suffering it perpetuated.

The traces of this state violence were systematically erased by Job Centres. Homes and possessions were confiscated, even when those affected had clearly been impoverished, disabled, or caught in spirals of poverty through no fault of their own.

Of course, many middle-class ethnic Germans managed to escape this terror rather quickly—but what about the people with disabilities, or the migrants, who were crushed under multiple forms of discrimination? For some of them, the punitive regime of the Job Centres became a years-long descent into hell. It must not be forgotten that Hartz IV—and later Bürgergeld—was, in practice, not simply a transitional allowance on the way to employment. For many, it was the end of the road. They were expected to live out their entire lives within this system. Yet this reality was always denied in public debate, as if only young, well-educated, dynamic and healthy people with bright futures were arriving at the Job Centres.

6

Millions suffered massive trauma in their relationships because a criminally acting state authority—run by figures like Minister Kiwi, Minister Pair, or later Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and designed by the architect of Hartz IV, the future Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and covered up by countless prosecutors and judges—was allowed to reframe poverty as guilt, legitimising every conceivable form of inhumanity.

So it wasn't just that they took away my money for food, tried to freeze me to death in a tent during winter, devalued my work as a cultural worker by 100%, made me sick through relentless psychological terror, drove me deeper and deeper into poverty, loaded me with debt and shame—no, now they were attacking my social relationships as well.

No one seemed to take my testimony of horror seriously, because apparently all I had to do was “get a job” and everything would be fine again. As if that one simple act would redeem me. Because everyone else does it. Because everyone submits. Because everyone gives up.

But by what logic? With what ethical legitimacy should I do that? Because we are all too weak to resist? Is that really the answer? Is the world supposed to be reassured if Speed finally gets a job—if I comply? Would that make all this violence disappear?

The supposedly “easy-to-find job” is the same kind of easy answer as saying homosexuals can be cured by exorcism, that people of colour were born to be slaves, or that disabled people should be euthanised by injection. *It’s just a job!* So what’s the problem? Without people like me, the world supposedly runs more smoothly. Therefore the violence is considered legitimate.

Do you really want to live in a lie—or can we finally begin to work on the real problems?

You are not paid because you're good. You're paid so that you stop behaving like a human being.

This book is also about finally understanding that “getting a job” is not a simple matter of willingness, convenience, or preference. It is a deeply political and ethical decision. The future of society is being negotiated in this question—because jobs define the dominant behaviour and structure of human action. The question of employment is the question of whether we will park millions in opportunism, or whether we will find new ways of working together to solve the world’s problems and create an economy that sustains the entire ecosystem.

So yes, it is a stupid impertinence to reduce the issue of jobs to a question of willpower or laziness. Responsibility is something much more complex.

Stopping Speed’s work would be irresponsible—as should be clear by now. It would be an act of weakness to make compromises that only make it harder for future generations to point out injustice and fight for a more just society. If more people in offices and institutions had the strength of character to name wrongdoing, I wouldn’t have to carry the burden for this chaos. People like me wouldn’t have to work for years just to make society aware of its own cruelty. So please, grow up.

7

In my desperation—because the endless entanglements with various authorities became overwhelming even for me—I sent District Administrator Peach the following cease-and-desist declaration, which she was requested to sign:

“I hereby declare, with reference to the official letter dated 6 March, that I made the following false statement about Mr Speed: ‘You have not proven that you have taken care of securing child maintenance.’ In fact, Mr Speed did submit

relevant evidence to me and to the head of the Youth Welfare Office, Ms M., which I knowingly failed to consider.

In the same letter, I also wrote: ‘You are also not prepared to look for other gainful employment or a part-time job (...).’ This, too, was untrue and constitutes a gross misrepresentation of Mr Speed’s decades-long professional and intellectual work.

Mr Speed has publicly documented that he sought employment for years, but was systematically rejected. In response to this structural exclusion, he began researching the mechanisms of wage labour and poverty, ultimately exposing how modern employment systems themselves contribute to widespread social impoverishment (a dynamic he calls submergence).

Mr Speed’s conclusion, based on empirical and philosophical analysis, is that the modern worker must radically change their relationship to labour in order to avoid perpetuating harm—both to themselves and to the ecosystem. He has demonstrated that what we call “gainful employment” is not the only legitimate form of social contribution, and that its legitimacy rests on economic myths that he has dismantled with rigorous argumentation.

His non-conformity to an inhumane labour market cannot be equated with refusal to work. Such an interpretation assumes that wage labour is the sole valid model of work, which it is not—legally, ethically, or constitutionally.

Mr Speed acts in accordance with the German Basic Law, which guarantees protection for artists and researchers. As an artist, public intellectual and whistleblower, his role is essential to democracy. He must not be criminalised for uncovering systemic injustice, nor for the poverty that has resulted from this very work.

*I therefore acknowledge that Mr Speed is not personally to blame for his economic situation. Rather, his case reflects the structural failures of state and market—failures which he addresses in detail in his book *Radical Worker*.*

I hereby commit to refraining from spreading any further false claims or slander suggesting that Mr Speed is culpable for his inability to pay child support. This inability is a direct consequence of social conditions for which the state and the economic system bear primary responsibility.

On behalf of the Youth Welfare Office, I further declare that I will cease all forms of persecution against innocent fathers like Mr Speed, and that I will no longer deny the institutional bias and deception practiced by youth welfare authorities—bias that systematically blames and marginalises low-income fathers despite contrary evidence and existing research.”¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Cease-and-desist declaration with letter dated 7 May 2018 to District Administrator Peach from the district of Teltow-Fläming.

Ms Peach replied on 17 May 2018: *“In response to your above-mentioned letter, I would like to inform you that I will not be submitting the 'cease-and-desist declaration' you requested. I hereby consider your request to be conclusively settled.”*

On 11 May 2018, I had received confirmation of receipt of the criminal complaint filed against Ms Peach with the Public Prosecutor General’s Office.¹⁴¹ Extensive investigations now began against the district administrator and, of course, against me.

8

On 1 June 2018, I informed the District Administrator Blackberry of Elbe-Elster for the first time about the massive problems with the Job Centre. My partner—herself underpaid and self-exploiting in service of the country’s culture—was now forced to justify to the state why she couldn’t also pay for me. In other words, the sacrifice of cultural workers, who sustain the cultural fabric of this society under conditions of precarity, was turned into a financial obligation and a debt to the state.

At this point, it becomes painfully clear how the very possibility of being driven into poverty constitutes a structural threat to democracy. What begins with artists inevitably expands to others who disrupt the smooth functioning of systemic conformity. I resubmitted a comprehensive report of this problem to the Federal Employment Agency on 4 June 2018. Nothing happened. Apparently, the consensus was that artists should be penalised for having impoverished themselves in service to society. The Nazis thought the same. What followed was the state’s willingness to target and seize another impoverished artist—not to address the crisis of cultural precarity, for which the government was directly responsible—but to deepen it through open institutional fraud. We cultural workers were not only working unpaid or underpaid to keep public culture alive; now we were to assume financial responsibility for others in our ranks who had also been made poor by the state. Several ministries and ministers knew of this violence and either silently condoned or actively supported it—including Brandenburg’s Minister of Culture, Raspberry.

9

¹⁴¹ Letter from the Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General’s Office confirms receipt of the complaint / 11.5.2018 / 54 Zs 449/18

The Public Prosecutor General's Office responded to me on the same day regarding the accusations against Ms M. from the Youth Welfare Office and Ms Peach:

“For the offence of fraud under § 263 of the German Criminal Code (StGB), it is required that the perpetrator deceives another person about facts. As a result of this deception, the person deceived must be led into an error. This error must then cause the deceived party, or a third party, to dispose of assets in a way that results in financial loss. There must be a causal link between all elements of this chain.”¹⁴²

Here again, we see how the public prosecutor described the legal requirements for a crime—but failed to apply this description to the actual events. Had they done so, they would have had to act against their own state. District Administrator Peach portrayed me in official files as someone refusing to work, even though the facts were far more complex: I worked 40 hours a week. She lied. As a third party, I suffered harm in the form of being threatened with advance maintenance payments—threats that would never have occurred had the real causes of my poverty been acknowledged: the precarious situation of nearly all cultural workers in the country. This is not a condition that can be resolved by simply abolishing art or ceasing to work as an artist.

At that time, my autism was not yet known.

One must continually remind oneself of the brutality it entails to force artists into a form of slavery, into subsistence work, when they have already laboured for decades—mostly unpaid—for the cultural life of this country. And when the economic system fails to accept them in all their complexity, their long-term work is inevitably threatened. In practice, this left only one path: low-wage jobs, at the expense of their artistic activity. The state destroyed cultural workers across the country by assigning them an impossible task—and did so knowingly. I explained this to these people hundreds of times.

“According to your complaint, the deputy head of the Teltow-Fläming district administration did not commit an act of deception within the meaning of § 263 StGB. In the context of a maintenance advance case, she merely expressed her view that you had not sufficiently fulfilled your duty to cooperate, thereby offering her personal assessment of the matter, but not misleading you about the facts. Your complaint is therefore unfounded.”¹⁴³

¹⁴² Letter from the Public Prosecutor General dated 4 June 2018 / 54 ZS 449/18 regarding 488 Js 7475/18

¹⁴³ Letter from the Public Prosecutor General dated 4 June 2018 / 54 ZS 449/18 regarding 488 Js 7475/18

So it was merely a private opinion—a subjective suspicion—that I was refusing to work, which nonetheless resulted in objective violence against me, as I was forced to repay the full amount of the maintenance advance. This clearly illustrates how even absurd claims can be used to cover up the obvious. Naturally, as in other cases, this public prosecutor also denied that racism was a form of deception. But social racism is and always has been precisely that: a deliberate act of deception. The prosecutor refused to acknowledge that Ms Peach's statement accusing me of refusing to work was not simply a personal opinion, but a false factual claim issued by a government authority. It was a statement made with the clear intent to discriminate against me—both socially and artistically—and thus to deceive me.

The complexity of my situation was deliberately reduced to a simplistic narrative—part of the larger "categorisation lie"—in order to reproduce harmful stereotypes: the lazy artist, the irresponsible father, the deviant poor. In doing so, the state sanctioned deception became a tool of structural violence.

I would not have been listed in the Hartz IV system as a top-up benefit recipient¹⁴⁴ if I hadn't been working—specifically, if I hadn't tried to escape poverty through self-employment. Contrary to the assumptions of uninformed individuals, artistic labour is not "easy" work; it is just as demanding and exhausting as any other profession.

So how did the Attorney General's Office justify allowing District Administrator Peach to portray me in official files as a so-called "work refuser"? Even the Job Centre itself did not do so—they acknowledged my ongoing work and allowed me to continue. Yet the Attorney General's Office failed to distinguish between my daily artistic labour and the critique of wage labour I expressed in my books. They took a critical analysis of capitalism—written by an obviously working author—as evidence that I was unwilling to work.

This interpretation was not merely an error; it reflected deeply rooted social racism and fit neatly into the worldview of right-wing radicals embedded in the civil service. Once again, we are confronted with the ideological refusal to accept cultural labour as legitimate work—an attitude historically associated with right-wing extremism.

¹⁴⁴ Supplementary benefit recipients are people who earn an income below the minimum subsistence level despite being gainfully employed and therefore receive supplementary citizen's allowance (formerly unemployment benefit II or Hartz IV). They are formally considered to be "gainfully employed", but are nevertheless subject to the obligations and sometimes also the sanctions of SGB II. Their status is ambivalent: they fulfil the requirement of "wanting to work", but at the same time are considered to be "in need" and are therefore under observation and potential control by the job centre.

Attorney General Apple covered up, for years, the slanderous narrative that I was a work refuser *because* I worked as an artist. But if that were true, why did I receive a basic income from various institutions for my cultural work? At this point, it becomes evident that the state was losing the substance of its argument and increasingly falling back on radical right-wing resentment. All of this stems from one fundamental equation made by state institutions: poverty = laziness. It is this core lie that legitimised the persecution of artists, activists, and the poor in post-welfare Germany.

10

On 5 June 2018, I sent the “Freywalde Declaration” to the Cottbus public prosecutor’s office. It laid out what I would later call the *Transfer Protocol* in my book *Radical Worker*: a detailed explanation of how the distortion of guilt functions under capitalism. From 11 June 2018 onward, the Public Prosecutor General’s Office in Brandenburg had comprehensive and precise knowledge of how people on Hartz IV were being broken and made ill, as well as how deeply rooted the resentment against separated fathers was—how this resentment led to the distortion of laws, racism, and administrative violence. The prosecutor’s office *deliberately played dumb*.

The sociologist David Graeber described bureaucracy in stark terms:

“My focus on violence, I admit, may seem strange. We are not used to thinking of nursing homes or banks or even health insurance companies as violent institutions—at most in a very abstract or metaphorical sense. But the violence I am talking about here is not abstract. I am not talking about violence in a conceptual sense. I am talking about violence in the literal sense, when someone hits another person on the head with a wooden club. All of these institutions are institutions that distribute resources within a system of property rights regulated and enforced by governments—governments that ultimately rely on the threat of coercion. ‘Coercion’ is a euphemism for force: the ability to summon people in uniforms who are prepared to threaten others with physical harm. The fact that citizens in industrialised societies so rarely think about this—or instinctively suppress it—is disconcerting. (...) The more our everyday lives fall under the control of bureaucratic regulations, the more everyone—except those who operate the system—downplays the fact that everything ultimately depends on the threat of physical force.”¹⁴⁵

The state’s violence against people living in poverty was not only undeniable—it had a concrete function. It served the narrative of a flawed

¹⁴⁵ David Graeber / Bürokratie: Die Utopie der Regeln / Goldmann / p 72

individual who required correction by a disciplinary apparatus. The more a person developed or improved, the more violence had to be used—because the more violence was used, the more resistance followed, and the more absurd the goals of this violence against the poor became. As I said, it was no longer about jobs; it was about punishing me because I was someone who deviated—someone who no longer conformed. Even though Speed's work was objectively for the benefit of humanity, this society could not respond appropriately as long as it clung to the lies upheld by the public prosecutor's office and the Job Centre.

What I did was just as legitimate as any other research. Important and valuable. I was an artist. Creating art requires full commitment to the internal logic and necessity of art. The state has no right to punish me simply because my work didn't generate financial remuneration—because only stupid people believe that wages are a reliable measure of the value of a contribution.

In response to my complaint regarding the Job Centre's harassment and its enforcement of the *community of need*, Mr M. from the Elbe-Elster District Council wrote to me:

"I have been informed of the facts and have also discussed the matter with the Job Centre's Managing Director. In my opinion, your main concern is that you disagree with the allocation of benefits and feel that your rights have been violated by the Job Centre's decisions."

But that was *never* the point. It wasn't about money—because either way, I received the same amount. It was about the violence directed at my partner, and the systemic fraud embedded in the very construction of the *Bedarfsgemeinschaft*. They erased the substance of my complaint and cast me once again as the familiar stereotype: a lazy, poor person simply demanding more money. These endless reframing attempts by the authorities can drive a person mad. Mr M. effectively reduced hundreds of pages of essays and my book *Radical Worker* to a format that suited *his* narrative.

This act of reframing allowed him to erase months of content and critique of the *community of need* with a single dismissive stroke. He went on to write:

*"I would like to point out that you can have the legality of the Job Centre's decisions reviewed by filing an appeal or pursuing legal action in the social courts (...) I will not comment on the criminal complaint you filed against Ms M."*¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Letter from the head of department of the district administrator / 14 June 2018

On 26 June 2018, I received a letter from District Administrator Blackberry himself for the first time. In it, he reiterated the statements of his employee and went one step further by writing:

“Even a district administrator is bound by the administrative actions of an authority—in this case the Job Centre—and cannot arbitrarily intervene in ongoing proceedings.” Saving human lives, then, was for him an *arbitrary intervention*.

“A judicial review should obviously be indispensable, especially in view of the profound legal questions you have raised.”¹⁴⁷

Here again, we see the fear of complexity when it comes to acting appropriately. The fact is: no one living in poverty can afford such a legal process. And he knew that. Yet he refused to act. These people—how can I put it—simply did not participate in saving the world. So the question is: who was actually harming society? Me—or them?

12

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport replied to me on 5 July 2018: *“Insofar as you accuse the youth welfare office of ‘systematic fraud’ in this context, I have come to the conclusion, after thorough examination, that there is no evidence of any unlawful decisions in the course of granting or reclaiming advance maintenance payments. I see no grounds whatsoever for your accusation of ‘systematic fraud’ on the part of the local youth welfare authority. Your objections have been reviewed in detail within the framework of legal supervision by the Brandenburg Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. No misconduct can be identified in terms of legal oversight. Maintenance obligations may be notarised at the local office. This notarisation is voluntary.”¹⁴⁸*

The so-called voluntariness consisted of me being summoned to the authorities, where I was presented with a letter I had to sign acknowledging a debt. If I refused, I was threatened with the bailiff coming to my home to seize anything he could find and/or being forced into court proceedings that would incur additional costs – which, for someone on Hartz IV, meant starvation. In other words, I was threatened with a situation in which I would no longer have money for food. To speak of voluntariness here is simply a lie. It was a case of blackmail – masked by the ministry through deliberate

¹⁴⁷ Letter from District Administrator Blackberry dated 26 June 2018

¹⁴⁸ Letter from the Federal Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Brandenburg dated 5 July 2018 / 21.5 - 71715

reframing.

This illustrates how authorities could arbitrarily construct their own realities and use them as protective shields – precisely because they were not required to engage in authentic relationships. As a result, they could lie in official communications without consequence.

The Ministry's review, due to this reframing, did not address whether the arbitrary calculation of a person's ability to pay – without any objective criteria – was ethically justifiable, nor whether the notion of an “increased duty to earn a living” amounted to unjust discrimination against impoverished parents. It merely examined whether I had signed at the office – construing that act as voluntary because I was offered the “choice” between plague and cholera, a supposed freedom that made all subsequent legal actions appear formally lawful.

They entirely ignored the fact that I had been subjected to massive psychological pressure and terror in order to extort a signature – from a traumatised person with PTSD. The very fact that I had to sign my “guilt” at all was already part of a construct to fabricate a pseudo-legitimacy in the face of glaring injustice.

One could discuss this for hours. The fact remains: the authority committed fraud through its method of truncated review – and in doing so concealed an even larger fraud: the structural discrimination against the poor that permeated the entire process.

It is in the nature of guilt, when defined purely in monetary terms, to be rendered absolute. There is then no room for individual circumstances or the relativity of social situations. And this was systemic – and intentional. Because once guilt becomes relative, the same relativity would have to be applied to wealth. And that, in capitalism, would undermine the legitimacy of vast accumulations of wealth. If my debt had been forgiven, it would raise the uncomfortable question of whether the wealth of others was ever truly deserved – or just another social fiction.

We need to understand this: justice is inconceivable without relativity. But the authorities only knew black or white, plus or minus. That was the foundation of their power. That was their method of deception – the absolutisation of “guilt” in a field as complex as the origins of poverty.

In a letter dated 23 July 2018, the then Minister of Justice of Brandenburg, Mr Ludwig, had Mr Kirsche – who would later become Attorney General of

Brandenburg (from September 2024) – respond to my letter, to which the “Freywald Declaration” was attached:

“Insofar as you criticise the way the Public Prosecutor’s Offices in Potsdam and Cottbus as well as the Office of the Public Prosecutor General have handled the matter, I have forwarded a copy of your submission to the Public Prosecutor General’s Office – as the immediate superior, both professionally and administratively, of all public prosecutors in the state of Brandenburg – and have asked them to examine the matter and take further action if your submission gives cause for it. I hope you will understand that I will not comment on the ‘Freywald Declaration’ and do not expect the Public Prosecutor’s Offices – whose statutory duty is to investigate concrete facts relevant to criminal law – to engage with its contents, which consist of unconventional socio-economic perspectives and general systemic criticism.”¹⁴⁹

The Brandenburg Minister of Justice thus drew a strict line between the work of the public prosecutor's office and the consideration of social grievances – including structural racism – even where these grievances destroyed lives or, directly or indirectly, led to deaths. As a politician of the (nominally) left, he refused to engage with issues that revealed the systemic dysfunctions and human consequences of contemporary capitalism. In doing so, he contributed to the cover-up of structural violence – in collaboration with Mr Kirsche, who would later become Attorney General.

This reveals the extent to which state actors are prepared to dissociate public prosecution from the socio-political realities it should serve. When racism, classism and social inequality produce demonstrable harm – including psychosocial deterioration, trauma, exclusion, or death by neglect – they are dismissed as mere “general systemic criticism” and thereby stripped of legal relevance.

For Brandenburg’s future Attorney General, the structural racism embedded in poverty law and its administration – including its effects on neurodivergent, precarious, or culturally working individuals – was therefore not a matter for the judiciary, even when it resulted in direct and documentable harm.

14

An employee of the district council wrote on 3 August 2018:

¹⁴⁹ Letter from the Ministry of Justice / 1410 - E III.037/18 (II.4.)

“Although there is no legal obligation to grant the Job Centre field service access to your home or house and to tolerate the home visit, it is ultimately in your interest to clarify the facts of the case.”¹⁵⁰

Because otherwise I would be subjected to even more violence. The method of assigning blame in the context of violations of the duty to cooperate when human rights violations were pointed out was a classic twist in Hartz IV.

The Job Centre wrote:

“A mutual willingness to bear responsibility for each other and to stand up for each other is presumed in accordance with 37 para. 3a SGB II if partners live together for more than one year, live together with a child, care for children or relatives in the household or are authorised to dispose of each other's income or assets.”¹⁵¹

What we are dealing with here is massive violence based on suspicion. And a suspicion, in this context, is nothing other than institutionalised resentment. If you were poor, neurodivergent, or politically non-conforming, and someone in the authorities *suspected* you of misconduct – that suspicion was enough to trigger state-sanctioned repression. In other words: if you were a racist or classist in a government office, the law stood behind you.

Segregation, the arbitrary and violent grouping of people deemed “inferior”, is one of the essential mechanisms of all forms of racism. It binds the marginalised together in webs of dependency and collective suspicion. This is also the historical root of clannish persecution (Sippenhaft).

When I asked ChatGPT to define “Sippenhaft”, it answered:

“The term refers to the practice of holding family members collectively accountable for the crimes or political activities of an individual. Historically, it was used by authoritarian regimes to suppress dissent. Entire families were punished for the actions of one member, violating the principle of individual accountability.”

Even a machine intelligence can grasp the destructive, anti-democratic implications of such practices.

The so-called *benefit communities* (Bedarfsgemeinschaften), invented under Hartz IV, were nothing less than an updated form of clannish persecution. They served to threaten social cohesion and enforce unbearable debt relationships among the poor. In my case, my partner – herself precarious, self-exploiting in her cultural work – was made to suffer financially because of *my* political and artistic work. This was not a neutral bureaucratic decision, it was a political punishment. It was retaliation against critical cultural labour.

¹⁵⁰ Letter from Head of Department N. / District Administrator Elbe Elster / dated 8 August 2018

¹⁵¹ Notice of objection / job centre dated 22.68.2018

Contrary to official propaganda, it was never about rich dentists supporting Hartz IV recipients in luxury villas. The real effect of this policy was that poor people were forced to subsidise *other* poor people. This is the very definition of a poverty trap: it institutionalised the ghettoisation of the poor and deepened social segregation.

And this segregation was not a side-effect, but the intended result of structurally racist and classist governance.

15

On 3 September 2018, I filed a lawsuit with the Social Court in Cottbus challenging the enforcement of the so-called “community of need” – not only because I contested its applicability in my own case, but because the lawsuit aimed to bring the underlying principle of clan detention (Sippenhaft) before a court of law – a practice that had caused profound suffering for thousands of people across the country.¹⁵²

The judge ignored all of my arguments regarding the systemic problems of the “community of need” construct and left the question of whether such a community existed in my case deliberately unresolved. This allowed the Job Centre to continue to operate on the assumption that one did exist. A final decision was deferred indefinitely. As a result, my suffering was prolonged for years—despite the court’s awareness that the situation was damaging to my health.

The logic seemed to be: since relationships are difficult to define from the outside, time would ultimately provide enough superficial indicators to justify the classification as a “community of need” based on bourgeois prejudices. And indeed, that is exactly what happened. Individual criteria were cherry-picked until a few matched, while numerous contradictory facts were deliberately ignored. This was a politically motivated and arbitrary judicial tactic. The decision was postponed because a direct ruling would have required an open lie—so instead they searched for a way to lie less visibly. This kind of behaviour was typical of social courts across the country. They bent the law to the point of breaking it—reinterpreting stereotypes as legal realities and ignoring legal inconsistencies when necessary to justify the system.

On 20 September 2018, in response to my first letter to Minister President Sweet Cherry regarding the violence I had experienced at the hands of Brandenburg authorities, one of his staff replied:

¹⁵² Action at the social court / S 40 AS 1185/18 ER

“Open letters are a tool of public relations. They are intended to draw attention to a topic, mobilise public opinion, and generate pressure on the recipient to respond. Open letters are not necessarily addressed directly to the addressee but are often simply published in the media. Against this backdrop, I ask for your understanding that open letters are generally not answered substantively, and no decisions or actions are based on them. I am returning your book manuscript with thanks. Please refrain from sending unsolicited books, manuscripts, etc., in the future.”¹⁵³

Prime Minister Sweet Cherry made it clear that the voices of artists were of no relevance to him. But this is a betrayal of the Basic Law, which protects artistic freedom precisely because art must be able to confront power. By treating art as a private pastime—no more politically significant than knitting socks—he revealed the full extent of his ignorance and contempt for cultural work.

And if this ignorance is part of what drives artists into poverty, why should I stop analysing and exposing the violent systems that sustain it?

16

Similarly, the Ministry of Justice wrote:

“Finally, I would like to ask for your understanding once again that we will not comment on the content of the results of your ‘labour and poverty research’ (...). Now that you have repeatedly presented your criticism of basic income support for jobseekers in great detail, and it has been explained to you that law enforcement authorities are responsible for prosecuting specific criminal offences—not for changing a system that is perceived as unjust—I ask for your understanding that I can no longer promise a reply to any further letters from you, should the facts remain unchanged. However, I will review them and, if necessary, forward them to the appropriate authority.”¹⁵⁴

Every form of racism and antisemitism is deflected in the same way by those whose professional existence depends on pretending that the real injustices and systemic problems do not exist—because they are paid by a system that both requires and sustains these racisms in order to maintain itself. It was therefore essential to confront the public prosecutor’s office with my research again and again. Because doing so exposed their willingness to ignore objective facts when it was politically convenient.

¹⁵³ Letter in response to letter to Minister President Sweet Cherry/ 20.9.2018

¹⁵⁴ Letter from the Brandenburg Ministry of Justice dated 26 October 2018 / 1410 - E III.037/18 (II.4)

Public prosecutors around the world continuously provide us with new “criminals”, but they say nothing meaningful about the broader question of justice—without which any honest assessment of guilt and responsibility is impossible. A public prosecutor’s office that sees racism merely as a matter of “subjective feeling”, and not as a concrete offence, is actively reproducing racism. They offer no answer to the question of why prisons are disproportionately filled with the poor and people of colour. They offer no answer to why a few possess nearly everything while many are left with nothing. Instead, they simulate the right of the privileged as though it were justice itself.

There is no point in discussing this in abstract terms if we are not willing to directly confront the institutions and authorities that make this dishonest system possible in the first place. It must be stated clearly: the public prosecutor’s offices in Brandenburg committed fraud—because to recognise the social racism embedded in Hartz IV as a crime, as structural violence, would have meant shaking the political foundations of the state.

Take-away box — Chapter” Raids, Guilt by Association, the Death of Privacy, and the Logic of Segregation “

Collective guilt as a technique of domination

Searches of entire communities of need, threats of cuts for relatives — the principle of clan detention shifts individual rights to a diffuse group responsibility and breaks down resistance through fear for loved ones.

Privacy → Administrative goods

Home visits, data synchronisation, AI risk profiles: The intimate becomes an object that can be utilised by the state. The more information the system “swallows up”, the less power the individual has to act (surveillance capitalism meets Hartz logic).

Spiral of segregation

Classist grids (“unwilling to perform”, “refusers of integration”) create zones of different basic rights. A modern inclusion boundary becomes visible (Bauman): Those who are sanctioned disappear from the public sphere, health statistics and political representation.

Autistic vulnerability

Hyperdetail perception makes attacks by the authorities physically tangible; weak priors prevent mental compartmentalisation. What is “just paperwork” for many becomes real sensory terror for neurodivergent people.

Affordance blockade

Police bell, letter from the Job Centre, digital appointment app: every forced action lies outside the autistic window of action. The environment only offers “escape” or “freeze” — a sabotage effect for self-determined relationship behaviour.

System-critical punchline

A democracy that storms households in order to enforce administrative norms reproduces authoritarian patterns — from Stasi segregation to predictive policing. Segregation is not an aberration, but a cost of a market that calculates deviation as a risk.

Act of Violence 5: Brexit, the ultimate Segregation Fantasy

1

On 23 June 2016, a new development occurred that I found deeply disturbing. The so-called “Brexit referendum” took place in the UK. The process concluded on 31 January 2020 with the UK's final withdrawal from the European Union. This absurd simulation, which failed even to begin addressing the real issues—the frustrations of those who wanted to leave the EU—spread globally in the form of populism and was now capable of making entire countries simply vanish from networks of mutual relations. All democratic communities and institutions were ultimately under threat from a form of submergence that pulled the ground out from under their feet. At the same time, we witnessed the phenomenon of Donald Trump—and shortly afterwards, Boris Johnson. These loudmouthed men with absurd haircuts, appearing everywhere.

“The Leave campaigners around Tory politician Boris Johnson and UKIP leader Nigel Farage tailored their campaign to be populist and even peppered it with demonstrably false claims—for example, that £350 million a week, which the UK supposedly paid to the EU, could instead go into the National Health Service after leaving.”¹⁵⁵

The exit was largely based on a PR scam, the promises of which often failed to materialise for the working class, the middle class, and the poor in the years that followed. The suffering of millions was the result of state apparatuses that were entirely indifferent to reality. It wasn't until October 2019 that the terms of withdrawal were agreed—specifying how to deal with people who either lived in the UK as EU citizens or were British nationals living in the EU. Before that, these people had played no role at all. Time and again, it was claimed that the process would be handled humanely—but once again, one had to ask: humane for whom? As always, not for the precarious.

¹⁵⁵ Spiegel Online / The most important facts about Brexit / By Almut Cieschinger, Mara Küpper, Claudia Niesen and Anika Zeller / 08.02.2019, 17:55



Brexit meant that those affected were left in complete uncertainty for around three years as to whether they could remain in the country in question or would be deported—even if they had been living “abroad” for decades. For many, this raised dramatic questions about pensions and health insurance. In some cases, it was a matter of whether chronically ill people would still receive their medication. We are talking about Europeans who, like me, were often born or raised as Europeans and had helped build Europe. This also affected partnerships in which the respective partner (holding a different passport) didn’t know whether their family would be torn apart. What we’re talking about here is massive violence against a group of people who, for three years, lived in a no man’s land between the EU and the UK. For thousands, a world collapsed—something hardly captured in the media. I was one of the many affected.

Like thousands of Britons living abroad, I was not allowed to participate in the Brexit referendum—that is, the vote to leave—which impacted my life to an

extreme degree. It was therefore not a democratically legitimate decision, because the essence of democracy is that those affected by decisions are entitled to a say or a representative vote. This was not the case for around one million Britons abroad—let alone for the 3 million Europeans in the UK. I am now 50 and have never been allowed to vote in a democratic election—neither in national elections in England, nor in Germany. Brexit happened anyway.

At that time, I had lived in Germany for about 25 years. I had left England 40 years earlier as a child. After my youth in Austria, I lived for over four decades in an EU of open borders.

When I first reported to the Elbe-Elster Immigration Office on 4 January 2019, I had no idea what kind of drama would unfold as a result of being turned into a so-called “third-country national.” During my initial meeting with the head of the immigration office, Mr H., he told me to my face that I would be deported because of my poor financial situation—as soon as my youngest child turned 18.

I was deeply shocked and desperate. As a cultural worker, I had no chance of ever meeting the financial expectations of petit-bourgeois officials who regarded cultural workers as useless burdens on society. Suddenly, the wall was back—a wall of racisms no one wanted to acknowledge as such.

I had already left the island as a child—at the age of eight—when my parents moved with me from England to Tyrol, where I grew up on the German-Austrian border. The forest behind our house was already Germany. England had joined the EU in 1973—the year I was born. For me, there were no borders, and it was simply a matter of course that I could move freely across Europe. It was *my* Europe. There was never a reason to take on another nationality—until the day I suddenly no longer belonged.

That is a very eye-opening experience for a white man, and one I would wholeheartedly recommend to most white and right-wing politicians. Suddenly I was sitting on a bench with people who had only arrived in Europe a week ago and, like me, simply wanted the complexity of their lives to be recognised—instead of being turned into a crime.

2

Brexit happened as the result of irrational populism, marking the emergence of a post-factual age. I mention this because it reveals the full extent of the problem of not doing Speed’s work. The privileged could, and would, simply opt out of the world—as if the British Isles were a privateer ship that could sail away into a universe without migrants and without poverty. Meanwhile,

people without resources, in the weakest positions imaginable, had to bear the consequences. Once again, livelihoods were destroyed, and it was left to capitalism to pass judgment on these people.

The term “post-factual” describes a political condition in which public decisions and debates are increasingly shaped by emotions, beliefs, and personal convictions rather than by facts. Yet an even more important dynamic is the dominance of structural simulation—an institutional failure to reflect complexity and act accordingly. The term “post-factual,” later used ubiquitously, came to denote phenomena such as populism, the spread of fake news, and the polarisation of public opinion. But these were also consequences of postmodernism—the disintegration of grand narratives and meaningful common ground—those very phenomena that philosophers had already described as acceleration (Rosa), liquefaction (Bauman), the flexible self (Sennett), or the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello).

All of them diagnosed the same unbearable flexibilisation of modern life and labour, in which both people and ecosystems perished—while a few isolated themselves from any relation to the whole in order to inflate their supposed relevance through exaggerated, artificially created value. The increasingly one-sided basis for decision-making also stemmed from the fact that the omnipotent network of modernity—and its totalising objectification via surveillance—meant that more and more people were ejected from meaningful contexts, categorised, split off. These contexts, as already mentioned, had become invisible.

Surveillance means nothing other than externally imposed integration into a predetermined viewing logic. It is the external gaze that continuously forces people to adapt, through constant comparison with shame-based metrics. Surveillance is a form of heteronomy—one that functions by flattening complexity. The camera has only one eye: it sees everything, and at the same time, it sees nothing properly.

The counter-movement to this emerged from the left through activists—and from the right through angry citizens caught in populism. To paraphrase Carolin Amlinger and Oliver Nachtwey in their book *Gekränkte Freiheit (Offended Freedom)*, a new form of violence emerged, rooted in the sense of injury felt by reactionary individuals who claimed freedom for themselves—but without any sense of relationality or societal interdependence. These right-wing actors, despite occupying largely privileged, white positions, felt constrained by economic decline, and in their self-pity, lashed out at everyone who seemed different or had “more rights” than they did.

“Offended freedom” became the fuel for right-wing violence against minorities—a violence that could only act self-destructively, because it could

not name the real taboo: their complicity in capitalist ideology. The scapegoat had to be someone else.

According to this new right-wing logic, those who wanted a different world—one with more humanity and less ecological destruction—were to blame. The Greens, for example, or anyone who spoke about climate justice. And yes, reconciliation with the working-class followers of these right-wing tendencies should have been attempted far earlier. No one was really on their side, no one recognised their existential fears—fears born not least of the racism of the upper class, of the privileged. The rhetoric of “the left behind” masked its own classist and racist assumptions. These people were not engaged as equals, but diagnosed from above.

The media often described these angry citizens as lunatics, as if the issue were purely about irrationality—thus revealing the arrogance of the bourgeois establishment, especially towards East Germans. Few politicians diagnosed the situation correctly. Many East Germans still possessed the instinct to recognise a simulation when they saw one. They had an allergic reaction to being lied to again. They spoke of “fake news” because, from their perspective, it was fake news: the simulation of an economy that had betrayed them. Their reaction, however, was and remains deeply misanthropic, primitive, and misdirected.

The problem with the right is not their perception of injustice, but the conclusion they draw from it—that minorities are to blame, and they themselves are “the real people”. They want to take over, thereby reproducing the very ideology that victimised them. That’s why it’s so convenient for the establishment to keep them as a controlled opposition: close enough to stir fear, distant enough to never actually touch the real question of justice. Justice remains defined against “the others”. It’s a logic entirely in line with capitalism. What we should have been debating instead was the excess of reification and efficiency, the loss of complex truth, not the irrationality of the angry mob. Across Germany, the value of “science” and “objective fact” was constantly emphasized in reaction to accusations of fake news—but this led to an abuse of scientism. The privileged used it to claim a superior position in the name of objectivity, without ever addressing the simulation at the root of it all.

Objectivity alone is not enough if it doesn’t make visible the lived world of those excluded. Thus, it only served as further evidence of staging—of a world that functioned better without “the rabble.”

The shift to the right, then, was not only the result of a struggle over jobs and resources, but above all a struggle for visibility and security within the simulation. The real crisis we face is a crisis of honesty—a crisis of complex,

emotional, existential and political truths, not a crisis of scientific facts. This cannot be answered with mere facts. It must be answered with humanity.

The term *post-truth* was first used 25 years ago by Steve Tesich, a Serbian-American playwright, in a newspaper commentary entitled “A Government of Lies.” As Joël Ben-Yehoshua¹⁵⁶ writes, Tesich believed that in the wake of Watergate, Iran-Contra, and the First Gulf War, Americans were faced with a choice: to confront the shame of these events—or to ignore them, in order to preserve their sense of national pride. The very same shame had, decades earlier, fueled World War II in Europe.

Here too we see a fundamental cognitive dissonance leading to a collective lie. That’s why, perhaps now more than ever, we need universal honesty in all public discourse. The distancing strategies must end. We need new cultures of dialogue. You can’t win over a right-wing extremist with facts, but perhaps with a fundamental debate about what it means to be human.

The question is not whether migrants are in fact responsible for unemployment. The question is: what suffering, what fear, what dehumanisation are we inflicting by even asking that question? If this inhumanity becomes real—if injustice is dealt with at the level of actual human experience—then it touches the lived worlds of both sides. This is what keeps debate within the realm of humanity, rather than letting it slip into abstract rationalism, which always makes the devaluation of others seem legitimate.

The problem with the media is often its own scriptedness, its inability to authentically portray or visualise human depth. As soon as the camera switches on, most people begin to perform—repeating fragments of canned discourse rather than speaking from their pain or their solidarity.

The work I did was meant to illuminate the personal suffering generated by capitalised violence. I wanted to make the complexity of that suffering visible. It was never about quick or easy solutions. Even when I attempted simple solutions, intersectionality showed me that they didn’t work.

Success is no longer an option—because success is betrayal. What is needed now is to continue living in the attempt to express and depict truth.

3

In view of the fact that Germany merely observed the horror of Brexit as if it had nothing to do with it—as if there were no distinction between Britons and those with a British passport who had lived and worked in Germany for

¹⁵⁶ Portal History of Ideas / Essays - Student authors 002/ 09 - 2017

decades—I sought naturalisation in order to establish proximity and immediacy here as well. I confronted the system as a human being.

Yet the authorities acted as if they were no longer responsible for their own neighbours, simply because those neighbours had now been declared “foreigners.” In a long letter to the immigration authorities, I wrote:

“Specifically, over the past 21 years, I have invested €250,000 of my inheritance directly into research on social problems—by paying myself, as an artist and researcher, over more than a decade. In addition, I have spent countless unpaid hours working on projects for the common good. In total, depending on how you calculate it, I have invested around one million euros into German society. Very few Germans have ‘given’ such a large portion of their income and working life so directly to their country—most prefer to spend it on holidays or luxury goods.”

I tried—desperately—to argue that my contribution to this country did not consist of “lying around on the sofa,” which is the standard resentment projected onto the poor and cultural workers. Still, once again, it made no difference. The more I explained, the more I was ridiculed by the immigration authorities—as if I were some kind of right-wing extremist.

I contacted the British ambassador, Sebastian Wood, with a formal complaint. He responded by sending me a brochure on “How to behave in Germany.” It was as if I no longer belonged anywhere.

It was a deeply traumatising experience.

4

On 9 January 2019, I submitted an application to the Immigration Office requesting an exemption from the naturalisation fee. I genuinely wanted to give it a try. The day before, I had sent a letter of complaint to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Horst Seehofer:

“I am currently in an incredibly inhumane situation due to Brexit and the Hartz IV benefit system. The immigration office informed me that I would not be naturalised because of my precarious economic situation.”

The Federal Ministry of the Interior confirmed that poverty was not generally an obstacle to naturalisation. It was a matter of interpretation—thus left to the institutionalised racism of the respective authority. A short time later, this legal interpretation was tightened by right-wing populists from the FDP in the new Immigration Act.

But back in 2019, the prevailing principle was still to blame people for their own poverty. Once again, this showed that facts meant nothing to the state when it came to the poor.

The head of the Immigration Office, Mr H., wrote:

“In your letters dated 4 January 2019 and 9 January 2019, you applied for an exemption from the naturalisation fee of EUR 255. The reasons you provided were your considerable services to Germany and the ethical obligations of the state towards you. The necessary documentation was enclosed.”¹⁵⁷

My argument that I could not pay the fee under Hartz IV, combined with reference to my contributions, was apparently intolerable for the head of the immigration authority. As an impoverished cultural worker, I would have had to beg—despite my societal worthlessness—for a possible reduction, dependent on his mercy and generosity.

He calculated that within Hartz IV—i.e. within the artificially low rate, which includes wholesale coffee prices rather than actual supermarket costs—16 to 20% was supposedly intended as savings. On this basis, he concluded that I could easily pay the €255 within three months. Once again, the lie of categorisation.

He based his reasoning on a rate that scientific research had already shown to be insufficient even for a healthy diet. His logic was perverse and inhumane.

As the *Frankfurter Rundschau* wrote:

“According to taz.de, the federal government reportedly remained inactive even after being informed by multiple experts that recipients of Unemployment Benefit II (Hartz IV) cannot afford a healthy diet. This was revealed in a response by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), under Labour Minister Kiwi (SPD), to a parliamentary question by Green Party MP Sven Dried Plum, as seen by taz.”¹⁵⁸

With the Hartz IV rate reduced by fraud, he used fake data to construct the reasonableness of saving, whereupon I sent him studies and wrote:

“Although you have been informed several times that I cannot pay the fee, this is factually proven, you deliberately ignore the facts and fantasise a ludicrous justification that can hardly be surpassed in contempt for humanity and unworldliness.”¹⁵⁹

In addition, Mr H. now had access to the file at the Job Centre, where I was portrayed as the scum of the earth—confirming and legitimising his course of action. Here we see how lies spread within administrative institutions began to have increasingly serious consequences for me. Of course, there were hardship provisions he could have used without any issue. But once again, this was about punishment. The more I tried to validate my work and my contributions, the more brutally they wanted to kick me down. As I said, it was

¹⁵⁷ Letter from the Elbe Elster Immigration Office dated 14 February 2019 / 32.33.30.07

¹⁵⁸ Frankfurter Rundschau / Expert: Healthy nutrition not possible with Hartz 4
Status:19.05.2021, Yannick Wenig

¹⁵⁹ Letter dated 20.2.2019 to the Aliens Department / Head Mr H.

about naturalisation—after more than two decades in Germany. As an active cultural worker in this country.

On 21 February 2019, I wrote all of this again to Prime Minister Sweet Cherry—and received no reply. On the same day, I filed a complaint with District Administrator Blackberry:

“Mr H. displays a perverse attitude towards people in poverty that places your administration on par with racists and antisemites. You have known for months—demonstrably, and under witness of the court and the public prosecutor—of the unbelievable discrimination by civil servants in your department.”

On 7 March 2019, the Immigration Office responded to my complaint:

“In support of your complaint, you stated your commonly shared view that Hartz IV is too low to cover the necessities of everyday life, the bias of the department head responsible for processing the application for fee exemption, and the legal legitimacy of your justification for the request.”

Once again, not a single word about the scientific studies I submitted. While I provided page after page of empirical evidence, the authorities were content to respond with politically motivated statements—unsubstantiated, and without any real relevance to the situation. The truth remained that I could only have paid the fee if I had forgone food—because people on Hartz IV always had to save on food, as nearly all other expenses were non-negotiable. *“There is no evidence of bias on the part of the department head responsible for this matter.”*

One of the official justifications for the rejection was that I had expressed hope of generating income in the future. The authority wrote:

“Your personal intention to earn an income again in the foreseeable future was apparent from your statements. It is factually impossible to investigate the existence of such intent. Therefore, the authority must rely on your statements. An exculpation—an argument of innocence—on the basis that your justification was mere hope is therefore inadmissible. Whether the Hartz IV rate is unconstitutional is not within the district’s authority to judge.”

The philosophical acrobatics with which the authorities at times accepted certain facts—and at other times denied them—did not stop at twisting a clearly stated *hope* into an actionable *fact* that could be used against me. Because they could not conclusively treat it as speculation, they simply decided to penalise me based on it. So the fee reduction was denied because of a hope for future income. The intention to discriminate could not have been clearer.

WDR journalist¹⁶⁰ showed in the programme Monitor from 17 May 2018 and 21:45 on ARD: *“For years, the federal government has been calculating the Hartz IV standard rate downwards. According to Monitor calculations, recipients should receive EUR 155 more per month. The state saves billions. (10 billion a year)”*

Without a lawyer, I filed a complaint at¹⁶¹ against the refusal to pay the fee with numerous supporting documents and lost by return of post due to formal errors. The court fee that I then had to pay was around EUR 150.

In defence of the foreigners authority, the district legal council wrote to the court: *“However, why the rejection of an application for exemption from fees should give rise to the risk that the applicant's rights would be thwarted or made significantly more difficult is neither apparent from the applicant's submission nor otherwise evident.”*¹⁶²

Poverty, once again, was not recognised as discrimination, but as a legitimate form of punishment. The District Legal Council refused to acknowledge the context that I was desperately seeking naturalisation in the face of imminent deportation in order to manage existential fears—fears that are life-threatening for an autistic person.

To counter the constant obfuscation by the authorities, a brief change of focus: in 2019, I began to examine more closely the behaviour of Mr B. from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Berlin. At the time, he was responding on behalf of Minister Pair and later Minister Kiwi. I wanted to know whether the hundreds of pages of essays and evidence, which clearly demonstrated how Hartz IV was destroying people, had ever reached Minister Pair's desk. I thought: there must be a way to break through this wall of exclusion, this backroom politics.

The ministry responded on 26 March 2019:

“After thorough examination, I reject your complaint against Mr B. In your letter dated 7 September 2018 to the Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Kiwi, you complained, among other things, that Mr B. had failed to forward crucial information, which in your view seriously incriminated him and other officials of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and you therefore lodged a formal complaint against him. I have reviewed your submission to determine whether Mr B. committed any official misconduct. After careful consideration, no such misconduct can be identified. There is no indication that Mr B. withheld information from the leadership. On the contrary, your letters

¹⁶⁰ WDR Jan Schmitt

¹⁶¹ Action before the Cottbus Administrative Court VG 3 L 95/19

¹⁶² Letter from the Elbe Elster District Legal Council dated 13 March 2019 / VG 3L 95/19

were duly forwarded to the relevant departments with a request for appropriate follow-up."¹⁶³

This statement proves two things—and, paradoxically, disproves both at the same time. Either Mr B. did inform Ministers Kiwi and Pair, meaning they were directly aware that Hartz IV was making people ill. Or—“rather,” whatever that was supposed to mean—the letters were forwarded not to the ministers themselves, but to other bodies within the ministry. This was then declared the correct procedure, although from my point of view it was not.

Whether this counted as misconduct thus depended entirely on the internal definition within the ministry: if it was considered perfectly appropriate not to inform the ministers directly, then forwarding the letters elsewhere was framed as the correct course of action—even if it ensured the information disappeared into a bureaucratic void. The scandal was reinterpreted so that the scandalous behaviour appeared reasonable.

Alternatively, the letter from the ministry confirmed that they recognised the risk: that I might be able to prove Minister Pair and later Minister Kiwi were indeed informed about the devastating effects of Hartz IV. That would have had serious political consequences. The phrasing in the ministry’s response was thus a calculated deflection. But such deflection could hardly have taken place without Pair’s or Kiwi’s knowledge or instruction. The fact that the letters were forwarded to “other bodies” does not in itself prove that the ministers were *not* informed—unless, of course, the ministry’s entire statement was a lie.

In the feature film *Transferprotokoll*, which I produced later, there’s a scene that documents this situation. It shows a clip in which I publicly confronted State Secretary Sour Cherry—Minister Kiwi’s right hand—at a BMAS conference, directly accusing her of complicity in institutional violence. This moment is recorded on video and proves that, at the very least, the top tier of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Berlin was fully aware of the abuses. Even worse, the State Secretary lied in front of the press.

SPEED:

“My name is Timothy Speed. I am a researcher on labour and poverty, and I’ve sent the ministry hundreds of pages and pieces of evidence over the years, showing that Hartz IV is making people ill—ill in a way that cannot be downplayed in terms of cruelty and brutality. And what you are doing here is exactly that: downplaying extreme violence. Extreme violence against those affected. So I ask you: when will you finally understand the human dimension of what sanctions and their side effects mean for those affected?”

¹⁶³ Letter from the BMAS dated 26 March 2019 / AZ Z a 1-01901

STATE SECRETARY SOUR CHERRY:

“To speak of violence in this context, and in connection with the work being done at the Job Centres—by employees, some of whom are here today in greater numbers than I expected—I really must reject that. It completely contradicts what is already happening in practice today.”¹⁶⁴

The State Secretary lied coldly—because telling the truth would have meant exposing massive violence. It would have cost her her job. The entire ministry would have been on the brink of collapse.

The ministry acted like a deranged sect, driven by its own ideology—an ideology fundamentally at odds with the lived reality of those affected.

6

On 15 March 2019, I wrote to the Administrative Court:

“The question must be asked: who, if not me, is ever granted a fee exemption by Mr Hä. (District Legal Councillor) or Mr H. (Head of the Immigration Office)? If even I am denied this exemption—despite being unable to pay the fee, with only around EUR 150 left to live on—then it follows that no one qualifies. This would mean that the Elbe-Elster administration, under the supervision of Mr Hä. or Mr H., is interpreting the law in a way that borders on fraud. If the law provides for exemptions in cases of hardship, then they must be granted where hardship exists. And this is one of those cases.”

Mr Hä. replied in a letter dated 28 March 2018:

“In particular, no claim to a fee exemption can be derived from any 'artistic freedom' to which the plaintiff may be entitled. Artists are also subject to fees. Nothing in the plaintiff's statements indicates a public interest or an equitable basis for granting a fee waiver. Moreover, the claim of discrimination lacks any substantiation. The reasoning—delivered in the form of a reflective essay—is inadequate and, in our view, does not justify exemption from the fee.”¹⁶⁵

Once again, an authority twisted my statements in a way that made me appear foolish, relying on justifications that were logically invalid. Statements such as *“artists are also liable to pay fees”* confuse two entirely different categories.

Mr Hä. reframed the fact that artists in Germany typically live precariously because they invest their energy in creating works of cultural value—which are rarely or inadequately remunerated—into an accusation against cultural workers per se, shaped by the usual pejorative resentment. His response was

¹⁶⁴ Excerpt from the feature film "Transfer Protocol".

¹⁶⁵ Letter from the Elbe Elster District Legal Council to the court. VG 3 274/19 dated 28 March 2019

driven by that resentment. The underlying message was: *Artists think they're special. Let's bring them down a notch.* Their actual discrimination and structural disadvantage were erased through reversal.

Objectively, it would have been fair to grant the fee reduction, which was about poverty—not artistic privilege. But this distinction was blurred, likely because of contempt toward cultural workers, who are often viewed as useless or “antisocial”. One must keep in mind that all this unfolded under the looming threat of my deportation, which lasted for three years due to Brexit. Thousands were affected in similar ways. The psychological burden was inhumane, and I have never fully recovered. That it was ethically indefensible to deny me naturalisation after 25 years in Germany made the behaviour of the authorities all the more grotesque.

On 1 April 2019, I wrote to the Job Centre:

“About a year ago, I asked that the Job Centre finally begin actively supporting my work and take the research I submitted seriously. Doing so would require a radical rethinking of your institution and a profound paradigm shift in economics and in labour and poverty research. (...) I have been in medical treatment for several months. There is now comprehensive medical documentation confirming that the Harz IV system causes illness. Mrs M. and Mrs B. have made themselves criminally liable in this context. I will soon be submitting statements from Dr V. and Dr J., as well as from a psychotherapist, to the public prosecutor’s office.”

It was my intention to gather medical reports from these and other physicians, whom I had to consult due to numerous symptoms triggered by the psychological terror I was subjected to. But I couldn’t afford the reports, and some doctors refused to write them. One psychiatrist, when I was traumatised and pleading for help, literally said: *“I don’t want to help you. I don’t want to get involved.”*

No one wanted to come into contact with the Public Prosecutor’s Office. Everyone knew how difficult it was to produce scientifically sound evidence, especially on the systemic level. And no one wanted to do that work without getting paid. It was expected that *I* would do it—alone.

7

Regarding the procedures at the Elbe-Elster Immigration Office, I have now received the following statement in response to a letter I wrote to Brandenburg's Minister of the Interior, Mr Blueberry:

“If you wish to make use of your opportunities to contribute to a proper and efficient course of proceedings, I would suggest that, in the future, you express

the artistic liberties you apparently claim for yourself in the committed pursuit of your legitimate interests a little less forcefully—at least when addressing the staff of the Citizenship Office. For example, in your letters of reference, you have used expressions such as 'brutality', 'sheer lunacy', 'brutal harshness', 'psychological terror' and 'sheer mockery'. I am, in any case, unable to discern any orientation towards the common good in your rhetorical force directed at the Citizenship Office—an orientation which you, for your part, assume to be self-evident in your actions.”¹⁶⁶

A Mr Bu. from the Ministry of the Interior threatened me—on behalf of Interior Minister Blueberry—that I would not be naturalised if I continued to speak of “psychological terror”, if I continued to criticise state authorities as a cultural worker for human rights violations and right-wing violence. This seemingly polite way of cynically dismissing my work as an artist is typical. In other words: he saw no contribution to the common good in civil society criticism of the state—despite the fact that this is precisely the role of art and journalism. That attitude could rightly be called fascist. This official even mocked artistic freedom.

Interior Minister Blueberry never responded to my repeated complaints. He thus stood by while the Ministry of the Interior marginalised “psychological terror” with threats of force. That the Minister refused to investigate far-right statements made by his employees—who ridiculed me as an artist—may perhaps have had to do, just a guess, with the fact that Mr H. from the Immigration Office and the head of the Job Centre were protected in their lies about me by District Administrator Blackberry (CDU), a party colleague of Blueberry.

The two were occasionally spotted drinking beer together in or near the CDU district headquarters in Herzberg. There were also photos online. Since Minister Blueberry later refused to release the files from his office in the context of a SLAPP complaint I filed in 2023—even after a judge, Mr B., contacted him as a witness—the whole thing increasingly looked like a cover-up of right-wing violence by the Interior Minister of Brandenburg.

Mr Bu. further wrote:

“(…) and I see no purpose that would support your application. In any case, it would not objectively serve your interest to wilfully create a situation in which I would have to request the complete original case files from the Citizenship Authority, just to examine whether your behaviour alone constitutes sufficient grounds within the meaning of §75 sentence 1 of the Administrative Court

¹⁶⁶ Letter from the Brandenburg Ministry of the Interior dated 10 May 2019 / 21-815-21

Procedure Act (VsGO) to refrain from making a decision on your naturalisation request.”

That was a direct threat against me as an artist. So if I—as an autistic artist—expressed criticism logically and with precision, I would be punished for it. Under Interior Minister Blueberry, an official could openly threaten an artist, telling him to his face that structural violence would be deployed if he didn't shut up. Of course, such violence would then be downplayed with a few jokes about artists. Hilarious.

As I said, Minister Blueberry had been thoroughly informed over many years and took no action to counter the far-right radicalism within his own department. Whether he wanted to protect his friend and fellow CDU member Blackberry, I cannot say. But the fact that even Brandenburg's Interior Minister—at one point the head of the Conference of Interior Ministers—refused to investigate the matter, is a scandal.

The Immigration Authority and Mr Bu. later refused to waive the fee—arguing on the one hand that I could supposedly afford it, while at the same time refusing to process the naturalisation request because they claimed they would never receive the money without it being paid upfront. Not even their own contradictions stopped their absurd administrative conduct.

An employee from Minister President Sweet Cherry's office finally responded to the entire scandal with the sentence:

“The State Chancellery is not in a position to process your complaint due to a lack of jurisdiction.”¹⁶⁷

On 20 May 2019, Mr H. from the Immigration Office stated the final reason for rejecting my naturalisation:

“(...) you are responsible for receiving benefits (Hartz IV) because you yourself have set—if not the decisive, then at least the formative—cause for this by refusing, in line with your subjective artistic vocation, to integrate yourself into reasonable gainful employment (...)”¹⁶⁸

So it was a *subjective vocation* that had to submit to the dictates of gainful employment—no matter what—even if I was pointing out massive structural abuses, which in turn was precisely the reason no one would employ me. They claimed the right to punish me severely because I took art seriously and saw it as my duty not to stand by while people were being destroyed.

Over and over, they invoked a capitalist system that not only failed *objectively*, but actively harmed people—insisting nonetheless that this was right and proper. It was a constitutional state operating in a self-referential bubble.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from the Brandenburg State Chancellery dated 15 May 2019 / 32.3/19/00868

¹⁶⁸ Letter from the Elbe-Elster Immigration Office dated 20 May 2019 / 32.33.30.07/07-2019/ha

Mr H., referring to the Job Centre file and to my book *Radical Worker*, declared me—as District Administrator Ms Peach had done before—a work refuser, invoking social racism. According to Mr H., my work was “not in the interest of the German state” – which is disturbingly close to what Hitler and his ilk claimed: that certain artists were harmful to the body politic, and should therefore be silenced, persecuted, or exterminated.

In 2019, H. portrayed artistic work in exactly the same way—using nearly identical language—as socially damaging. Even the Minister for Culture of Brandenburg, Ms Raspberry (SPD), failed to contradict him despite multiple requests. She too apparently regarded impoverished cultural workers—particularly those who spoke out against the far right—as worthless people who of course had to be punished if they did not conform.

As I said: the fact that your work is not remunerated does not objectively mean it lacks relevance, value, or necessity. Discrimination must not be inferred from complexity. Those who ask difficult questions should not be the ones penalised.

8

I was granted an unlimited right of residence following an agreement between the EU and the UK, but I still don't know whether this truly provided any real security. After all, rules mean nothing when they're subject to arbitrary interpretation. I was left completely to my own devices, unsure what to do next. So I just kept working—trying to understand more, trying to resist the inhuman conditions.

The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Berlin wrote to me on 23 May 2019:

“You mention the basic income support for jobseekers under the Second Social Code and how it should be changed.”

A brief moment of hope.

They continued:

“It is right and important, 14 years after the introduction of SGB II (Hartz IV), to talk about how basic benefits for jobseekers can be adapted to current challenges and conditions. That is why Federal Minister Kiwi has launched a broad dialogue on the future development of basic income support, the future of work, and social security. This future dialogue aims to provide answers to how we can live well together in our country, work together, and support one another in the face of new challenges. The dialogue reflects on 14 years of SGB II. We have identified four key positive effects:

1. *SGB II has proven itself fundamentally.*

2. *According to current scientific findings, SGB II has made a significant contribution to the continued upswing of the labour market.*
3. *The Job Centres integrate hundreds of thousands into employment every year and offer support, including advice and training opportunities.*
4. *Basic income support in Germany is an internationally recognised and unparalleled safety net for nearly six million people. You can find more about the dialogue's outcomes on our website."*

None of the competent critical voices on Hartz IV—those who had been publishing on the issue for years, pointing out the system's fundamental injustices—were invited to this circus. Neither was I. All our objections, essays, books, reviews—basically, our lives—were exchanged for a show in which the outcome of the “dialogue” was already predetermined.

I experienced my own *1984*.¹⁶⁹

9

On 22 September 2019, I wrote an extensive letter to Interior Minister Blueberry, to which I never received a reply:

“In a democracy, you cannot ask cultural workers to act critically and non-conformistically—because that is their democratic duty—and then reproach them for being less economically successful as a result, which is entirely logical. That undermines the very principles of democracy. (...) If Mr H. pretends this does not matter, it is simply fraud. (...) I ask you to intervene swiftly.”

What made the situation especially tragic was that both the Brandenburg Minister of Culture, Raspberry, and the German Cultural Council were informed about these events—and, as mentioned earlier, never responded. The German Cultural Council, under the leadership of Olaf Zimmermann, openly ridiculed me and failed to take the matter seriously. Minister Raspberry simply remained silent, even when later informed that I had been hospitalised as a result of abuse by officials motivated by far-right ideology. This is how impoverished cultural workers are treated in Germany.

In a letter to District Administrator Peach dated 17 December 2019, I wrote: *“Poverty is a crime committed against the poor, not an offence committed by the poor against society.”*

On 12 February 2020, I wrote once more to Minister of the Interior Blueberry: *“Officials at the Ministry of the Interior continue to cover up right-wing nationalist motivated abuse and discrimination against me as a cultural worker.*

¹⁶⁹ Wikipedia: *1984* (original title: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*), written from 1946 to 1948 and published in June 1949, is a dystopian novel by George Orwell that depicts a totalitarian surveillance state in the year 1984.

(...) Either you finally investigate these officials—both in the Ministry and in the Herzberg Immigration Office, which is politically close to you—or the whole situation will publicly appear as what it is: that right-wing nationalist officials are trying to harass me, as an artist, to the point of hospitalisation.”

Mr B. from the Ministry of the Interior had only this to say in conclusion: *“There is no reason to add anything further to our letter dated 10 May 2019. Please note that no further correspondence on this matter will be answered.”*

At the same time, thousands of people were being naturalised—many of them after only a few years in the country. But I, who had lived here for 25 years, was denied naturalisation. My offence? Being an artist who asked difficult questions. That, along with my undiagnosed autism, had led to my impoverishment—and to my punishment.

Take-away box — chapter “Brexit — the Ultimate Segregation Fantasy”

Major political raid instead of sovereignty

Brexit presents itself as a regaining of national control, effectively acting like a state crackdown on its own population: freedom of movement, research and care infrastructures are being cut — dis/integration replaces cooperation.

Segregation as economic short-circuit logic

As in the Job Centre sanctions regime, belonging is measured by usefulness: “Global Britannia” for investment elites, border fences against migrant workers. The island is shrinking its affordance space and slowing down the flow of innovation.

Monotropism at national level

Autistic theory explains narrowing of focus: A single topic (“take back control”) draws all resources; complex interactions (supply chains, Erasmus, environmental standards) are sensorially faded out.

Classism + nostalgia = populist binder

Economically marginalised people project frustration onto “Brussels” in the same way that Hartz IV narratives place blame on “those unwilling to work”. Segregation provides the emotional kick without touching structural causes.

Emergence deficit

MNO logic shows: If the experience of foreign perspectives (EU freedoms) is cut off, the emergence zone that generates new ideas collapses. What remains is an indimergence desert of hollow sovereignty objects.

Doctrine for the concept of labour

Whether it's a nation or a company: those who cut relationships gain apparent autonomy, but lose the ability to resonate and learn. Segregation is not a marginal phenomenon, but the macro-political equivalent of a workplace without self-determination — with the same consequences.

Act of Violence 6: Corona and the Vacuum

1

Few events revealed the irrationality of poverty more clearly than the Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2020. Thousands of people were driven into poverty by external circumstances—such as work bans—and yet, most of these victims were subsequently held responsible for their own impoverishment. What occurred during the pandemic exposed, perhaps more than any other situation, how absurd and unreal the attribution of guilt to the poor truly is. It was obvious that the affected individuals were not responsible for the poverty caused by the pandemic. And yet no one dared to integrate this correction into capitalism—let alone understand it as a structural challenge to the market.

Thus, support and respect for those affected were feigned as an alibi, but this did not come close to repairing the damage done to countless lives and livelihoods.

Once again, the capitalist system proved incapable of recognising the actual causes of impoverishment, let alone addressing them appropriately. It deployed the same punitive mechanisms against all poor people—including those impoverished by lockdowns and bans on mobility. This once again revealed the built-in fraudulence of the market logic, which continues to act as if market processes were neutral, egalitarian, and devoid of intersectionality or structural discrimination.

On 30 August 2020, I wrote a ten-page letter to the Youth Welfare Office:

“I request that you inform me again, within four weeks, how exactly I am supposed to prove that the entire financial year 2020 was destroyed through no fault of my own by the pandemic?”

Because “subjectively experienced suffering” was no longer fathomable to the authorities, was no longer part of political reality, and had become unmeasurable—precisely because no one wanted to measure it—it simply ceased to count. So, like countless others during the pandemic, I continued to accrue debts based on a legal fiction of “capacity to work” and an intensified obligation to work—even though the state had effectively banned me from working in the name of infection control.

The injustice that some people were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, while others—especially civil servants—were not affected at all, was systematically erased from bureaucratic routines. The fact that I, as an autistic person, was unable to work regardless, played no role at the time—

mainly because I hadn't yet realised this myself. But the consequences were real.

Although the state imposed a work ban on me, as it did on countless other cultural workers, to protect people from the virus, and I could hardly work because I didn't have access to daycare for my young son, they continued to charge me with these child support debts, based on the idiocy of the 'ability to pay' concept, which, even in the face of a work ban due to lack of daycare access, did not lose its function — namely, providing a reason within the sanction paradox to continually punish poverty, regardless of the causes of that poverty. The main victims of the pandemic, alongside children, young people, and healthcare workers, were particularly those whose value to society was deemed low — that is, cultural workers, restaurateurs, and the poor, who were not considered 'systemically relevant' and therefore did not enjoy the privileges during the pandemic. The state of Brandenburg profited from these people, especially from the “Invisible Labourr”

But the ban on work went far beyond the closure of daycare. Many other of my projects were cancelled or obstructed by the pandemic. My book *Radical Worker*, which should have been launched at the time, as well as other efforts to increase my income from previous years, were effectively derailed. The financial and psychological damage was immense—not only for me, but for thousands of others across the country. The cultural scene still has not recovered from the structural destruction it suffered.

I wrote to the Youth Welfare Office:

“In conclusion, I would like to emphasise, in reference to your letter, that a full waiver of any claim against me is clearly justified—on the grounds that I was made ill by the state, that my impoverishment is not self-inflicted, and that a mere deferral is not only offensive but actively undermines my health and economic independence. This overwhelming debt, which—as my current and past income clearly show—I will never be able to repay, is massively damaging. It gravely obstructs my efforts to care for my children. The state is destroying me.”

The Youth Welfare Office responded that they would not acknowledge my “inability to work” because, according to them, I had not worked “at all” before the pandemic:

“Even before the pandemic, you were not fulfilling your obligation to work.”

This sentence is central because it states that, even though the pandemic meant a work ban, the authorities would not recognize this fact. The level of resentment toward my work as an artist was so great that facts were simply erased in favour of prejudice. My art—which was my only viable attempt to escape poverty under the conditions I faced—was not acknowledged as work

at all. This follows a logic of distortion that renders discrimination invisible precisely by devaluing the person affected.

I forwarded all of this to the Minister of Education. On 5 September 2020, I wrote to Minister Britta Ernst, wife of Chancellor Olaf Scholz:

“I ask you to explain why your ministry refuses to engage with this research, let alone invite me to a meeting.”

No reply. They simply continued with their structural racism and insisted that the work of a cultural worker had no value to society. The logic of the Nazis continued—now disguised through ministerial bureaucracy.

2

I wrote to the Cottbus public prosecutor's office:

“As part of my work as an artist and poverty researcher, over the years a number of authorities, including Job Centres in particular, have opened files on me in which officials, reacting to public criticism of me, which I published as an artist and researcher in books etc., tried to whitewash themselves by entering wild distortions and stories about me in files. Over the years, this has resulted in a gigantic file full of slander and lies, which other authorities in turn refer to (...). We will show all of this in the film.”¹⁷⁰

I was referring to the film I produced, *Transferprotokoll*, which I had been working on for four years and which was nearing completion at the time. What became evident was how a “narrative of domination”—in which the poor, foreigners, migrants, or artists were consistently portrayed as inferior—was replicated across all offices and authorities in Brandenburg. This replication served to conceal fraud and massive systemic abuse.

My work exposes a form of structural violence that cannot be ignored in a democracy. My research demonstrates that every authority in Brandenburg that dealt with my case exhibited this behaviour. It became clear that one could still observe severe discrimination and right-wing violence in real time—and make it visible through what I call “provoked empiricism”: a method by which institutions reveal themselves at the breaking point of their ambiguity—precisely where the system fails on its own.

As I began to inform District Administrator Mrs Peach and all other involved offices that *Transferprotokoll* was nearing completion, a wave of nervousness set in. Mrs Peach, in turn, began to exert massive pressure behind the scenes on the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office to initiate proceedings against me. Minister of the Interior Blueberry was also informed about the film on 28

¹⁷⁰ Letter to the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 28 September 2020 / 1360 Js 31976/20

September 2020. On the same day, I again contacted the Cottbus Prosecutor's Office to report the issue of falsified files, which District Administrator Peach was now attempting to expand elsewhere.

From this moment onward, the authorities were—borrowing from Hannah Arendt—*seduced into evil*. In a mode of self-preservation, their only remaining strategy was to lie—through what I call *categorisation lies*—because they could no longer admit that their assessment of reality had been fundamentally wrong. Their grip on power relied on a simplified worldview. But complexity itself threatened that legitimacy. When reality became too complex, they simply denied it.

In a letter dated 30 September 2020, I filed a formal criminal complaint against the officials at the Youth Welfare Office who had falsely claimed that I had not been working before the coronavirus pandemic, even though I had in fact been working 40 hours a week throughout. From that point on, the Prosecutor's Office had explicit evidence that the State of Brandenburg was profiting from pandemic victims like me—by saddling them with debt, even though state-mandated Covid measures had made their work impossible. The authorities knew I had been unable to work due to the very restrictions they imposed.

The public prosecutor's office should have acted, since the fraud was clearly and comprehensively documented. But it did nothing. The prevailing narrative—that poverty equals laziness—remained the operative logic.

Mr L. from the Youth Welfare Office wrote to me:

"You are still of the opinion that you are not in a position to repay the advance maintenance payments granted to your children due to illness and the consequences of the pandemic."

This view was well documented—but he showed no interest. I appealed to the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Britta Ernst, on three separate occasions, urging her to respond. The Chancellor's wife remained silent. The fraud against victims of the coronavirus pandemic continued unhindered.

3

In an open letter dated 11 October 2020, I accused District Administrator Peach, a former member of the SED, of using the same methods as the Stasi against me—namely, branding dissenting cultural workers as "work refusers." It was a matter of once again exposing systemic complexity. In the GDR, refusal to work was criminalised under the so-called "antisocial paragraph" (§149 of the Criminal Code), and people could be imprisoned for it. Many cultural workers ended up behind bars as a result.

I wrote to the District Administrator:

“When you learned that I had become impoverished—like many other cultural workers—as a result of my decades of social commitment, and was temporarily unable to pay child support for my two children, you showed no interest whatsoever in the reasons for my impoverishment, as your letters make abundantly clear. No, for you, the reflexes of your past surfaced immediately. An artist dares to question the economic system—that must be the cause of his poverty—and therefore, the state has to pay for him. Such an artist must be punished with maximum severity. In the past, when your SED still held power, people like me would undoubtedly have been left to rot in prison. Now, supported by the rightward shift in Brandenburg’s administrations, you seem to believe it is perfectly acceptable to discriminate against me, even if doing so violates the Basic Law. Perhaps this is news to you, but artistic freedom still exists. It prohibits the persecution, discrimination or punishment of artists because of their work. That did not interest you in the least.”¹⁷¹

What is being replayed here as a kind of “GDR in miniature” is emblematic of the state’s brutal treatment of people in poverty. We will make all of this public, in detail, in the cinema film *Transferprotokoll*. What you have done is disgusting—and nothing can excuse it.

The ministers Blueberry, Sweet Cherry, Ernst and Raspberry, as well as the federal government and the public prosecutor’s office, were fully informed about this frontal assault and failed to respond. They also ignored complaints from the relevant oversight bodies to which they were obliged to reply.

On 12 October 2020, I sent a new letter to Interior Minister Blueberry:

“With reference to my letter of 28 September, which remains unanswered, I will refrain from repeating every detail here. However, I must inform you that District Administrator Peach—see open letter—is on the verge of committing unimaginable criminal offences as a former SED member. Your office has been aware of this situation for months.”

On the same day, I informed the head of the public prosecutor’s office in Potsdam, Mr Dried Plum, that the youth welfare office was attempting to coerce me—under threat of legal action—into signing an “admission of guilt” to cover up discrimination committed during the pandemic. They sought to sabotage my case and silence the entire matter by threatening me with legal costs I could never afford unless I signed this declaration. I wrote to the Chief Prosecutor in an artistically heightened form:

¹⁷¹ Open letter to District Administrator Peach dated 11 October 2020

“The television footage will reveal how District Administrator Peach is committing a crime motivated by far-right resentment. You are called upon to intervene.”¹⁷²

In a further letter dated 16 October 2020, I added:

“The actual causes of poverty are being deliberately ignored. What is happening here is intentional deception in order to reclaim public funds with maximum severity through fraudulent means. In this case, political will overrides the law in a way that destroys human lives.”

The entire case was due to be presented to the district council at the end of October. This development resulted from the ongoing letter exchange and was triggered by an initiative from the Brandenburg Ministry of the Interior. I wrote to them on 19 October 2020:

“As you can see from my letter to the Chief Public Prosecutor, the district administrator is deliberately attempting to deceive the district council after you transferred responsibility to it. The rule of law itself is in question when, on the 26th, a body composed of school pupils, students, retirees and AfD right-wing nationalists is tasked with deciding on the harassment of a cultural worker.”

Absurdly, the district council—an entity that Peach largely controlled—was the same body meant to supervise her. As I saw from the agenda, she intended to present only selective and meaningless documents to this committee. In response to my objections, she simply threw all my letters into the ring, so to speak, as if to drown the matter in volume. By doing so, she publicly humiliated me: no one wanted to read hundreds of pages in which I had been forced to repeat myself over and over again simply because no one ever engaged with the substance of my claims. She used this strategy to portray me as a crank in front of the district council.

On 26 October 2020, the council cleared her of all wrongdoing without truly understanding what the matter was about. All they saw was a poor man complaining, someone who allegedly didn’t want to pay maintenance. They saw a flood of documents no one had time or interest to read. It was a farce. She orchestrated a right-wing mob to sacrifice me, publicly, like a lamb before the slaughter.

In a final letter, I wrote to the district administrator:

“Yesterday, the public health officer, Dr. W., informed me that all appointments are suspended due to. Scheduled appointments have been cancelled. This means I won’t be able to get another appointment this year—right after the ministry told me a medical examination by the public health office was required to

¹⁷² Letter to Chief Public Prosecutor DörrPlum dated 12 October 2020 / regarding 360 Js 31976/20

confirm my illness. Let me repeat: you failed to take a serious illness seriously—presumably because you knew you were one of its primary causes, through the administrative bullying you inflicted. It will take well into 2021 just to return to the status quo before 2020. It must be clearly stated: two to four years of work have been destroyed or severely damaged by the government's pandemic policies.

*The long-term consequences of COVID are almost impossible to quantify. The entire cultural sector has collapsed, the arts infrastructure lies in ruins, funding has dried up, and all future prospects are increasingly restricted.”*¹⁷³

I found it increasingly difficult to think clearly, let alone explain the situation coherently. By this point, I had completely succumbed to the bullying; the events were now dictating my actions. Everything revolved around the injustice I could not grasp—because it could not be represented within the “reality” of the simulation. Since the public prosecutor's office failed to respond to any of my concerns, I wrote a 17-page letter to Attorney General Apple. From this point on, the Attorney General of Brandenburg was thoroughly informed about virtually all aspects of the state's treatment of people living in poverty in Germany.

I wrote:

*“Last year, 300,000 households had their electricity cut off, primarily because these costs are not covered under Hartz IV. 74,000 households with children were sanctioned. In doing so, children were ruthlessly harmed. For 15 years, the federal government violated the German constitution and human rights through 100% sanctions, which were ultimately declared unconstitutional by the Federal Constitutional Court. The thousands of victims suffer unimaginable psychological, health-related, and economic damage—and are simply ignored. All of this continues under the fairy tale of meritocracy, fair competition, and equal opportunity—concepts that barely exist in reality. If this were about a motorway bridge instead of the state's treatment of impoverished people, the accused would have long since been imprisoned. Systems like Hartz IV have indirectly—and in some cases directly—killed far more people than a collapsing motorway bridge ever could.”*¹⁷⁴

My aim was to call the Attorney General to testify. He should have to deal with the fact that racism against the poor, migrants, artists or the unemployed took place in countless authorities, with consequences that differed little or not at all from assault, fraud or psychological terror.

¹⁷³ Letter to District Administrator Peach dated 29 October 2020

¹⁷⁴ Letter to the Attorney General Apfel dated 28 October 2020

During these events, the district administrator filed a criminal complaint against me. She argued in several letters¹⁷⁵ that I had personally insulted her by referencing her past in the SED, and that I was not criticising her official conduct but attacking her as a private individual. Initially, the Cottbus public prosecutor's office declined to press charges, acknowledging that it was my right to criticise her in her official capacity. However, the district administrator intensified political pressure by sending numerous letters—including to the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office—and leveraged her official authority to do so. She also involved the district legal council and other state-employed attorneys, even though she would not have had the right to make use of public legal resources in a matter of alleged personal insult, as such cases fall outside the scope of official duties.

This did not seem to trouble the Cottbus public prosecutor's office. In a later case, it simply adopted the district administrator's narrative in order to prosecute me as a critic of the public prosecution service. In effect, they allowed the right-wing extremist district administrator—who had repeatedly slandered me—to dictate the indictment against me.

Right-wing prosecutors in Cottbus adopted a one-sided view of me and framed legitimate, fact-based criticism of state abuse as “defamation,” without addressing the question of why I, as an artist, had criticised the district administrator or in what political and systemic context. For them, the poor man was guilty—full stop. That was the starting point for the politically motivated charges brought against me. By a justice system with right-wing extremist leanings.

¹⁷⁵ Letter from the district administrator dated 2 June 2021, file number 30.40.LR.54/20 in the context of 1511 Js 43451/20

Take-away box — chapter “Corona & the Vacuum”

Pandemic as a stress test for the concept of work

Lockdowns revealed that supposedly “systemically relevant” jobs on the periphery of care (nursing, logistics, culture) are poorly paid and hardly protected institutionally — a value vacuum in the middle of the value creation system.

Social resonance cancellation

Distance rules cut off everyday accordances: Touch, eye contact, spontaneous coffee-table debates. For autistic people, this brings short-term relief (less sensory overload), but at the same time shows how much relational behaviour is behind every productivity metric.

Digital substitute spaces = hollow objects

Zoom calls reproduced output, not experience. Without shared corporeality, the MNO triangle shrank to a two-dimensional paper tiger: object (meeting link) ↔ will (agenda) - the experience remained empty, emergent creativity faltered.

Classical continuity

“Stay at home” was a privilege: working from home for the middle class, compulsory presence for supermarket and delivery staff. The virus made the categorisation lie visible — the same segregation logic as in the Hartz system, only pandemically accelerated.

Monotropism & hyperdetail as crisis radar

Autistic monitoring of rule inconsistencies (mask policies, testing strategies) demonstrated how important divergent perception is for organisational learning — yet these warning signals were often dismissed as a disruption.

Conclusion for a post-corona economy

The “vacuum” is not a state of emergency, but the normal architecture of a working model without embodied relationships. Only a transition to Universal Care Income + self-determined relationships can cushion future shockwaves and create real resilience.

A Definition of “Right-Wing Radicalism” and Expanded Forms of Racism

In this book, “radical right-wing” is not defined solely by party affiliation or symbolism, but functionally: *radical right-wing* refers to any person, organisation or practice that excludes individuals or groups from the universal claim to dignity, equality, and participation – and enforces or legitimises this exclusion through the exercise of power. Three criteria are decisive:

1. The hierarchisation of humanity (value categories such as “useful/useless”, “ethnicity”, or “cost factor”);
2. The delegitimisation of universal rights in favour of bloodline, productivity, or market logic;
3. A normative or de facto willingness to use violence – whether condoning, demanding or enacting exclusion, disenfranchisement or physical harm.

This definition demonstrates that radical right-wing structures are not confined to political fringes but may operate within the “normal functioning” of authorities, corporations or media as soon as human beings are reduced to economic parameters and sanctions are justified as socially “adequate.” The definition is compelling because it condenses the historical core motif of right-wing ideologies – the denial of egalitarian solidarity – into a functional principle. It thereby enables a concrete evaluation of actions beyond symbolic labelling.

In this book, “racism” is defined as any institutional, cultural or everyday practice that hierarchises people based on arbitrary characteristics – whether skin colour, origin, religion, gender, social class, neurodiversity or employment status – to distribute access to resources, power or recognition unequally, and to present this inequality as “natural,” “deserved,” or “inevitable.” The term encompasses three dimensions:

- **Structural racism** – legal, economic or administrative regimes that systematically disadvantage particular groups (e.g. sanctions against the poor, lack of accessibility for autistic people).
- **Discursive racism** – narratives, metaphors and media representations that devalue or dehumanise groups (e.g. “high achievers” vs. “cost factor”).
- **Interactional racism** – everyday acts, microaggressions and exclusions that reproduce and reinforce structural hierarchies.

This broad, intersectional definition is convincing because it identifies the historical core of racism – the legitimisation of unequal rights through ontological devaluation – and applies it to any system of domination that degrades people through categorisation, whether through classical “race” theories or modernised constructs of class, productivity or mental conformity. It thus makes clear that classism, ableism, or the pathologisation of neurodivergent people also follow a racist functional logic and invoke eugenic traditions whenever they selectively suspend the universal claim to dignity.

The Opening of the Evidentiary Process

1

This final section of the book presents the core evidence that self-determined work—especially in the context of relational labour—is not only necessary but civilisationally indispensable. In contrast, dependent wage labour, as the dominant form of human activity, poses a threat to civilisation due to its tendency to simulate productivity, devalue subjectivity, and disempower individuals.

Although this case study focuses on a single individual, it represents a unique long-term analysis of real-world conditions over a period of ten years. While not all experiences are as extreme as those documented here, the patterns identified reflect structural tendencies that are widely observable across this society and economy.

A central insight is that people in traditional employment must simplify their perception and actions to remain functional within rigid systems. But any society that hopes to sustain itself as an ecosystem must learn to integrate complexity. This exposes a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the belief that paid employment alone sustains the social order. In truth, without invisible labour, care work, and what I call “speed’s work”, this society would collapse—and in fact, we are witnessing this collapse in real time.

As the following chapters will show, the issue is not only about integrating diversity as a foundation of complexity or about naming systemic violence. It is also about confronting a simulation of society that increasingly excludes

lived diversity and destroys the foundations of existence. The violence deployed is often symbolic, what Bourdieu terms *symbolic violence*—indirect, institutionalised, and made invisible. If we want to end this violence in a democratic society, we must first render it comprehensible.

This violence—unacknowledged by prosecutors, judges and politicians in Germany because they reproduce right-wing ideological frameworks—can only be uncovered, denounced, and ultimately stopped through self-determined labour. Only the radical self-expression of free individuals enables us to see what is being destroyed, what the crime actually is, and how populism works through systemic degradation.

What is offered here is not a comprehensive proof in the statistical sense of quantitative research. But it is more than sufficient to demand a fundamental rethinking of the concept of work.

This society must no longer punish invisible labour or destroy lives simply because people do not conform to capitalist norms of productivity—or because they “fail” within capitalism.

Our language, our expression, is the living space in which we exist. Work, too, can be understood as a form of language. The subcultures we create are the habitats of the future.

“Of additional importance for our considerations is the fact that a language not only conveys information, but is also an expression of a very specific view of reality. As Wilhelm von Humboldt already stated: different languages are not merely different descriptions of the same thing—they are different views of the world.”¹⁷⁶

A mature society must therefore be capable of integrating multiple formal languages. Work is such a formal language: it produces forms as expressions of inner and outer order. The psychotherapist and communication theorist Paul Watzlawick, to whom the following quote is attributed, illustrates this with an experiment involving a neurotic horse, described in his book *How Real Is Real?*

In the experiment, the horse stood in a paddock with a metal plate beneath one of its hooves. A mild electric shock was administered shortly after a bell rang. After only a short time, the horse learned to lift its hoof as soon as it heard the bell. Watzlawick writes:

“This leads to the interesting result that every time the animal lifts its hoof and ‘therefore’ does not receive a shock, it is reinforced in the assumption that lifting the hoof is the ‘correct’ behaviour that protects it from an unpleasant outcome. However, this reinforces the incorrect behaviour itself. Or, in other words: it is

¹⁷⁶ Paul Watzlawick / *Wie wirklich ist die Wirklichkeit* / Piper series / p 20

*precisely this supposedly correct behaviour that now makes it impossible for the horse to make the important discovery that the threat of the shock no longer exists.”*¹⁷⁷

This parable powerfully demonstrates the core dynamic of systemic mislearning: the reinforcement of coping strategies that once had meaning but now prevent liberation. In societal terms, the metaphor speaks volumes: work behaviour that adapts to oppressive structures, under the illusion of protection, can blind individuals—and entire societies—to the fact that the underlying threat has changed or disappeared. What remains is simulation and compulsion, but no longer understanding.

We can work differently. We only have to realise that the metal plate is no longer live. With this insight, I continued *Speed's Work* in order to confront the habitual reflexes of the economy—because the attitude within a work is itself a language, expressing far more than any standardised activity. The usefulness of my work manifested on multiple levels, its effects multidimensional. This was typical of an enactive form of labour—one that is embodied, relational, and embedded in the world.

In contrast to this stood the unculture—the metaphorical metal plate—which the writer Evgeny Morozov attributed to the so-called “solutionists”: individuals, often located in tech-dominated cultures like Silicon Valley, who approach all human problems with simplified, technical fixes. These “working attitudes” are perfectly compatible with capitalist ideologies of one-dimensional success. They erase context and consequence. In their worldview, everything must be solved immediately—yet nothing fundamental is ever truly addressed. Morozov writes:

*“So the term solutionism does not simply mean to paraphrase in a stilted way that everything looks like a nail to someone with a hammer in his hand; it does not just mean to say that ' technical solutions ' are unsuitable for 'knotty problems'. Not only are many problems simply unsuitable for the solutionist's 'quick & easy' toolbox. Above all, much of what solutionists see as a 'problem' that needs to be solved is not a problem at all.”*¹⁷⁸

What appears as efficiency is often blindness; what appears as innovation is frequently the elimination of nuance. And what masquerades as “solution” is, in many cases, the system’s own avoidance of transformation. The solutionist model has also long since become the role model of the worker in the jobs. Therefore, the unwieldiness of my intervention is rejected, seen as resistance or violence instead of an offer of expansion.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Watzlawick / *Wie wirklich ist die Wirklichkeit* / Piper series / p 59

¹⁷⁸ Evgeny Morozov / *Smart New World* / Karl Blessing Verlag / p 26

Imagine the world were built entirely of simple Lego bricks. You can construct a certain degree of complexity—but only up to a point. Every basic brick fits neatly into predefined rows. But what happens when you suddenly introduce a complex structure, a new kind of brick that doesn't immediately fit? People tend to reject it, repelled by two things: first, the effort integration would demand; second, the absence of a clear function or utility for the unfamiliar piece. It unsettles the system.

The fundamental flaw of capitalism is that it makes truly sustainable processes economically unviable. Its "solutions" are often just substitution schemes—solutionist detours—because capitalism systematically reduces complexity through the one-dimensional attribution of value. The principle of success, tethered to numerical outcomes and monetary yield, is in itself absolutist: you're either successful or you're not. But life isn't that binary.

The Lego world cannot evolve if it fails to integrate the complex brick. It must, paradoxically, partially dismantle itself. It must act against its own rules. Yet people within this system will first expect the complex brick to adapt—to comply. Because they are the majority. Put bluntly: they'll demand an integration agreement—like at the Job Centre. Or they'll grind the stone until it fits.

This adaptation reflex is deeply ingrained in our world. But it's a problem. Progress requires synthesis, not submission. Capitalism, however—and this must be stated clearly—will neither fund nor value the complex brick. It will destroy it, with all its might. This explains many of today's crises: species extinction, the decline of scientific productivity, the rise of fake discourse. In the interregnum, people adapt to everything, further deepening the simulation. Anxiety multiplies. Authentic solutions look like complex bricks—unwelcome, incompatible with a simplified labour world.

Speed Work has always been—and will always be—regarded as "wrong" as long as capitalism dominates our categories. The crises we face are simulation crises: distortions that cannot be overcome without a radical expansion of complexity. That's why I keep going.

Only when society learns to honour care work will we enter a new economic system. Perhaps something like participatory or democratic socialism, as thinkers like Blakeley, Piketty, or Saito propose. Or perhaps something entirely new. What matters is this: we must be willing to endure a threshold phase (cf. "diversity equalisation" in *Radical Worker*)—a transition until diversity reaches the necessary complexity to sustain an ecosystem.

To rewild an ecosystem, you take hundreds of small steps. You restore balance through diversity. But capitalism cannot facilitate this, and neoliberalism even less so. Because parties like the CDU, FDP, SPD—and often even the Greens—continue to think within the coordinates of capitalist success, which only intensifies the simulation. They fail to see that while capitalism can mimic any value, even “green” ones, it remains a system based on exclusion, segmentation, and exploitation. All they do is change the direction of the plough—but it's the same destructive tool.

I'm not saying everything must be abolished. It's about regaining balance. We are trapped in a frenzy of reification and simplification. This must stop.

The more severe the crises become, the more individual development is curtailed, and the more diversity is strangled. We must not keep repeating this fatal mistake. The outcome is always the same: right-wing populism. A war of value hierarchies—of one group declaring itself worthy and others unworthy. Institutions cannot lead the way. They cannot create diversity. Diversity begins with the self-determination of the individual and is realised only through the collective's capacity for ambiguity tolerance. A complex we can only steer when it trusts itself. That trust has been destroyed—by capitalism, but also by classical socialism.

What remains is the will of the individual—to begin another kind of work. Work that understands value as relational practice.

The following sections show how this conflict escalated. How the simulation attempted to erase me. How prosecutors, judges and bureaucrats began to lie—systematically and massively. All to defend the simulation against diversity. As if their own lives depended on it. We witness in their labour a grotesque perversion of the idea of work. Yes, they were useful—in the eyes of the system. But they were also ignorant, inhuman and deeply damaging. Toxic work.

And I, as an autistic person, have documented it all.

3

On 12 November 2020, I wrote to the Public Prosecutor General's Office:

"I hereby inform you that my health has significantly deteriorated as a direct consequence of the bullying by various authorities in recent weeks and months. As there appear to be no official doctors available due to the coronavirus situation, I no longer know how the consequences of all this can be properly documented. As you can see from the letter to Dr. W., this is all very complicated. Please advise. I now suffer from increased somatic symptoms—weekly migraines, severe neurodermatitis, inflammatory responses—and the

psychological strain is becoming unbearable. It takes its toll when, after 25 years of committed work, you are labelled by the authorities as 'harmful to society', ignored, criminalised and ostracised—and no one believes you. I will likely have to seek treatment again soon. I remain only partially resilient, but I apparently cannot prove this—and it seems none of the responsible authorities care. I continue to be categorised by the Job Centre, the Youth Welfare Office and the Immigration Office as someone who refuses to work—and am discriminated against accordingly. This has nothing to do with reality."

Making vulnerability visible is essential. The philosopher Judith Butler has repeatedly argued this in her writings. "Hard work" is meaningless if it serves only to conceal vulnerability. How are we supposed to relate to our own experience if it is buried? How can we know what is true if it no longer matters whether something causes deep harm?

On 26 November 2020, I wrote again to Attorney General Apple:

"I have now received a notice concerning charges against the head of the Youth Welfare Office. It once again reveals how a public prosecutor pretends ignorance in order to avoid investigating the matter.

The Teltow-Fläming administration still refuses to acknowledge the damage caused by the coronavirus measures, is aware that I cannot afford to bring legal action, and has been informed for months that this bullying is severely affecting my health.

As the attached letter shows, the administration is denying me access to the relevant files—presumably because it wishes to conceal the fact that District Administrator Peach misled the district council and spread defamatory claims about me.

I am no longer receiving responses from the Teltow-Fläming administration. They are clearly afraid I could provide evidence of fraud."¹⁷⁹

By this point at the latest, Attorney General Apple had been fully informed of two essential facts: first, that I was seriously ill, and second, that the consequences of the coronavirus measures were not being recognised as performance-inhibiting—due to right-wing extremist resentment toward the so-called lazy poor. Apple had also been informed that I was being directly penalised as a cultural worker because of my artistic work. Taken together, this amounted to documented fraud by state authorities and massive structural discrimination.

¹⁷⁹ Letter to Public Prosecutor General Apfel dated 26 November 2020 regarding 54 Zs 856/20 and 488 Js 44394/20

The Attorney General's Office should have responded—but it did not. In the end, the Attorney General's role as a state functionary got in the way of his duty to justice.

4

In a letter to District Administrator Blackberry dated 18 November 2020, I wrote:

"If the sole reason for refusing naturalisation is that, like many other cultural workers, I had to accept impoverishment to contribute to this country's cultural life, then there is something fundamentally wrong with the attitude of the Elbe-Elster administration. Mr H.'s behaviour has long since ceased to have anything to do with proportionality. I urge you to finally proceed with the naturalisation process (...). As I mentioned, the Federal Ministry of the Interior has already stated that naturalisation would be possible."

On 11 January 2021, I once again informed Attorney General Apple of the overall context in a nine-page letter:

"By the end of October 2020, you were fully informed that current poverty research clearly demonstrates how the state deliberately disadvantages, deceives and systematically makes poor people ill. You were asked to arrange a meeting where I could explain hundreds of pages of research findings and present additional evidence. These documents had already been submitted to you. To this day, months later, you have not enabled such a meeting—nor even offered a phone call to address the core facts. In the meantime, other people have suffered severe trauma and harm. Neither you nor Mrs R. have said a single word about the research presented. Even the cases I submitted as concrete examples—my own included—have now been filed away without explanation. The public prosecutor's office has simply chosen silence."¹⁸⁰

Attorney General Apple was informed through this letter of the threats made by Mr B. from the Ministry of the Interior, of the manipulations by Ms Peach, and of the slander by Mr H. from the Aliens Department.

"Nothing can excuse the stupidity and radical right-wing behaviour I have been subjected to by German authorities. And yet you remain silent about all of it."

Could Apple have changed all of this? Perhaps not. But did he have the right to remain silent? No. The scandal, in essence, was that I had been defined as an inferior person. This definition inevitably stripped me of any perceived competence in Apple's world. It had to be made clear that the reason the

¹⁸⁰ Letter to the Attorney General Apfel dated 11 January 2021 / regarding 1360 Js 31976/20, 54 Zs 856/20 and 4130 Js 40390/20

public prosecutor's office ignored the facts was precisely because I was poor—and thus seen as inferior. This revealed the social racism embedded in the very fabric of state institutions. And so I kept writing, knowing that eventually, the dam would burst.

In another twelve-page letter dated 13 January 2021 to Attorney General Apple, I wrote: *"District Administrator Peach lies in her letters—by omitting facts, by fragmenting the broader context, by refusing to address any substance, by disregarding evidence, and by acting with disproportionate severity. This is particularly apparent in the context of the pandemic (...). The District Administrator is a poverty racist who views people living in poverty through a rigid lens she never adjusts or discards. According to this template, the poor are always to blame for their poverty (...). The District Administrator concedes nothing to the poor."*¹⁸¹

A little further on in the letter, I attempted to explain to the Attorney General how such brutality could occur:

"In research, we refer to this as the agentic state. The more irrational and brutal the actions become, and the more rigid and authoritarian the commands or laws from above, the worse the things are that district administrators and numerous authorities do to those beneath them in specific situations. We are speaking here of an escalation of state violence. Milgram analysed this in order to understand how the concentration camps, for example, could have been possible. The initial assumption must be that it is impossible for 'normal' people to inflict the kind of torture on others that—put simply—occurs today in many Job Centres, for example. A 100% sanction during the winter is, quite plainly, attempted murder. There is nothing that can justify or whitewash that."

Of course, the Agentic State¹⁸² was only one aspect of the problem. But here you can see how I was desperately trying to explain its power to an

¹⁸¹ Letter to the Attorney General Apfel dated 13 January 2021 / regarding 1360 Js 31976/20, 54 Zs 856/20 and 4130 Js 40390/20

¹⁸² The term "agentic state" describes a condition in which a person tends to leave their actions and decisions to other authorities or environmental pressure rather than considering their own moral convictions or conscience. This term originates from social psychology research and was developed by Stanley Milgram in connection with his famous experiment on obedience. In Milgram's experiments, participants were instructed to administer supposed electric shocks to other people if they gave incorrect answers to questions. Although the participants often had moral reservations, many of them obeyed the instructions of the authority figure in charge of the experiment and carried out the shocks anyway. Milgram referred to this state, in which the participants submitted to the authority and suppressed their own moral concerns, as the "agentic state".

The agentic state shows how people in authoritarian or controlling situations can tend to abdicate their personal responsibility and submit to the will of an authority figure, even if this

authority that refused to acknowledge it. It was also about documenting that they were fully aware of every imaginable factor and perspective involved in this matter—yet still chose not to act. They knew they were making people ill. But acknowledging that would have meant the end of Hartz IV—or the new Bürgergeld.

Just imagine: someone tells you tomorrow that your job contributes to the death of millions. How would you react? Unfortunately, as not only my own research shows, the concept of the *agentic state* means that most people not only keep their jobs, but double down on the violence—justifying their actions as necessary, following orders, hiding behind procedures and protocols. The blackmail of capitalism—our dependence on paid employment—makes every imaginable form of violence enforceable. It legitimises every conceivable lie. As I will now show in more detail, it even led a German Attorney General to actively cover up a basic truth: that discrimination makes people ill and that classism is a massive, systematic form of discrimination.

This conflict of interest drove an Attorney General to cover up right-wing violence.

I went on to write:

“The discrepancy between the district administrator’s claims and reality is striking. As I’ve said: I am working. Yet she continues to claim that I have failed to prove I am working—even though I am currently making a film, something you can read about online.”

5

If the state reserves the right to reduce everyone and everything under the condition of scarcity to such narrow notions of value, how are we ever to achieve responsible, meaningful behaviour at work?

The primitive construction of value and contribution—defined solely through paid employment—inevitably leads to a world without alternatives.

“The bureaucratisation of everyday life means imposing impersonal rules and regulations on people; but impersonal rules and regulations only work if they are supported by the threat of violence.”¹⁸³

On 14 January 2021, I sent another letter to the Cottbus public prosecutor’s office:

“For months now, your office has been investigating the head of the Immigration

contradicts their own beliefs. This concept is important for understanding obedience phenomena and social dynamics in different contexts.

¹⁸³ David Graeber / Bureaucracy - The utopia of rules / Goldmann / p 42

Office (Elbe-Elster), who refused to grant me naturalisation as an artist on the basis of right-wing nationalist motives.”¹⁸⁴

I wrote to Senior Public Prosecutor Dried Plum (Potsdam) on 27 January 2021: *“We are now recording in the TV studio how District Administrator Peach coerces me, under threat of sanctions, into signing a declaration that blames me for my own impoverishment caused by the corona lockdowns. This is being documented as part of the feature-length film production Transfer Protocol, which is currently in progress.”*

Federal Minister Ernst, the wife of Chancellor Scholz, was also informed about the recording for television, as was Attorney General Apple.¹⁸⁵ This was the last major enactment of embodied, enactive work in response to the situation. *“We will therefore record this signature—obtained under coercion and threats of sanctions—in the TV studio, explicitly naming you as a witness, along with Minister Ernst. The resulting footage will later be broadcast on public television, documenting how the state sought to seize assets from individuals whom it had itself previously driven into bankruptcy through lies and administrative violence.”*

Brandenburg’s Minister of Justice, Erdbeere, was also informed of these events on 24 February 2021. She never responded to this complaint concerning the Youth Welfare Office. On the same day, the Minister of Culture, Raspberry, and the Minister of the Interior, Blueberry, were also notified again. Thus, by that point, half the Brandenburg state government knew that victims of the coronavirus lockdowns were being targeted with seizures or threats of seizure—despite the authorities being fully aware that these individuals had previously been officially banned from working for months or even years, that their livelihoods had been destroyed, and that many had not recovered from the consequences to this day.

On 11 March 2021, I again wrote to Senior Public Prosecutor Dried Plum (Potsdam):

“You are aware that you are obliged to read the several hundred pages in this case. The public prosecutor’s office has witnessed months of bullying by the district administrator, who has let me spiral into ruin for years. In future, it will no longer suffice to recite legal formalities; you will be obligated either to refute my claims concretely—or to prosecute those public officials who have committed fraud.”¹⁸⁶

The facts remained unaddressed, and no allegations were ever refuted. Instead, the framing—the categorisation lie—was shifted. The accusations

¹⁸⁴ Letter to Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 14 January 2021 / 1360 Js 31976/20

¹⁸⁵ 54 Zs 856/20 and 4130 Js 40390/20

¹⁸⁶ Letter dated 11 March 2021 / regarding 456 Ujs 3237/21

were reduced and simplified to such a degree that any inconvenient truth could simply be dismissed. Yet over time, this strategy became less and less effective. The sheer volume of my letters and interventions began to reveal a pattern of state-driven cover-ups.

This pattern was made evident by one striking fact: not a single public prosecutor ever commented on the racism involved—despite its obvious presence. Instead, the public prosecutor’s office consistently acted in ways that provoked further letters, complaints, and criminal filings from me. In this way, the core legal issues were never actually clarified—because they couldn’t be clarified without exposing the system itself.

Classism should have been recognised. I must emphasise this again: in all these years, not one public prosecutor has examined the most basic question—whether portraying an artist as a “refuser of work” might constitute slander, incitement, or administrative fraud rooted in institutional prejudice. The possibility that such portrayals could stem from racism within public authorities has been systematically ignored.

6

On 25 March 2021, I wrote to Ms B. from the Teltow-Fläming district administration:

“As you know, we have been without daycare for our three-year-old son for ten months (no emergency provision). After just two weeks of reopening, the daycare is now closed for us again—probably until autumn. That means we can work only two or three hours a day, practically nothing. The lockdowns have destroyed projects worth an estimated EUR 50,000, as well as three years of work. Like most cultural workers, I receive no compensation for these losses.”

It must be noted that the entire COVID relief I received—EUR 7,000—was invested in the production of the feature film *Transferprotokoll*. As an artist, I made a film for the people of this country *free of charge*, using public funds not for myself, but to mitigate the broader social damage caused by the pandemic. Despite working full-time, I earned nothing from this film—just as I will likely earn nothing from this book.

This is everyday reality for artists in Germany. What other professional group works for years without pay? The reflexive claim that the artistic and scholarly work I produce is “worthless” exposes an underlying right-wing radicalism, doesn’t it?

The state’s inability—or unwillingness—to offset structural injustice against its own claims shows just how dysfunctional the system is. Let’s do the math again:

- The state profited by at least EUR 140,000 from my work.
- At the same time, it demanded EUR 20,000 in maintenance payments.
- Meanwhile, state-mandated lockdowns caused at least EUR 50,000 in damages and made me chronically ill.
- Throughout all this, I continued to work full-time producing valuable research and cultural goods for society.

And yet, in official records, I was still described as a “refuser of labour”—a term used to conceal this injustice.

So: I was a “work refuser” who produced a feature film and several hundred pages of social research in four years of unpaid labour. What exactly went wrong here?

On 28 April 2021, I once again demanded a medical officer from the Potsdam public prosecutor’s office. On the same day, I reminded Minister of Justice Erdbeere of the events. I also confronted Attorney General Apple with this statement from his office: *“There is no reason for the public prosecutor’s office, as the prosecuting authority, to engage in the civil dialogue you expect.”*¹⁸⁷

This shows that the authorities were beginning to realise what was at stake here, but also the mindset of those authorities who arrogantly thought that they did not have to justify themselves to civil society, that they did not have to explain, did not have to respond, were not under scrutiny. I presented Apple with another quote from the Potsdam public prosecutor's office:

*“The task of the public prosecutor's office is to prosecute criminal offences committed by natural persons. However, the prosecution authorities are not responsible for combating the social grievances you have criticised.”*¹⁸⁸

This attitude was both wrong and dangerous, given the fact that the authorities knew they were making hundreds, if not thousands, of people ill. It is legitimate to ask: what would these prosecutors do if fascists came to power again? Would they allow murders to happen again? It is deeply disturbing to realise that many prosecutors would comply with anything, because they simply do not care about “social injustice”—even when lives are being destroyed in the process.

This is the danger of the categorisation lie: reducing individuals to functional labels, thereby justifying any amount of harm. That is precisely why it is legitimate—and necessary—for me to demand moral and political maturity from prosecutors. What matters is not whether a particular act of violence is “legal”, but whether one has the maturity to recognise violence in all its forms and act accordingly.

¹⁸⁷ Letter from the Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General's Office / 1 March 2021

¹⁸⁸ Letter from the Potsdam public prosecutor's office / 22 March 2021

The more often they rejected my concerns, the more ethically questionable their position became. At that point, I could begin to hold them accountable in public. It was a matter of perseverance. The prosecution service could only maintain its position in this “war” by cutting moral and legal corners.

This is exactly what I kept accusing them of:

“You are covering up a legal system that destroys human lives based on irrational prejudice. You excuse this through crude manipulation of legal interpretations. The officials under your command act with an arrogance and complacency that is nauseating and will shock most decent people. You are now so entangled in the bourgeois world of self-deception created by your own prosecutors that your only remaining option is to vanish from the scene entirely. (...) Your incompetence and ignorance have contributed to the fact that I am now undergoing medical treatment for a severe bullying syndrome. Due to extensive psychosomatic symptoms, medical examinations will continue for months, and therapy will likely take years—if recovery is even possible. You participated in this bullying, or you continue to do so. (...) How am I supposed to prevent the state from systematically killing me?”

Attorney General Apple did not respond to this four-page letter. Not yet.

On 29 April 2021, I wrote to District Administrator Peach:

“You have ignored the illness that led to my inability to work for years—because you are one of the primary causes of that illness.”

On 12 April 2021, another letter was sent to Interior Minister Blueberry:

*“I am still waiting—after several months—for a response regarding the far-right views of one of your officials, and the Herzberg Immigration Office, which refuses to naturalise me based on Nazi-style ideology towards cultural workers. The details have now been published online and will also appear in the television broadcast of the cinema film *Transferprotokoll*. You are named in the film as the person politically responsible.”*

Silence.

I also wrote to District Administrator Blackberry:

“Filming is currently delayed because I have been denied a daycare place for my son for ten months, effectively banning me from working. But rest assured: sooner or later, the full extent of this case will be made public through the film.”¹⁸⁹

On 15 September 2021, I wrote a two-page letter to Minister-President Sweet Cherry:

“The ‘drinking buddy’ of your Interior Minister—District Administrator Blackberry—is responsible for the fact that officials at the Immigration Office

¹⁸⁹ Letter to the District Administrator of Elbe-Elster / Heinrich Blackberry / 12 April 2021

in Herzberg are portraying me in official correspondence as a threat to society. After nearly 25 years of work as a cultural worker, I am being denied naturalisation based on far-right ideology and administrative manipulation (...). Brandenburg has made me ill. You have known about this right-wing violence for over a year now, perhaps even two. But if you are a victim of right-wing violence, you are not counted."

As expected, the office of Minister-President Sweet Cherry remained silent.

A day later, I addressed a letter to the Minister of Culture, titled:

"Minister of Culture Raspberry continues to watch right-wing violence against artists."

The letter read:

"For well over a year, you have ignored the far-right violence directed at me by members of the state government and various civil servants because of my work as an artist. You have been informed of this through countless letters—none of which you have answered. A Minister of Culture who stands by while cultural workers are brutalised by right-wing forces is a disgrace to this country."

Act of Violence 7: Right-Wing Courts and Washing Machines

1

The philosopher Kohei Saito wrote in his book *Systemsturz*:

"Because they probably have—no, we have—a dark sense that we are only doing well because others are doing badly. But we try to perceive this injustice as something that does not concern us. We cannot bear to look at it. Yet even though we know we are the cause of this injustice, we secretly wish for the current state of affairs to continue."¹⁹⁰

I wrote to the Job Centre again:

"I hereby also apply for a subsidy for the purchase of a washing machine. Invoice enclosed. I would like to point out that the standard rate is objectively too low due to Corona and general inflation. If you refuse this, we will also mention it in the upcoming press conference."¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Kohei Saito / *Systemsturz* / dtv / p 27

¹⁹¹ Letter to the Elbe-Elster Job Centre dated 26.1.2022

Even in the deepest horror, there are moments of dark comedy. A press conference about the denial of a washing machine might appear as a derailing of proportionality—but perhaps this society will only begin to heal when *all* conditions are granted relevance.

Of course, it would never go down in history as the “Washing Machine Conference.” But it is worth pausing to imagine how different our world might be if the problems of the lower classes made the evening news every single day—via press conferences.

“Hubert Meier from Block 5 needs an iron. Outrage! Sabine from the basement flat had her bike stolen and can’t afford a new one. How is she supposed to get to work? We demand action! Racism is everywhere!”

What you'd hear would be a pattern of complex beauty and an expression of what it means to be human—and of a society capable of reckoning with such wounds. And of course, it is one of the tasks of art to render such conditions visible, especially on their meta-levels.

Naturally, the application for the washing machine was denied. *“It’s just a washing machine,”* some might say. But for the poor, it is far more than that. It is a symbol. Refusing to cover the cost means nothing less than telling people once again: *You are dirt. So stay dirty.*

In a letter dated 11 March 2022, Judge K. from the Cottbus Social Court informed me regarding the still unresolved issue of the “Bedarfsgemeinschaft” (community of needs):

“The court is considering ruling on the matter in writing and without an oral hearing, in accordance with § 105 of the Code of Social Court Procedure. This is possible because, in the court’s opinion, the legal dispute does not involve any particular complexity of fact or law, and the factual situation has been sufficiently clarified. You are invited to comment within two weeks.”¹⁹²

So the judge not only intended to decide the issue of a *community of need* between two cultural workers from her desk—simply to save the state money—but she also entirely ignored my extensive written explanations about the fundamental injustice embedded in the concept itself. She ignored evidence. The plan of the other judges in Cottbus had clearly been to wait one or even two years and then declare a “Bedarfsgemeinschaft” (community of need) solely based on the framing: *“You’ve lived in the same house for long enough—therefore you must be a couple.”*

Yet it was all just suspicion. An insinuation.

Like most of her colleagues, the judge von K. was engaged in what can only be described as *open institutional fraud*. She didn’t render judgment based on

¹⁹² Letter from Cottbus Social Court / Judge von K. / 11.3.2022 / Ref: S 14 AS 1193/18

actual evidence or reality—but on stereotypes and bureaucratic convenience. She wasn't interested in the actual nature of the relationship. She ignored hundreds of years of civil society's struggle for autonomy in intimate and domestic arrangements.

Of course, this constitutes *disproportionate violence*, ethically indefensible. But it simply followed the logic of capitalist morality—guilt, punishment, atonement.

And when she wrote: "*No particular difficulties of a factual nature*," it became clear that she had no intention whatsoever of engaging with my arguments. She acted arbitrarily—and in line with a right-wing worldview that reduces people to functional roles in a system they did not choose.

2

I replied to the court:

"I hereby inform you and the court that the case you have described as 'unambiguous' is in fact one of the best-documented examples of poverty research related to Hartz IV ever compiled. It has now been made into a feature-length film for cinema and television. The production, entitled Transfer Protocol, is currently in post-production and will be released to a wider audience in the coming months, no later than early 2023.

The film features prominent political figures such as Katja Kipping and Federal Labour Minister Kiwi, as well as the well-known Hartz IV critic and activist Inge Hannemann. Scientists and those directly affected also speak out.

The film exposes how courts, Job Centres and ministries systematically harmed individuals through prolonged bullying. It documents the structural classism and racism against the poor embedded in the Hartz IV system.

It is now clear, in broad public discourse, that the court's assessment was not only biased but demonstrably wrong. This becomes even more apparent with the release of the film."¹⁹³

The judge von K. had likely not anticipated this development, which may explain her increasing hostility toward me.

"As the court has once again refused to seriously engage with the reality of this case and the Hartz IV system, and instead intends to issue a decision from behind a desk after two years of inaction, I hereby set a deadline of two weeks for you to explain how the court intends to address the facts of the 'community of need' — both in general and in this specific case.

¹⁹³ Letter to von K. / Social Court / dated 21 March 2022 / S14 AS 1193/18

Appropriateness demands that the court confront the povertist foundations of the Hartz IV legislation, which have been objectively substantiated by research. It must also acknowledge the systemic bullying practices inherent in the system and engage with relevant psychological and economic findings, as well as broader theories of racism and group-based discrimination.

Appropriateness does not mean reducing the entire case to the simplistic assertion that a 'community of need' exists because two people have lived in the same apartment for more than two years. I can no longer tolerate such under-complex and ignorant claims that erase the very real discrimination, suffering, and conflicts created by the legal fiction of communal dependence. The court will bear direct responsibility for the health consequences already resulting from the Job Centre's conduct."

The judge was informed of every relevant detail. The essay I submitted was nine pages long:

"The ideological foundation of Hartz IV — the claim that those not engaged in formal employment make no contribution to society and thus have no value ('Those who don't work shouldn't eat' – Franz Müntefering) — is a falsehood that can no longer be sustained.

The notion that the state is entitled to make moral demands of the poor, or that welfare recipients owe gratitude to their benefactors, stems from this same lie. The court, in siding with these assumptions, becomes an extension of them. These ideological distortions are the intellectual core of Hartz IV.

I remind you that in German history, it has not been unusual to rationalize the worst prejudices as social obligations. You cannot simply claim that welfare recipients have a duty to society and that expropriation and disenfranchisement naturally follow, when nearly all contemporary research in economics and poverty studies confirms that the poor are largely not responsible for their own poverty.

On the contrary: the production of poverty is a structural function of capitalism — a mechanism through which the concentration of wealth is sustained. The court reveals its ideological bias here, and must now choose whether it wishes to continue in public with that bias — and face the consequences."

Later in the letter I wrote:

"We are impoverished — and this applies to most cultural workers — not because we are stupid, lazy, or incapable, but because we deliberately accept precarity to contribute to the cultural fabric of this country.

We continue to work under conditions where our contributions are chronically underfunded or unpaid. And we do this in service of the public good — often at great personal cost.

The work we do — which the state has invested in through our education — generally cannot be absorbed by the conventional labour market. It is precisely this kind of self-employed cultural labour, rooted in the public mandate of the Basic Law, that society must assume responsibility for.”

My broader concern was to hold society accountable for recognising and rewarding care work. Decades of cultural and social labour cannot be declared a “non-contribution” without invoking the logic of social racism. Every public authority that denied the value of my work simultaneously degraded my dignity as a human being.

One cannot rationally claim that the work of artists and researchers holds no value. But if it does, then it must be honoured. And if it is not honoured under capitalism, then that contradiction reveals the core failure of a system that pretends to reward performance — but structurally devalues care, culture, and complexity.

On 4 April, I once again wrote to the judge — this time an eight-page essay:

“If the court does not officially acknowledge in writing that Hartz IV — as legislation, as a system, as practice — is structurally rooted in violence against the poor, in class-based discrimination, in what we must now call povertism, and that this same logic has long been adopted by social courts when ruling against the vulnerable, then the court will face public exposure as complicit in systemic racism against the poor.

In moral terms, such complicity places the court on a level with anti-Semites and rapists: those who use power structures to violate the dignity and rights of others.

The court has until 26 April to formally recognise in writing that cultural workers in Germany — as is empirically evident — are systematically condemned to poverty in order to uphold the cultural life of the country.

If the court does not annul the community of need status applied to my partner, then it becomes co-responsible for the deterioration of my health. This accusation is grave. I will inform the public prosecutor of this matter.

We are preparing to present concrete evidence of physical and psychological harm caused by multiple Job Centres — acts of discrimination against impoverished citizens that have recently been documented in detail, for instance by the author Ronen Steinke

¹⁹⁴, as discussed in Der Spiegel.

¹⁹⁴ Ronen Steinke (* 1983 in Erlangen) is a German journalist, non-fiction author and lawyer. Book: Not everyone is equal before the law - The new class justice.

The reckoning with the abuses committed by judges, Job Centres and political institutions has only just begun. The same structural conditions are present here as those that led to the #MeToo movement.

You are now being called upon to formally recognise the reality of racism against the poor in the Hartz IV system. The deadline is 26 April 2022. You are also called upon to abolish the construct of the community of need, to raise standard rates in line with actual living conditions, and to affirm the massive culpability of state institutions in the harm that has been done.”

It is essential to state clearly: placing artists within the Hartz IV or citizens' allowance system when they are impoverished because of their artistic work is absurd. But more broadly, it is absurd to treat anyone in these systems as if poverty were a personal failing.

The core question is this: Why does the citizens' income system focus on scrutinising individuals, rather than interrogating the systemic structures that produce poverty in the first place?

Why is it not considered fraud — from a prosecutorial standpoint — when Job Centres, in order to cover up injustice, resort to spreading far-right narratives about the poor, as documented throughout this book?

A lie does not become truth simply because it aligns with political convenience.

3

On 26 April 2022, the court hearing finally took place under the direction of Judge von K. at the Social Court in Cottbus.

There was something absurd, almost surreal, about sitting alone on a chair in an empty room while three women perched on a raised bench prepared to pass judgment on me. The judge, clad in her ridiculous robe, flanked by two elderly lay judges who looked like they had just come from a knitting circle.

Right at the beginning, the judge read out my history of Hartz IV receipt as if reciting a criminal record. No mention of who I was, what I had done as an artist, or what my contributions to society had been. Just a bureaucratic catalogue of supposed disgrace, accompanied by theatrical eye rolls from the lay judges. All delivered in a sanctimonious tone that would not have been out of place in church.

I sat there without legal representation — I couldn't afford a lawyer. Legal aid had always been denied. Once again, I tried to explain in detail the brutal consequences that declaring a *community of need* would have for my partner. The judge clearly wanted to reach a verdict as quickly as possible. Later, in the written justification for the ruling, she wrote:

“The chamber does not share the plaintiff’s concerns regarding the constitutionality of the construct of the community of need as defined in § 7 para. 3 no. 3 lit. c) of the Social Code II (SGB II). The chamber assumes that the provision is constitutional and therefore refrains from suspending the proceedings or referring the matter to the Federal Constitutional Court pursuant to Article 100(1) of the Basic Law (GG).”¹⁹⁵

The judge thus argued that she was merely “assuming” – a statement that revealed not critical legal reasoning, but maximum indifference. She went on to explain, in the usual socio-racist narrative, that social welfare should only go to those who “truly need it,” and that the state had every right to define how this is determined. Accordingly, the concept of the *Einstehungsgemeinschaft* (community of mutual responsibility) was perfectly legitimate.

At no point did the 14th Chamber acknowledge the deeper injustice of assigning responsibility for poverty to friends, relatives or partners. The priority was to avoid state expenditure – no matter the human consequences. Unsurprisingly, the old argument of subsidiarity was dragged out again, suggesting the state only needs to step in when others can't, a line that has long served to offload responsibility and deny systemic accountability.

“It is reasonable to expect those in the family community to actually stand up for each other and 'manage from one pot'.”

My repeated testimonies that we did not manage from the same pot were simply ignored. This deliberate omission amounted to a lie.

Despite having received extensive documentation of the injustice involved – namely, that an impoverished artist was being forced into a community of need, causing extreme psychological stress and impairing the work of my partner (herself an unpaid cultural worker for decades) – Judge von K. issued this staggering statement:

“The fact that the plaintiff and his girlfriend, according to the plaintiff’s own statements, work as artists, or, in the view of the chamber, are involved in the scientific field, does not alter the assessment. The practice of artistic or scientific freedom as protected under Article 5, paragraph 3 of the Basic Law is not unrestricted. The chamber does not consider the inclusion of the girlfriend’s income and assets in the calculation of the plaintiff’s social benefits to constitute an infringement of these freedoms. Nor does the court see any violation of other fundamental rights as a result of the community of need or the granting of ALG II in this case.”

¹⁹⁵ Reasons for judgement S 14 AS 1193/18

These statements amounted to a scandal. The forced economic seizure of my partner – a recognised artist in Brandenburg – and the de facto prohibition of financial autonomy through frozen savings and blocked investments, were considered irrelevant to her independence.

The judge's belief that such structural violence was legitimate because "artistic freedom is not unrestricted" exposed a staggering presumption: namely, that decades of unpaid work for the public good could be declared null and void in the name of preserving a state-sponsored lie.

It echoed a far-right attitude: that cultural workers are neither relevant nor worthy of protection, and that their work can be ended with a bureaucratic gesture – without any engagement with the substance or social value of their practice.

The court drew absurd causal chains that neither justified nor clarified anything. What it did do, however, was degrade the dignity of art and science so thoroughly that it left observers speechless. Once again, the arts and sciences were blackmailed by the market – and the court not only refused to see this as unconstitutional but actively endorsed it.

If someone is driven into poverty for exposing systemic injustice – and this poverty is then used to delegitimise or disable them – then courts that ignore this dynamic are not protecting the Constitution, but helping to bury it.

Judge von K. employed fascist narratives here, equating the interests of the market with the interests of the state, thereby undermining the very foundation of democratic society.

She ignored the massive discrimination my partner and I faced. She erased the fact that art operates unconditionally. She never once addressed the reality that both of us had served the cultural fabric of this country for over 30 years – largely unpaid – and now stood impoverished. Instead, she reinforced the social-racist narrative that the poor owe the state and that this extends into forced familial financial entanglements.

During the hearing, she told me I should be "grateful" to still be receiving Hartz IV – considering the alleged "worthlessness" of my artistic work – and that they would now consider whether this should continue.

In that moment, she indirectly threatened my existence. She threatened me with annihilation.

Everything collapsed inside me.

It didn't matter what I said. No reality, no truth, no evidence was accepted. Only the dominant narrative of the "lazy and worthless poor" was allowed. The poor had to obey. They had to serve the market. The market was always right.

When I asked whether the court would reimburse my travel expenses, she replied that my presence in court had not even been necessary.

I felt dizzy. I lost my balance.

I developed a fever of 40 degrees. Days later, I suffered from acute hearing loss. I could barely hear for weeks. My body was in deep shock. I was sweating, I lost weight, my condition deteriorated rapidly.

It was clear from that moment on: something had to change.

On 29 May 2022, I requested the Job Centre to cover the costs of therapy necessitated by the psychological violence of the Job Centre and the court. I asked them to acknowledge what was obvious: that Hartz IV makes people sick. Without this admission, there could be no healing.

Take-Away Box – Chapter: “Right-Wing Courts and Washing Machines”

Justice as Ideological Laundering

Judges and prosecutors “cleanse” structural discrimination by declaring social racism socially acceptable — a juridical whitewashing that renders violence invisible and odourless.

Right-Wing Common Sense in Robes

Classist dogmas (“poverty is your own fault” / “those who don’t work shall not eat”) echo far-right populist narratives. Courts reproduce these frames in their rulings, cementing a two-tier legal order.

The Washing Machine as Poverty’s Litmus Test

Speed reveals how banal household items become crime scenes: repair costs or electricity usage trigger bureaucratic suspicion. Everyday life mutates into a surveillance lab for the poor.

MNO Analysis: Object-Fixated Legalism

Legal practice focuses obsessively on formal surface facts (the object level) while ignoring will (motivation) and experience (consequences of discrimination). Result: judgments without emergent justice.

Affordance Blockade via Paragraphs

For autistic individuals, courtrooms become sensorily hostile. Their testimony is discounted due to atypical expression. Divergent perception crashes against the rigid rhetoric of standardised legal procedure.

Conclusion: The Rule of Law in Crisis

As long as courts continue laundering structural violence instead of confronting it, democratic redress remains impossible. A just legal system must attend to relational behaviour and context — not just spin its wheels through formal codes.

Act of Violence 8: Smash What Smashes You

1

The phrase “*Smash What Smashes You*” was the title of a song by German singer Rio Reiser from the political rock band *Ton Steine Scherben*, released in 1969. It brings us back to the urgent question of how to destroy a simulation. After I informed the President of the Social Court in Cottbus, Mr W., that Judge von K. had discriminated against me by reproducing far-right narratives, he replied that he was not responsible. He wrote:

*“Regardless of this, after reviewing the case files submitted to me, I am unable to identify any violation of applicable procedural law. I cannot determine from the files that you were denied the right to submit further evidence for the proceedings.”*¹⁹⁶

By now, it has become routine — as confirmed by the President of the State Social Court, Ms Pineapple — to feign ignorance. The investigations referred only to a framing that rendered racism invisible, and everything I said or wrote was simply disregarded.

In a 24-page letter dated 4 June 2022 to Justice Minister Ms Strawberry, I wrote a pivotal sentence: *“In general, almost all judges at the Social Court tend not to acknowledge the pain of victims. The degree to which massive violence is rationalised is alarming. Those who refuse to see this violence do so because they are poor-racists — they assume the poor deserve this violence and consider it completely ‘reasonable’. But it cannot be reasonable if it makes people sick — and especially not when that violence is inflicted on innocent people. And I’m not even talking about sanctions, since I was never sanctioned (...).”*

Later in the letter, I stated clearly:

“The Social Courts in this country ignore 100% of the actual causes of poverty.”

Justice Minister Strawberry should have responded — but she didn't. No studies were consulted. No investigations followed. Nothing.

I asked her a simple but system-threatening question:

“Why don’t you prove to me that my work has less value to this society than yours?”

It was a straightforward challenge — and yet it had the power to collapse the whole edifice. They didn’t want that discourse. So they said nothing.

¹⁹⁶ Cottbus Social Court / Letter from the President of the Court dated 1 June 2022 / S 13 AS 1193/18

On 2 July 2022, I informed the head of the Job Centre, Ms S., that I had filed a criminal complaint against her office. The reason: I was repeatedly receiving Hartz IV notices via my neighbour — a clear violation, in my view, of the secrecy of correspondence.

My goal was to expose a broader pattern of systemic discrimination by involving additional authorities and ministries. I wanted to show how deeply this violence was embedded in the bureaucratic logic of German institutions. RPV, a private postal company that offered cheap delivery rates for public offices and freelancers, regularly subcontracted the “last mile” in Brandenburg villages to neighbours of the recipients. As a result, one person in the village often knew exactly what kind of letters their neighbours were getting.

And some envelopes revealed everything: Hartz IV notices, police summonses, letters from prosecutors or courts — all clearly marked. These were precisely the kinds of documents that could lead to stigmatisation. And the person delivering them was often the local gossip.

What looked like a logistical solution was, in truth, a breach of privacy and dignity. It institutionalised surveillance at village level — and no one seemed to care.

This led to my social status being made known in the neighbourhood every few weeks by the Job Centre, which for many of those affected was simply psychological terror. It was easy to prove that this was psychological terror, because decades earlier the Stasi,¹⁹⁷ the notorious secret service of the GDR, used the same method against disagreeable cultural workers. The contents of official letters were leaked within the neighbourhood to destabilise the social life of the addressee through the dissemination of stigmatising information – such as bankruptcy or homosexuality – via rumours. This practice echoes what was once taught under the term “decomposition” at the Juristische Hochschule (JHS) in Potsdam, where “operative psychology” served the GDR's secret police. Contemporary research clearly shows the psychological consequences of such tactics – most notably, post-traumatic stress disorder, which I, too, developed.

The effects were known. The causal structures behind this form of information leakage were known. Both Attorney General Apple and Minister Erdbeere, as well as numerous other authorities, were fully informed that the

¹⁹⁷ Wikipedia: In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the Ministry for State Security (MfS), also known as the State Security Service or Stasi for short, was both a secret service and a secret police force and functioned as an instrument of government of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED).

local practice of letter delivery in large parts of Brandenburg exposed people to poverty, stigmatisation, and long-term psychological trauma.

On 2 June 2022, I wrote to District Administrator Blackberry:

“The public prosecutor's office has been informed that the Elbe-Elster Job Centre is massively violating the secrecy of correspondence.”

The response, dated 3 June 2022, read:

“You will receive your letter dated 2 June 2022, received by us on 3 June 2022 (PE-NR. 533), for our approval. Kind regards, District Administrator Blackberry.”

The delivery method remained unchanged. In full awareness of the traumatising it caused, the administration continued as before. Blackberry appeared to believe that merely returning my letter constituted a sufficient reply. From today's perspective, these actions seem just as grotesque as they did then. Human lives meant nothing to these people.

On 4 June 2022, I asked the Minister of Justice to remove the President of the Social Court for covering up systemic classism and social racism in the context of Judge von K's actions. I did not expect it to happen – the point was documentation. Creating contradictions. Building interdependencies. In this way, I wove Brandenburg's institutions into a single net to render their complicity traceable.

On 7 June 2022, I received a letter from the Elbe-Elster district administration. Various authorities were now beginning to monitor one another. The administration asked me to provide more details regarding the lies spread by Mr H. from the immigration office.

I replied with a five-page letter to Mr N., a department head, in which I outlined why portraying an artist as a work refuser and denying him naturalisation after nearly 25 years is structurally classist:

“Obviously, Mr H. does not recognise what cultural workers do as work or as a contribution to society. He openly mocks me for it.”

For a moment, I attempted a personal tone – believing that even a newcomer might still be able to grasp how this was not just unjust, but socially racist. I described how this led to deep depression:

“Even worse than the rejection itself was the defamation: Mr H. claimed I was a danger to German society, recorded this in official files, and gave me no legal way to contest it. In the film, we show how Mr H. exercised classist-racist violence against me, while the District Administrator and the Minister of the Interior, Blueberry, looked on.”

On 15 June 2022, Mr N. replied:

“As a result of reading and classifying what you have presented, I have come to the conclusion that your accusations against Mr H. are not justified.”

Five pages of detailed explanation – answered with a single sentence that ignored every word I had written.

3

A key criterion of bullying, as outlined for instance in the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror (LIPT), includes attacks on communication, social relations, work quality and prospects, social standing, and physical or psychological well-being. All of these forms of violence were encapsulated in that single sentence from Mr N. He denied any dialogue, any engagement with the facts. He legitimised the refusal of naturalisation—a radical form of exclusion after 25 years of living and working in Germany. Like Mr H., he interpreted my artistic work as refusal to work, thereby devaluing it and attacking my social worth. He ignored the documented health consequences and simply prolonged the violence.

Months later, in a personal letter to me, Attorney General Apple officially exonerated Mr N. of any misconduct. In doing so, he protected not just Mr N., but ultimately himself—for he, too, had known that Mr H.'s statements were false. By shielding those who continued the injustice, Apple ensured that the focus never shifted to his own long-standing complicity. He had every motive to let the escalation run its course: the deeper the spiral, the harder it became to trace his original failure.

The problem I faced was this: the more the authorities reduced their responses to single sentences, the more difficult it became to make the violence legible. Most still equated violence with visible acts. Very few understood the structural dimension. Symbolic violence in particular—conceptualised by Pierre Bourdieu—is practically invisible. It works through language, social norms, values and cultural codes. It naturalises domination by embedding itself in everyday routines and institutional habits.

Symbolic violence unfolds when dominant groups present their perspective as universal while silencing others. Inequality is reproduced not through force, but through internalisation. Through habitus, people come to see their own marginalisation as inevitable, even justified. In this way, racism is masked—cloaked in what appears to be neutrality.

Symbolic violence maintains power without appearing violent.

Take, for instance, the assumption that only gainful employment constitutes a meaningful contribution to society. This premise erases other forms of labour—care, cultural, intellectual—and renders invisible the violence that this exclusion generates. Because the logic is one of “reward and punishment”, the coercion is concealed within an ideology of fairness.

But if one reads all my letters as a single document, this violence becomes visible. What also becomes visible is how difficult it was for me to react to it, how impossible it was to escape the logic. This third-order knowledge—a lived, embedded, systemic awareness—offers a crucial insight into the real-life consequences of poverty in Germany. It reveals the precarity not just of the unemployed, but of entire classes of cultural workers. It also exposes how severely underresearched these structural patterns still are.

The authorities refused to read. They refused to contextualise. They reduced everything to isolated technicalities, reframing structural crimes as administrative routine. They drew jurisdictional borders to avoid responsibility. This is how the simulation of governance becomes a simulation of accountability.

What remains is a hollow state, marked by apathy, opacity, and procedural gaslighting. No question receives an answer. No act has consequences. Institutions stand silent in the landscape like emptied-out statues.

It is the disappearance of democratic consciousness.

4

With regard to Judge von K. of the Social Court in Cottbus, the President of the Regional Social Court, Ms Pineapple, wrote to me on 16 June 2022:

“However, I have found no indication of any conduct that would warrant disciplinary action under supervisory law. In a letter dated 1 June 2022, which I have on file, the President of the Social Court in Cottbus dismissed your complaint regarding proceedings S 14 AS 1193/18, citing the applicable constitutional standards. I therefore reject your complaint against this decision.”¹⁹⁸

On 20 June 2022, I responded to Ms Pineapple in no uncertain terms: *“Your behaviour amounts to fraud. You reduce the facts to an audit framework by making classism as invisible as possible. You fail to address any of the content or evidence that clearly indicates class-based discrimination. Instead, you completely ignore the core accusation and deflect onto unrelated matters. In doing so, you apply a framework that filters out almost everything that contradicts the court's routines and dogmas. (...) You are obliged to engage with the presented evidence. You must confront the fact that the Social Court in Cottbus disregarded hundreds of pages of documentation on human rights violations in the context of Hartz IV and deliberately concealed classist violence in order to protect itself from legal scrutiny—at the expense of the victims. (...)”*

¹⁹⁸ Letter from President Pineapple dated 16 June 2022 / 3132E I - 32/22

Stop pretending not to understand, and reflect on what the courts under your jurisdiction are doing to people! Once again, I urge you to appeal to the Federal Constitutional Court.”

President Pineapple continued her tactic of deliberate ignorance and did not respond. Although the accusations were substantiated and later presented to Minister Erdbeere, nothing followed. As I said: nothing ever had consequences.

5

In a letter dated 21 June 2022, the Job Centre sent me two forms in response to my request for coverage of therapy costs and an increase in my Hartz IV rate due to high inflation. I was told to complete and sign these forms—otherwise, I would be sanctioned for “refusing to co-operate.” This was an open threat, even though they were fully aware of my mental health condition. The first form (MEB) was meant for chronically ill people requiring a special diet, to be filled out by doctors. Irrelevant to my situation. The second form (BB) referred to “the granting of an irrefutable special need.” Both forms were designed to reframe the problem in such a way that the Job Centre could give the impression of bureaucratic responsiveness—while in truth, they provided no viable path to support. Therapy would have made the violence visible. Instead, the authorities shifted attention away from their own responsibility by instrumentalising meaningless paperwork.

My request was simple: to cover the cost of therapy, specifically the travel expenses. Neither form enabled that. The BB form was useless unless one could provide exact future costs in advance—impossible when you first have to find a therapist and attend multiple intake sessions. Each journey would incur varying costs. When I asked how this could be handled, I received no response. For months.

The MEB form sent as a response to inflation was so absurd it made me furious. It effectively defined malnutrition purely in terms of BMI—your body had to be visibly wasting away before the state would acknowledge food insecurity. But at the same time, all across the country, people were queueing at food banks. Hartz IV didn’t cover both groceries and the electricity bill. People were starving. And in response to my political demand, I was handed a form that implied hunger is only a “need” once it becomes a diagnosable pathology.

This is a eugenic mindset. From the relevant historical literature:

“A mentally ill person costs 4 RM a day, a cripple 5.50 RM, a criminal 3.50 RM. (...) According to conservative estimates, there are 300,000 mentally ill people, epileptics, etc., in institutional care in Germany. — (b) At a rate of RM 4, how

*much do they cost in total per year? — (c) How many marriage loans of 1,000 RM could be granted from this money—without repayment?”*¹⁹⁹

The marriage loans in question were subsidies granted to “ethnically pure” and “healthy” German couples.

A German Job Centre was now distributing forms based on the same idea: that a person’s value—and thus their right to food—could be calculated scientifically, allowing a bureaucratic distinction between the “useful” and the “useless,” with the aim of minimising the costs of the latter.

These two forms were not a “service offer,” but rather a reframing trick rehearsed in bureaucratic schooling—a textbook case of administrative violence. Ethics researchers refer to this as *administrative evil*: bureaucracies produce suffering while hiding behind seemingly neutral routines. Formality serves as camouflage. As long as the affected person “voluntarily” fills something out, the issue appears resolved—even when the form itself is utterly inappropriate.

According to Michael Lipsky’s theory of *street-level bureaucracy*²⁰⁰, caseworkers deflect structural shortcomings back onto the claimant through the use of forms. “Incorrect” or impossible completion provides a pretext for punishment.

Johan Galtung’s concept²⁰¹ of *structural violence* describes exactly this dynamic: no fists are raised, but vital needs are denied. The violence is real—the weapon is paper.

Current research in social policy shows that such “activation” forms, particularly in the German SGB II system, are systematically used to deter claims. The bureaucratic burden (e.g. medical certificates, cost estimations) is designed to discourage applicants and reduce official benefit figures.²⁰²

The MEB and BB forms reframe my request in a way that allows the Job Centre to simulate helpfulness while structurally blocking any real solution. This is a textbook example of indirect administrative violence—legitimised through bureaucracy, masked by formalism, and executed via performative gestures of assistance.

6

¹⁹⁹ Adolf Dörner (ed.): *Mathematik in den Diensten der nationalsozialistischen Erziehung mit Anwendungsbeispielen aus Volkswirtschaft, Geländekunde, und Naturwissenschaft*. Frankfurt am Main 1935, p. 42 / Taken from the book *ausgesteuert-ausgegrenzt ... angeblich asozial / AG SPAK* / p. 112

²⁰⁰ Michael Lipsky (1980): *Street-Level Bureaucracy. Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*

²⁰¹ Galtung, Johan (1969). *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3.

²⁰² https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ajs4.371?utm_

The Job Centre's response to inflation, which was forcing people into hunger, was to bureaucratically dissect and devalue the health of the poor. One sentence in the MEB form stood out as particularly perverse:

"As a rule, if a diagnosis of malnutrition is confirmed, an additional need is to be affirmed. Exceptionally, this may not be the case if the phenotypic and aetiological criteria are met, but due to the particularities of the clinical picture, a more costly diet cannot actually be assumed – as may be the case, for instance, with anorexia nervosa."²⁰³

This sentence reveals a grotesque logic: even when malnutrition is medically diagnosed, it can be denied if no extra food costs can be proven. Starvation is acknowledged, but not compensated – unless it becomes expensive. In this twisted logic, only the economically costly are recognised as suffering.

So if a poor person vomited their food, the state would save on expensive nutrients. Anorexics, therefore, were not entitled to a healthy diet. They were cheaper to ignore. The logic behind this was – and remains – inhumane.

By sending me these forms, the Job Centre revealed its underlying pathology: the reduction of human beings to manageable input-output systems. This is precisely the kind of instrumental reason that Adorno and Horkheimer warned against – the same logic that paved the road to Auschwitz. Once a person's worth is calculated purely in economic terms, horror becomes rational.

The MEB and BB forms became a bureaucratic shield: Mr Speed received two forms. He did not fill them in. Therefore, like the anorexic, he could not be helped. The office, however, had fulfilled its obligations. Legally covered, ethically hollow. This is how thousands were left to starve silently across the country – their suffering hidden behind inflation charts and untouched reference rates.

Over time, I developed serious nutritional deficiencies – forced by economic necessity to continually reduce food intake. Yet the Job Centre responded to almost nothing. No appointments, no sanctions – just silence. I was a *dead man walking* in their system.

Early in the Hartz IV era, such cases were internally labelled as “artists”, as the well-known activist Inge Hannemann²⁰⁴ once told me. Not as citizens, not as contributors – but as waste categories of labour logic.

This was also evidence of considerable resentment towards cultural workers.

²⁰³ Page 3 of the MEB form / Instructions for issuing the certificate / for doctors.

²⁰⁴ Wikipedia: Inge Hannemann (born 21 April 1968 in Hamburg) is a German blogger, Hartz IV critic and former politician

I was traumatised – and precisely because I exposed massive human rights violations by German authorities. The response was repression: more bureaucracy, more silence, more pain.

For years, the Job Centre blocked access to therapy using two official forms – not as instruments of help, but as tools of concealment. Their goal was not to heal the illness they had caused, but to suppress any evidence of its origin.

Even the Brandenburg Ministry of Health under Green Minister Raspberry supported this denial. They refused to recognise that class-based discrimination within Hartz IV made people sick. Instead, they portrayed my refusal to complete irrelevant forms as resistance — knowing full well that these forms were structurally designed to fail. This illusion of “non-cooperation” was used to deflect from the reality: that the state itself was producing the illness.

Several state and federal ministries were aware of this deception. People were allowed to suffer, even die, in order to avoid acknowledging that systemic classism and anti-poor racism were making them ill. Estimates suggest that up to one third of affected individuals were at serious risk.

This did not only result in illness, but also in imprisonment, dependency, loss of citizenship rights. The authorities knew about the violence. They knew how to use bureaucracy to mask and excuse it. What we are dealing with is not just negligence — but deliberate institutional fraud, in which high-ranking civil servants were directly involved, and ministers indirectly complicit.

Attorney General Apple, Justice Minister Strawberry, Health Minister Raspberry, Interior Minister Blueberry, and Labour Minister Kiwi were informed. Former Ministers of Labour — including Ursula von der Leyen (now EU Commission President), Olaf Scholz (now Chancellor), and Minister Pear (SPD) — also presided over the policy framework in question.

The consequences for those affected were devastating. But because public discourse demanded “serious consequences” for the poor, these consequences were rendered invisible through symbolic violence.

7

On 24 June 2022, in a state of health breakdown and growing despair, I wrote to the head of the Job Centre, Ms S., after once again receiving a negative letter from her office — this time again delivered through my neighbour, which I had repeatedly denounced as a breach of postal confidentiality. I wrote:

“The letter from your office once again borders on cognitive disorder and institutional irresponsibility. I am left speechless. It is beyond comprehension that such letters are sent out — potentially also to people suffering from

psychosis — despite the foreseeable worsening of their condition. Please be advised that this inhumane practice will be documented and addressed through the media.

Your behaviour is completely unacceptable.

For me personally, your letter constitutes a form of re-traumatisation, with serious consequences for my mental and physical health. What your authority effectively expresses once again is the implication that I, as a person, am such filth that I have to humiliate myself just to receive the bare minimum necessary to survive.

I cannot and will not comply with this insanity. For medical reasons and in order to prevent a further severe depressive episode, I must refuse to do so.”²⁰⁵

The phrase “*cognitive disorder*” was intended as a neutral description from my perspective as an autistic person, referring to the systemic irrationality and loss of reality contact within the administrative apparatus. It was later misread as a personal insult and used as the basis for legal action against me — a telling example of how autistic forms of communication are often pathologised when they deviate from neurotypical emotional codes.

The Job Centre did not help me escape from this traumatic situation — instead, it filed criminal charges against me. The head of the Job Centre was fully aware that such a move would further worsen my already fragile health — and she did it anyway, perhaps even *because* of it. She knew that my statements were made in the context of a trauma-induced breakdown, and she knew that she had actively denied me access to therapy and support.

Labour Minister Kiwi had been informed — and, as usual, did not respond. From the authorities' perspective, however, everything appeared “normal”: Forms had been sent. They had not been returned. This is exactly what Pierre Bourdieu described as symbolic violence — violence that hides behind formality while reproducing social exclusion.

In the book “*ausgesteuert, ausgegrenzt (...) angeblich asozial*”, edited by Anne Allex and Dietrich Kalkan, a quote from *Cluster* by Geppert²⁰⁶ and Hartmann gives chilling insight into the mindset behind case management in Hartz IV administration:

“To this end, he (Hartmann) refers to the guidelines on case management (Hartz IV) in North Rhine-Westphalia, which state: ‘The task of case managers is to rule out the possibility of those seeking help settling in or coming to terms with their situation. In the knowledge that the offers are usually not so tempting, a certain

²⁰⁵ Letter to the head of the job centre dated 24.6.2022

²⁰⁶ Cluster: Die neue Etappe des Kapitalismus by Gerald Geppert and Detlef Hartmann / Association A

amount of pressure and coercion should get people moving. People defend their marginalised life contexts and their associated survival strategies. Integrated help for work should therefore work out a new life plan with the people.’ (p. 69)
In addition to the case diagnosis, the operational steps also include analysing the “client ‘s” resistance and knowledge. (p. 71)

And at the end, there is the pressure of sanctions if the client does not utilise their options despite intensive clarification. “The threat of annihilation, even starvation, precarisation, declassification and exclusion into superfluosity are the extreme pole of coercive means to inflict subjectivity.’ (p. 23)”

This fundamental attitude — “obey, work, or be punished” — was designed to push people to the brink until they broke down in a way that could be interpreted as “socially inappropriate behaviour”, at which point sanctions could be legally imposed. In my case, however, classic sanctions were no longer applicable: I had become too ill to be “activated”. So the system turned to criminalisation — a slow procedural way to destroy me. This would ultimately lead to criminal proceedings against me — a topic I explore in detail elsewhere.

After 10 years of unpaid but highly productive artistic work, the German state wanted to put me in prison — simply for saying that poverty makes people sick, and that the state is directly responsible. That this could even happen — while multiple ministers looked on — reveals the complete collapse of democratic accountability.

My work shows in painful clarity how the simple truth — that this bureaucratic violence makes people sick — is still politically taboo. And that this taboo produces an evasive choreography of denial and repression: ministries, courts, public prosecutors, all focused not on remedying the injustice, but on destroying the person who uncovers it.

The deeper I got to the root of the scandal, the more ministers and judges became afraid for their own positions. And the more brutal and absurd their attempts to silence me became. We must conclude: the bigger the taboo, the greater the lies and violence a state is willing to inflict to avoid exposure.

In such a system, neither the rule of law nor institutional roles offer protection — what matters is the ethical maturity of the individuals involved. Without that, democracy becomes hollow.

The obvious was never addressed: an artist, impoverished by his decades-long contribution to society, poses a fundamental ethical question of justice. But civil servants, caught in powerless roles, responded not with responsibility — but with a will to destroy.

This cannot be allowed to continue.

That I, as an autistic person with autistic integrity, had no real way out, is another layer of this tragedy.

Simulations kill. Stop simulation.

8

On 6 July 2022, I received an envelope from District Administrator Blackberry containing two of my own letters, which I had previously sent to him. Both letters were unopened. Each envelope bore a Post-it note with the handwritten message: “Consignment unwanted”.

These letters were requests for help, containing descriptions of massive grievances that, from a legal standpoint, would have required the district administrator to act. Instead, they were returned unread. This behaviour was already known to the public prosecutor’s office from multiple letters. Attorney General Apple was also aware of it.

On the advice of Data Protection Commissioner Dagmar Hartge, I subsequently attempted to compel the district administrator to disclose the sources upon which he allegedly based his claim that I was a “refuser of labour”. I knew he would not be able to provide any such evidence — because none existed. As expected, he continued to either return my letters unopened or simply ignored them altogether.

Meanwhile, in a letter dated 13 July 2022, the Cottbus public prosecutor's office responded to the RPV letter scandal as follows:

“In your complaint, you accuse those responsible at the Elbe-Elster Job Centre of sending mail to you in such a way that the sender's address was visible from the outside. Since this necessarily means that all deliverers — not only so-called private carriers but all relevant postal workers — become aware of both the sender's and the recipient's address, you believe that this constitutes a violation of postal secrecy under Section 206 of the German Criminal Code (StGB). However, this is not the case.”²⁰⁷

The public prosecutor thus explicitly refused to recognise that socially stigmatising sender information, clearly visible on the outside of official correspondence, constitutes a violation of privacy — even though it enables systematic breaches of confidentiality in small communities. The prosecutor reduced the matter to a technical formality, thereby shielding structural abuse under the guise of routine.

This letter once again began with a distortion of the context and a strategic reframing. The issue was never about general postal workers, but specifically

²⁰⁷ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 13 June 2022 / 1417 Ujs 16728/22

about neighbours of the recipients. One might think that this would not be too difficult to grasp.

“The fact that a sender's address must be provided for postal items is simply a postal necessity, as otherwise, for example, if a postal item cannot be delivered, it could not be returned to the sender and the sender would not be informed that it could not be delivered.”

Even the basic function of a return address was explained in detail — as if the issue had ever been about whether addresses are printed on envelopes. This rhetorical sidestep served one purpose: to obscure the actual violation. What we learn here is not the law, but how prosecutors deploy reframing to empty grievances of their content.

“The disclosure of sender and recipient addresses by postal staff does not constitute a violation of § 206 of the German Criminal Code. [...] The fact that postal delivery staff may have access to this information in the course of their duties does not in itself constitute a criminal offence. [...] A violation of the secrecy of correspondence requires concrete evidence that such information has in fact been disclosed without authorisation.”

The Cottbus public prosecutor's office simply ignored the core of the complaint: The Job Centre routinely handed Hartz IV notices to a neighbour of the recipient, thereby exposing their social status to a member of their immediate environment. Whether or not that neighbour passed on the information was beside the point. She had already absorbed it.

To reclassify the neighbour as merely a “private postal deliverer” was a grotesque distortion of reality. The privacy breach lay not in some later act of gossip, but in the Job Centre's deliberate use of personal neighbours as letter carriers for sensitive, stigmatising state communications. A neighbour does not become a stranger simply by donning a mailbag.

The prosecutor's deliberate confusion of institutional role and private proximity served to downplay the damage. The crime was not that the neighbour passed something on — that wasn't provable — but that the Job Centre actively enabled her to know and potentially weaponise that knowledge.

They knew what they were doing — and they knew the psychological consequences. But since this method of delivery saved money, no one wanted to confront the underlying violence. Instead, they leaned on legalistic obfuscation: the case was reduced to the banal question of whether postal employees can see an address — a red herring of the most cynical kind.

“You have expressly stated that you do not wish to accuse your neighbour. Your complaint therefore provides no evidence that any postal worker violated § 206 StGB. For outsiders, the sealed envelope revealed only sender and recipient

addresses. There is therefore no basis for assuming a breach of confidentiality by Job Centre staff.”

That statement was objectively false.

On 15 June 2022, I responded to this absurd letter and submitted a formal complaint. The matter was subsequently passed on to the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor’s office. By now it had become too politically explosive. Nobody wanted to issue a response that could later be quoted. Instead, taxpayers financed lengthy, evasive letters that wandered off-topic.

But the truth was simple: My neighbour could not split herself into two — one half a neutral deliverer, the other a social acquaintance. She remained a neighbour. And the Job Centre’s act of giving her my Hartz IV notification — regardless of her intention — constituted a violation of my privacy.

The legal fiction constructed by the prosecution may have held up on paper — but it did not hold up in reality. My pain, unlike their rhetoric, was real. Simulation replaces responsibility with protocol. But protocol never suffered. I did.

9

On 11 August 2022, I again received the same two forms from the Job Centre, now accompanied by the explicit threat that my benefits would be cut if I continued to refuse to complete and sign them. The intention was clear: blackmail. As before with the District Administrator, I was being forced to recognise the official narrative — either I accepted their interpretation of reality, or I would go hungry and be subjected to even more violence.

The letter I had previously sent, which had triggered criminal charges against me, was not mentioned at all. It was clear they expected me to drop the charges and instead submit to their bureaucratic frame. The Job Centre, under the direction of Ms S., ignored the documented psychological violence of Hartz IV, which had been substantiated by studies I had submitted, and used administrative formalism as a cover for further harm.

In response, I filed a 44-page statement of claim on 13 August 2022 with the Social Court of Cottbus, once again outlining the bias of Judge von K., whom I requested to be removed from my case. Copies were sent to Labour Minister Kiwi (BMAS) and Justice Minister Erdbeere.

In my letter to the new presiding judge, I wrote:

“There are two central issues. First: as long as the Hartz IV system refuses to acknowledge that it causes illness, affected individuals cannot get well. Therapy becomes almost impossible under continued state terror. You cannot heal trauma while it is still ongoing.

Therefore, I am taking legal action against the Job Centre and the court itself, as they are directly responsible for illness and suffering. The court must recognise the classist nature of Hartz IV — or it will itself become part of the mechanism that makes people ill. Second: the Hartz IV rate is not sufficient for a healthy life. We are now facing inflation that is eight times higher than what was originally calculated into the rate. As Professor Sabine Pfeffer (FAU Erlangen) put it: 'A healthy diet with Hartz IV is not possible.'"

The judge was also made aware of the IAB research report (2017), commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Labour, which noted the rising number of mentally ill individuals within the Hartz IV system:

"Eleven interviewees cited varying estimates of mentally ill clients — from 10% up to 80%. [...] 'I have a concentrated number of clients with disabilities, and mental illness is not rare.' [01 03 Case manager]"

Other studies estimate that around 60% of recipients within Hartz IV are mentally ill.

The same report stated:

"Most interviewees agree — subjectively — that the share of mentally ill benefit recipients in SGB II has risen in recent years. Some link this to the improving labour market, as 'fit' individuals are placed more quickly, leaving behind the 'bottom layer' [02, 06 health authority]. 'Long trajectories, some with over ten years of illness, people who are very, very impaired. We're seeing that more and more now. At first, we got cases where you didn't know how the labour market would respond. Those with better chances have been filtered out. What's left now is the bottom.' [07 06 Medical Service]"

The report also noted a widely held belief among staff that long-term unemployment itself contributes to psychological decline:

"Many of those affected have been receiving SGB II for a very long time. And I realise that this alone — being on SGB II — makes people ill. Because work is [...] important for everyone. It gives you self-affirmation. And that's something these people simply don't have anymore." [06 03 Case manager]"²⁰⁸

These inhumane statements, taken from a study commissioned by the BMAS itself — and thus available to both Minister Pair and Minister Kiwi — reveal two things: First, it was known that mental illness was a growing problem within the system. Second, there were clear indications that the Hartz IV system itself was making people ill. However, this was usually reframed: instead of recognising the system as the source of suffering, the narrative suggested that unemployment in the abstract led to stigma and devaluation.

²⁰⁸ IAB Research Report 2017/ p. 88

But it was Hartz IV that actively produced this stigma, this devaluation, and the constant threat.

One of the self-serving myths repeated by many civil servants in the Hartz IV system was that they were not the cause of the problem — “poverty” was. But poverty alone is not the same as socially manufactured psychological terror, which in this case was inseparably tied to stigmatising the poor. That was the business of the Job Centres and of right-wing populist politics.

After WWII, many people experienced poverty — but they also experienced solidarity. In today’s Europe, apart from acute hunger or cold, poverty itself is no longer the primary problem, but rather the stigma attached to it. This is especially true in welfare states. The idea that “labour” grants value to a person is a modern invention — one that emerged with industrialisation. Hegel once spoke of self-determined labour giving rise to dignity. This idea was later reinterpreted into a moral commandment: that work equals value — a distortion which Marx critiqued as alienation. Today, the same logic is weaponised by institutions like the Job Centres. If someone cannot work, their entire existence is rendered worthless. Kant would likely write about Job Centres with the same indignation I do.

But work does not inherently define self-worth. Plenty of workers feel worthless despite having jobs. It is not work, but the social framing of certain jobs as “valuable” that determines who is granted dignity. This warped attribution of value does not assess contribution; it reproduces exclusion.

The confusion between the value of a person and their ability to engage in gainful employment is yet another lie. It allows the state to portray the devaluation of the poor as a humanitarian gesture. “We only want to help,” they say. “That’s why we punish you.” This is classic double bind logic. “Rise from the dregs — or suffer.” Thus, illness is blamed not on systemic violence, but on the poor themselves, who “refuse to work.” This logic is grotesquely reminiscent of Nazi ideology, which also viewed mental illness as a sign of inferiority. It was baked into the system.

On page 89 of the study, one team leader states:

“I don't know how many [mentally ill] there really are. I'm cautious. It's like with refugees. Everyone has the impression that the whole country is full of refugees. That's nonsense. [...] It's the same with the mentally ill. You're impressed at first, you're preoccupied, and then it's easy to say: yes, we have sooo many. But then, when you look more closely, you realise: not really. So I... can't grasp the numbers.” [08 01 Team leader]

Of course they couldn't grasp the numbers — because they were never properly recorded. The system didn't want to know. Right-wing agitators like

Grape or Plum (CDU) wouldn't have been able to spin their stories about "work refusers" if official numbers showed that Hartz IV made people sick. Caseworkers reported rising numbers of mentally ill claimants, while psychological services downplayed the issue — a classic conflict of interest. Exposing the problem would've raised too many questions. Clarification was not politically desirable. That's why Minister Kiwi's ministry ignored this study.

The language used in this study is eerily reminiscent of welfare institutions during the Nazi era. We see the same covert violence.

On page 90, the study notes:

"Case management professionals reported that their clients often had multiple limitations, with mental illness being just one of many placement barriers. These people end up in SGB II. You can see it as a kind of reception centre." [02 06 Health dept.]

Elsewhere:

"The mentally ill were broadly described as lacking motivation, withdrawn, resigned, and unfit for the labour market. Some professionals said the mentally ill use their condition 'like a shield.' Integration into work was not the goal — mere stabilisation was." (p. 91-92)

Minister Kiwi knew — and so did Pair before him — that mentally ill people were treated as fakers. People harmed by Hartz IV were recast as "refusers," stigmatised anew. Their illnesses, often caused by the system, were pathologised again.

This was a government study. If you read it, you knew: this was systemic violence. And it was everywhere.

On page 93, another caseworker describes the mentally ill:

"You see them come in, slumped over. Sometimes they say nothing. You can sit for an hour without a word. Others — well — they're, let's say, 'behaviourally noticeable.' Sudden mood swings. They explode if you say the wrong thing." [04 02 Case manager]

On page 94:

"Professionals said they try to build a relationship of trust so they can talk openly about behaviours that suggest mental illness."

But this "trust" was instrumentalised, because the goal was never care — it was performance maximisation. The systemic lie — that the poor are to blame for their condition — remained unchallenged and continued to do harm.

This produced inauthentic relationships. Mentally unstable clients, or just sensitive ones, reacted to the double messages: *"We care about you, but you're a worthless jobless person we have to discipline."*

The goal of placement — at all costs — remained untouched. Even under “citizen’s income,” the system reverted to Hartz IV logic within weeks.

These smiling lies were a form of institutionalised bullying. Speaking out, as I did, meant punishment.

The study also categorised staff attitudes. One type: “Negative view of mentally ill recipients.” A quote from page 99:

“Today I had a client. At the first meeting, a year and a half ago, I thought: what a lazy bastard. He’s been home for years, built his little system. Didn’t want to do anything. Didn’t even ask myself: can he still work?” [08 04 Employment Agency]

The ministry knew that many caseworkers mistreated the mentally ill. The study said a third were overwhelmed; the rest had “strategies” that still often harmed clients. But the real problem was the system’s obsession with labour market reintegration, which ignored human complexity.

No one admitted the basic truth: that gainful employment is a poor proxy for contribution in a human society. People were excluded not because they were defective, but because they couldn’t be exploited for profit. They threatened the illusion of fairness in capitalism — much like the Global South is kept on the periphery.

What capitalism demands is functionality — reduction to one aspect of being. That alone is what gets rewarded. Everything else is discarded. This makes people sick.

Mentally ill people need care, respect, ethical treatment, and an understanding of ecosystems of vulnerability. Job Centres understood none of this. They tried to use force to repair the damage they themselves caused.

As one team leader put it:

“The problem with mental illness is that we don’t really recognise it. And if we don’t recognise it, we obviously can’t support it.” [07 01 Team leader, p. 104]

That Freudian slip says everything.

On p. 105, a caseworker notes:

“A lot of people don’t have a diagnosis — they say the world is crazy, not them. They don’t tell me about their illness. Why should they?”

On p. 128:

“One of our doctors says: ‘This guy can’t do anything.’ Another doctor — maybe more important — says: ‘Sure he can.’ Then I have to take the client back. I say: but you can work, because that doctor outranks the other one. It’s nuts.” [03 02 Case manager]

Professionals were emotionally overwhelmed. They knew they were failing. But the ideology of performance, and the racist logic behind it, made it impossible to act differently.

Minister Kiwi — and before him, Minister Pair — knew all of this. But instead of acting, they intensified the violence, and destroyed lives.

A final problem: most Job Centre employees sincerely believe they are helpers — not perpetrators. On p. 136:

“A classic example is the job placement programme. Some clients ‘blossom,’ they get structure, someone looking after them — great. But others? They see it as a threat. They fall into depression because the Job Centre expects something.” [08 01 Team leader]

They failed to see that every intervention was preceded by humiliation and structural insult. The correct, ethical response to such coercion is resistance.

People with depression, autism, trauma, or simply human dignity cannot accept being devalued. Refusing to submit to symbolic violence is healthy. The double bind of Job Centres destroys people — whether or not they are already ill.

The Hartz IV system was rebranded as a helping hand. It remained a site of covert structural violence. Resisting it is morally right.

Most media outlets — *Der Spiegel*, the *F.A.Z.* — actively promoted hate speech against the poor. So did “fake institutes” like the IAB. A 2024 IAB study noted a 4% drop in job uptake after sanctions were lifted under Bürgergeld. Instead of asking what benefits this brought, it was spun as a scandal.

But using 4% to legitimise hate is outrageous. The abolition of slavery also caused economic losses. Does that justify reinstating slavery? And yet the *F.A.Z.* ran:

*“IS WORK STILL WORTHWHILE? Citizen's income slows entry into work.”*²⁰⁹
Der Spiegel ran:

*“Minister Kiwi — our Minister for Labour Obstruction.”*²¹⁰

This was social-racist propaganda. Based on weak data, used to justify renewed violence against the poor. The FDP²¹¹ and others followed suit.

“Scientificity” was once again misused to serve ideology.

The Social Court was informed of all this. My statement — *“Hartz IV makes people ill”* — was well-founded. And so was my claim that Job Centres actively covered up violence against those who were already suffering.

²⁰⁹ F.A.Z. / Dietrich Creutzburg / <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/mehr-wirtschaft/neue-studie-zum-buergergeld-bestaetigt-zweifel-lohnt-sich-arbeit-noch-19704468.html>

²¹⁰ Spiegel Online / Alexander Neubacher / <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/buergergeld-hubertus-Kiwi-unser-arbeitsbehinderungs-minister-kolumne-a-f6a07262-6801-413a-86a9-48ef44738414>

²¹¹ F.A.Z. / Dietrich Creutzburg / <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/mehr-wirtschaft/fdp-fordert-von-der-ampel-eine-korrektur-des-buergergelds-19707619.html>

On 19 August 2022, I wrote to the head of the Job Centre, Ms S.:

“I repeat once again: I would like to know whether you will cover the travel costs to several therapists, including initial consultations and pre-therapy counselling sessions. These costs are not covered by health insurance.”

Ms S. did not answer this question. Instead, she continued to insist that I fill in the two pointless forms — knowing full well that she was actively preventing therapy and damaging my health. She placed bureaucracy above a human being’s well-being.

In a letter dated 26 and 27 August 2022²¹², I informed both the Public Prosecutor General’s Office and the Cottbus Public Prosecutor’s Office that I had once again received mail via RPV — in other words, that another Hartz IV notice had been served via my neighbour.

I wrote to Ms S. on 26 August:

“You are simply continuing the psychological terror in order to cover up your own guilt. We will make all of this public.”

Shortly afterwards, I received the first of four summonses to appear at the police station — triggered by charges of insult and coercion filed by the Job Centre. My “offence”: demanding that they acknowledge the simple truth — that Hartz IV makes people ill.

I attempted once more to explain the situation in a twelve-page letter to the Cottbus Public Prosecutor’s Office dated 31 August 2022. I wrote in detail about the suffering I had endured and described the deeper context of artistic freedom, class-based discrimination, and the structural violence of the Hartz IV system. I hoped that this would be the end of it.

Instead, in a letter dated 29 August 2022, the Public Prosecutor General’s Office responded to the RPV scandal. Prosecutor B. wrote:

“Sending letters with the sender address of the Elbe-Elster Job Centre via a delivery service that commissions private individuals under labour law to deliver them does not constitute a criminal offence. Your expressed dissatisfaction with the delivery of letters by your neighbour, who was commissioned to deliver them, likewise does not constitute a criminal offence.”²¹³

Knowingly making people ill was therefore not considered a criminal offence. The Public Prosecutor General’s Office continued its policy of reframing and falsehoods, despite being fully aware that this practice led to severe traumatisation — across Brandenburg.

²¹² AZ 1417 Ujs 16718/22 A

²¹³ Letter from the Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General’s Office dated 29 August 2022 / 54 Zs 595/22

While the delivery of mail was formally not a crime, the systematic acceptance of harm to those affected was never addressed as one — though it should have been.

As a result, I contacted Attorney General Apple again on 2 September 2022, writing:

“I would like to see you, Mr Apple, if I were to send your neighbours a weekly letter containing your account balance or details of your sex life. That is the level of public humiliation we are talking about here.”

On 8 September 2022, I wrote the following to Judge S.:

“A criminal complaint will be filed with the public prosecutor’s office against Ms B. (caseworker at the Job Centre) for fraud resulting in bodily harm. She is lying to the court by withholding essential facts and, after the Job Centre has actively made me ill through years of psychological terror, she is now trying to blame the victim and divert attention from the basic preconditions necessary for therapy.”

Ms B. had submitted categorical misrepresentations to the court to frame the administrative actions as lawful — through an under-complex and manipulative account.

Because of this letter — in which I explained in detail how the Job Centre was driving me into madness by repeatedly sending the same two forms — I was reported to the police again, this time for defamation.

On 14 September 2022, I submitted several studies to Judge S. and wrote:

“Enclosed is the newly published study on the consequences of sanctions and generalised threat — i.e. the culture of continuous fear-mongering in Hartz IV. These studies clearly show the health impact and confirm what I have already stated.”

Nevertheless, the public prosecutor’s office continued to pursue me on charges of defamation, simply because I had claimed that Hartz IV made people ill — and because I linked this to specific misconduct by caseworkers.

I then received a letter from the Public Prosecutor General’s Office on 15 September 2022, in which Senior Public Prosecutor M. wrote to me regarding the RPV scandal:

“In response to your aforementioned submission, which you addressed to the Public Prosecutor General — and which I interpret as an objection to the

decision dated 29 August 2022 — I have once again thoroughly reviewed the matter. However, I see no grounds to alter the decision."²¹⁴

Once again, this meant that Attorney General Apple was aware that possibly hundreds of people in Brandenburg were being subjected to stigmatisation measures similar to those carried out by the Stasi. Apple also knew that this had the potential to massively traumatise people. He knew that the Job Centre continued to do this anyway. He simply stood by and watched.

12

On the same day, I received the order from Judge S.: *"The application for a temporary injunction to oblige the defendant to cover additional needs for costly food and expenses for medication and travel costs for visits to the doctor as well as childcare costs is rejected."*²¹⁵

As if in a surreal film, the judge argued for pages on the subject of special dietary requirements for sick people — an issue that was never actually raised. She simply and doggedly followed the absurd logic of the two forms and the Job Centre's cover-up strategy. She wrote:

"Because of the content of his numerous letters, which do not contain any documentary evidence of the amount of the requested additional requirement and which repeatedly contain the accusation of classism in Hartz IV, reference is made to the applicant's pleadings submitted to the court file."

She did not address the issue of classism at all, nor did she engage with the extensive studies I had submitted — hundreds of pages that were hard to ignore as evidence. It was clear she had simply not read any of them. The fact that I could not quantify the costs in advance, as I had explained repeatedly, was twisted into being my own fault. The months-long refusal of the Job Centre to answer my questions on this was ignored entirely.

I did not have the money to see a therapist. Which diagnosis, which treatment path, which exact costs — all of this could not be clarified in advance. It was therefore necessary to state that expenses would be reimbursed retrospectively, upon submission of receipts — and could only be so.

Instead, the judge wrote eleven pages to argue why the Job Centre was right to deny me therapy — simply because I had not filled in the two forms. That is a deliberate act of violence, a wilful denial of assistance. I tried to explain all this to the judge, but it didn't matter. The only thing that seemed to count was

²¹⁴ Letter from the Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General's Office dated 15 September 2022 / 54 Zs 595/22

²¹⁵ Decision of the Cottbus Social Court dated 15 September 2022 / Ref: S 22 AS 612/222 ER

confirming that everything the Job Centre did was correct — because everything the court did was per definition correct.

She added:

“As far as the applicant defames this as ‘terror’ on the part of the defendant and persistently demands the criminal prosecution of the responsible employees, such allegations are legally unfounded.”

With this, Judge S. provided the legal justification for years of therapy being withheld from me as an autistic person — while the institutional terror continued. Both the judge and the Job Centre knew that my health would continue to deteriorate as a result. They did it anyway — to cover up massive misconduct.

By blocking me from obtaining expert assessments, by refusing to reimburse travel costs, by expecting me to legitimise their narrative through signatures and the filling out of forms, they enacted a textbook case of victim blaming at the expense of my health.

The judge apparently chose to believe the resentment embedded in my Job Centre file — resentment that Attorney General Apple had been aware of for years, and nothing had been done. The judge covered up the obvious fraud committed by the Job Centre so that, as a social judge, she would not have to question herself — after having supported the system for years. They covered for each other.

I wrote to the President of the Social Court in Cottbus:

“I am informing you that judges in your court have deliberately ignored research findings they were unable to refute, and appear to have become entangled in a conflict of interest, which they attempted to resolve at the expense of Hartz IV recipients by perverting the law.”²¹⁶

After the ruling, I wrote to the head of the Job Centre, Ms S.: *“We now have the concrete situation that therapy is impossible for me until you, as the Job Centre, admit your complicity in my illness and stop exerting direct or indirect pressure on me.”²¹⁷*

The head of the Elbe-Elster Job Centre, however, as would later become increasingly clear, not only obstructed access to therapeutic treatment but actively escalated the violence by feeding the police with ever more falsehoods about me. It was the only way she could continue covering up the violence.

All of this shows how Speed’s work cut deeper and deeper into the systemic conditions — and, in doing so, exposed ever more layers of violence. One

²¹⁶ Letter to the President of the Cottbus Social Court dated 16 September 2022

²¹⁷ Letter to Ms S. from the Elbe-Elster job centre dated 16.9.2022

categorisation lie followed the next within the bureaucracy. Instead of simply acknowledging the obvious — that classism and social racism within the Job Centres make people ill, which is a scientifically verifiable fact — they chose to turn against me.

That such things happen in one office or another may appear tragically “normal” in this world. But the fact that the entire Brandenburg judiciary, up to and including government ministers, has been involved in this for years is deeply alarming. It makes brutally clear why we must confront these structures — through work.

Through a kind of work that, apparently, is forbidden.

13

I was now receiving an increasing number of dismissal notices from public prosecutors regarding criminal complaints that I had never actually filed. The new strategy of the authorities was evidently to dissect my submissions and remove them from their context — so that the full extent of the horror would remain invisible.

Parts of my letters were sent to various offices and authorities, fragmented and decontextualised. No one could grasp the actual problem, because the whole had been cut into pieces. I was not only denied relational coherence — I was systematically disassembled.

My work was no longer perceived as the unified body of an increasingly complex case, but merely as disjointed fragments, as stray scraps of letters that reappeared somewhere else — arbitrarily processed, cursorily replied to, and spat back out by the apparatus, now dispersed across Germany.

What emerged was a state of advanced institutional schizophrenia. The bureaucracy had lost the ability to organise information in terms of meaning and relevance. Trivialities were inflated, while crucial evidence vanished from view. Everything served to suppress painful truths that had long since been dissociated.

They clung with all their might to the story that Hartz IV was helping the poor — while fully aware that they were destroying people whose only failure was to have become poor through no fault of their own.

In a letter dated 27 September 2022, the Berlin public prosecutor’s office informed me that it had dropped the investigation against Wolfgang-Hubertus Ernst Ulrich Kiwi, the Minister of Labour. No explanation was given as to the context or reasons. Around the same time, the public prosecutor’s office in

Nuremberg-Fürth informed me that it had also closed the investigation against the head of the Federal Employment Agency, Detlef Scheele.²¹⁸

For years, I have been trapped in a room without an answer. Nothing was responded to — not even though we are supposedly living in one of the most advanced constitutional states in the world.

On 10 November 2022, the Ministry of Justice wrote: *“I ask for your understanding that I will only respond to further letters from you in this matter if they contain new facts.”*

The irony is that the facts were never addressed to begin with. The bureaucratic apparatus simulated responsiveness — giving the appearance that everything had already been reviewed — when in reality, nothing had ever been dealt with. This simulation served to disqualify my renewed submissions as inadmissible.

A public prosecutor from Cottbus wrote to me on 11 November 2022: *“In particular, despite your very extensive pleadings, you have not substantiated the alleged acts of obstruction of justice against Judge von K., the head of the Job Centre Ms S., and the district administrator with anything concrete or verifiable. In any case, your expressions of displeasure and judgemental statements do not justify a corresponding initial suspicion.”*²¹⁹

The prosecutors thus created a rhetorical loop: nothing could be verified because no one would investigate, and no one would investigate because “nothing had been verified”. This circular logic was not a flaw — it was the method. And it exemplifies how institutional simulation becomes a tool of erasure.

It had become impossible to understand why letters without attachments, and criminal complaints lacking the hundreds of pages of evidence they referenced, disappeared at the public prosecutor's office — or were answered only partially, out of context, and stripped of any meaning.

Because symbolic violence was categorically denied, the underlying racism remained unacknowledged. Each act of institutional violence was treated in isolation, detached from the political conditions that had produced it — and always interpreted through the perpetrator's logic.

²¹⁸ 214 Js 28293/22 from 19.10.2022

²¹⁹ 1360 Jas 30829/22

That I was summoned to the police for the fourth time on 22 November 2022 — once again for allegedly threatening and insulting individuals — rendered the entire situation grotesque.

The authorities were evidently capable of isolating single sentences from my correspondence which they claimed violated the personal honour of a caseworker, yet entirely unable to recognise the systemic inhumanity of Hartz IV legislation or the massive structural violence enacted daily by Job Centres. Once again, I submitted a ten-page essay to the police on Hartz IV and classism, hoping to resolve the issue. But the more I wrote, the more suspicious I became in their logic. The more nuanced and individualised the explanation of my situation became, the less credible it appeared to officials trained in stereotypes.

A credibility gap emerged from the fact that the simulation of state rationality simply could not comprehend a lived experience like mine: a complex lifeworld in which I had, for over 20 years, researched the interconnections between labour, poverty, economy and ecosystems — all while working unpaid, 40 hours a week. This was utterly foreign to the institutionalised imagination of the bureaucracy.

Consequently, my statements were reflexively dismissed and overwritten by racist narratives.

Anyone unwilling to recognise the social racism embedded in the Hartz IV system also failed to grasp why the logic of Job Centres necessarily produced such racism — and thus, violence. The violence of official actions remained invisible precisely because it was reformatted into what appeared to be legitimate punishment for alleged misconduct that had never occurred.

The authorities always deduced guilt from punishment — and for them, that was the end of the matter.

Take-away box — Chapter: “Smash What Smashes You”

Creative Mismatch 2.0

Building on Martin Luther King’s concept of “creative maladjustment,” Speed calls for a conscious refusal of destructive norms — not as marginal protest, but as a life-preserving obligation to body and psyche.

Strategic Micro-Sabotage

Rather than heroic uprisings, the chapter explores practical techniques of everyday disruption — delay, over-compliance, form reinterpretation — that overload exploitative systems from within. “Soft sabotage” becomes the most effective weapon of the precarious.

Affordance Reframing

Objects, spaces, and legal texts always offer more potential than intended. By detecting and twisting these latent affordances, autistic actors short-circuit the script of domination.

From Individual Burnout to Collective Emergence

“Breaking” targets not people, but the structures that corrode health and relationships. In the MNO sense, relinquishing obsolete objects (indimergence) releases energy for new networks of solidarity and emergence.

Ethics of Proportionality

Radical resistance is never an end in itself: only that which is already destructive is dismantled. This approach situates itself between militancy-critical theory (Butler) and anti-colonial self-defence (Fanon).

Guiding Principle

“System maintenance begins with the removal of toxic modules.” Only through the active dismantling of dysfunctional rules, institutions, and internalised self-images can a truly relational working environment emerge. Everyone has a role to play in the dismantling process.

Act of Violence 9: We Deny Everything

1

From 12 August, I also began to approach the Ministry of Health in Brandenburg. Here too, the aim was to counter the omnipotent network with active relationship work. I wrote to the head of the LAVG, who is responsible for public health:

“Against this background, hundreds of documents were submitted to the Job Centre last summer showing that Hartz IV was making people ill. The Job Centre was asked to acknowledge this, as healing is otherwise impossible and my health will continue to deteriorate. (...) As the official responsible for health in Brandenburg, you are therefore now publicly requested to acknowledge in writing that Hartz IV is making people ill and to put an immediate end to the situation. Further details can be sent on request, including comprehensive witness statements regarding the incidents. (...) People with mental illness in particular are being subjected to repeated re-traumatisation. We are talking here about acts of revenge by officials against poor people that leave them speechless.”

In a letter to the district administrator dated 19 August 2022, I wrote: *“To this day, you refuse to comply with Article 15 and other applicable laws and regulations, as neither you nor Mr N. are able to provide sources to substantiate your organisation’s slanderous claims. You continue to allow the Job Centre to maintain a file of lies designed to cause me maximum harm.”*

Of course, I was slowly going crazy too. Who wouldn’t be, in such a situation? For years, not a single day passed without this problem haunting me. All I wanted was to find someone in authority who would believe me. Especially as an autistic person, it was impossible for me to let go of this injustice—let alone relativise it.

2

On the same day, I wrote to Labour Minister Kiwi:

“The film shows how the BMAS knew for years about serious health damage caused by Hartz IV and actively covered it up. The documentation and journalistic research go back to the time of Minister Pair. (...) Since I don’t need to explain to you what classism is, you should understand that it is easy to prove severe misconduct by your institution on the basis of classist narratives—i.e. lies about people in poverty. My case is the most thoroughly documented example of

state violence against the poor to date. Hundreds of pages of evidence, witnesses, books, and soon a film. You attempted to cover up this horror with the so-called Citizen's Income, but failed—mainly due to the CDU/CSU. Hartz IV remains Hartz IV, despite the change in name. The public reaction will be all the more intense as soon as the facts about widespread abuse become known. (...) You are hereby called upon to publicly acknowledge that Hartz IV, as a law based on classism lies about the lazy and undeserving poor, causes illness. If you fail to do so—if you continue to stand by while I, as a cultural worker, am being tortured by the Job Centre for the very work I do—this will serve as final proof that the BMAS tolerates serious harm to health even after it has long been substantiated by scientific evidence and reported to public prosecutors.

This situation presents a unique opportunity for you: this case gives you the chance—if you are truly willing, and that too is documented—to finally abolish Hartz IV completely, including the system of sanctions. Because my case shows exactly where the pressure against the poor leads. You could, with reference to me and others, publicly declare at any time that the pressure must be fully lifted from the Hartz IV system. That you wish to prevent further PTSD and other serious health consequences for those affected.

In light of 25 years of documented public service to the people of this country—often for as little as 3 euros per hour—as a cultural worker, as a poverty researcher, it is utterly absurd to apply classist N-words like “support and challenge” to me, let alone speak of duties. Thousands of others are in the same situation. (...) If you refuse to publicly acknowledge that Hartz IV and the Citizen's Income cause illness—despite this being long proven by research repeatedly presented to you and your ministry—you will continue to harm people like me. The only way I and other victims can begin to heal is if the entire Hartz IV system is officially recognised as a form of terror and abolished accordingly.”

On 29 August, I had to go to the emergency room with severe tremors and intense anxiety. The doctor prescribed psychotropic medication. I feared I was going to die.

3

The head of the LAVG health authority wrote to me on 3 January 2023: *“After examining the matter, I have been instructed to reply to you and to*

forward the issue to Department 51 of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Labour and Energy of the State of Brandenburg.”²²⁰

In doing so, the health authority ignored the health crisis at hand and attempted to deflect responsibility by forwarding the matter to an economic ministry department. This bureaucratic reframing allowed the health authority to wash its hands of the issue.

The idea of addressing a serious public health concern by transferring it to “Department 51”²²¹ was about as responsible as forwarding it to “Area 51” in the United States—rumoured to house UFOs, not social epidemiology. It was obvious that this “Department 51” would have neither the mandate nor the expertise to engage with the matter, and my case was effectively dumped into a black hole.

On 9 January 2023, I replied to the health authority:

“Instead of recognising the facts, the studies, and the actual content — all of which clearly demonstrate that Hartz IV makes people ill — you are now apparently passing the issue back to the internal ‘Hartz IV authorities’, who will once again reduce the investigation to something like a technicality over incomplete forms. Thus, a structural scandal with serious health consequences for thousands is turned into a local administrative quibble. And at the end, predictably, the victims will be blamed again and still receive no treatment — while you watch, preserving an inhumane system for political convenience. Your attempt to shirk responsibility is now officially documented. (...) A diagnosis of complex PTSD under ICD-11 indicates years of severe mistreatment by Brandenburg authorities.”

That same day, I informed the State Secretary in the Ministry of Health in Potsdam, Mr Elderberry. I called on him to publicly acknowledge that classism and social racism in Hartz IV cause illness:

“If you fail to provide clarification and recognition, we will consider your ministry complicit in fraud with bodily harm as consequence. The public will be informed.”

As expected, on 11 January 2023, Department 51 replied to the Ministry of Health:

“I would be happy to support you, but please understand that the MWAE cannot pursue your request due to lack of supervisory authority.”

²²⁰ Letter from the State Office for Occupational Safety, Consumer Protection and Health dated 3 January 2023 / PB-0732-3-PH

²²¹ Area 51 is a restricted military area in southern Nevada (USA) owned by the United States Air Force and the US Department of Defence. A well-known location in conspiracy theories about UFO sightings.

Department 51 then forwarded everything to the BMAS in Berlin. I never heard back. In fact, the BMAS has not responded to a single one of my letters in years. They would apparently rather let me die than risk sending a reply that I could quote. Labour Minister Kiwi remained silent — strategically. He must have known what the consequences of any admission would be.

The evidence I submitted that Hartz IV makes people ill consisted largely of studies documenting the health consequences of racism and discrimination. It was therefore unnecessary to prove that Hartz IV specifically caused these effects; it was sufficient to show that racism — or group-based misanthropy — was operationalised within Hartz IV and its successor system. That such discrimination causes illness is no longer controversial. It is, in fact, common sense.

The refusal of multiple Brandenburg ministries to acknowledge that discrimination and racism are harmful to health is therefore deeply alarming. In addition, there exists an extensive and internationally recognised public health literature considered *settled science* since the 1990s. Epidemiologists like Nancy Krieger and David R. Williams have shown that chronic exposure to discrimination leads to dysregulation of the body's stress response (HPA axis), elevates allostatic load, and increases risks of depression, cardiovascular disease, diabetes II, and autoimmune disorders.

Additional key contributions include:

- Arline Geronimus (University of Michigan) – *Weathering Hypothesis* (premature ageing due to chronic social stress)
- Bruce McEwen (Rockefeller University) – *Allostatic Load* (biological “wear and tear” due to stress)
- Sherman James – *John Henryism* (paradoxical health deterioration from coping with structural discrimination)

Well-documented physiological mechanisms:

- HPA axis dysregulation (hypothalamus–pituitary–adrenal cortex)
- Chronic inflammation (elevated interleukins, TNF- α)
- Telomere shortening (accelerated cellular ageing)
- Epigenetic changes (e.g. DNA methylation)

Empirically robust studies:

- Whitehall Studies (Michael Marmot) – social status and health
- Jackson Heart Study – racism and cardiovascular risk
- MIDUS studies – chronic stress and allostatic load

In short: no separate “Hartz IV pathophysiology” is needed. The pathomechanisms are identical to those found in any system of institutionalised exclusion. If Brandenburg's ministries deny this, they are not only rejecting scientific consensus — they are violating their duty to protect

public health, and perpetuating exactly the structural violence that has been empirically confirmed dozens of times.

4

I wrote again to State Secretary Elderberry:

“As you can see from the enclosed letter, Division 51 is not responsible — which, as we all knew, was to be expected. To evade responsibility, Ms L. has effectively disappeared the case into institutional limbo. This may legally constitute fraud resulting in bodily harm, and possibly failure to render assistance (§ 323c StGB). Moreover, as has long been demonstrated, the state — and by extension the state of Brandenburg — is actively involved in the neoliberal discrimination of people living in poverty. This is evident through the systemic connections between social exclusion, structural discrimination, and exploitation under market-based ideologies. These dynamics include the instrumental exclusion of migrants and the targeted stigmatisation of the poor through laws and policies such as Hartz IV or Bürgergeld.

Given this active involvement, the state assumes a guarantor position (Garantenstellung) in relation to the affected population. According to established legal doctrine, such a position arises from Ingerenz²²² — that is, from prior conduct which has created or intensified a source of danger. The state, by enacting and perpetuating these discriminatory systems, interferes in the life conditions of those affected and thereby assumes a duty to protect them from the resulting harm.

This guarantor duty is not optional. It obliges the state not only to refrain from further harm, but to take positive action to prevent foreseeable damage to the life and health of those it has placed at risk. In the present case, your ministry’s failure to acknowledge well-documented, health-damaging consequences of class-based discrimination constitutes a breach of this legal duty and may carry criminal relevance.”²²³

The concept of ingequence (Ingerenz) was central to my argument, because it established a guarantor obligation (Garantenstellung) — a legal duty of care between the state and those affected by poverty — wherever the state could be shown to have created, maintained, or aggravated that poverty.

²²² Wikipedia: Definition: What is "Ingerenz"? Form of a guarantor obligation arising from an existing guarantor position in a criminal offence of non-genuine omission, by actually causing a dangerous situation.

²²³ Letter to the Brandenburg Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Integration and Consumer Protection, dated 19 January 2023

This principle, drawn from criminal law, opened the possibility to challenge the Hartz IV regime as a whole: for the system could only be upheld by deliberately excluding any structural connections between poverty and capitalism, or between poverty and racism in the market economy.

The poor had to be kept in the narrative of “lazy recipients”, of “welfare dependents”, of “people in need” rather than “people deceived”. As long as the state could pretend that it had nothing to do with the creation of poverty, it could demand gratitude from those it actively oppressed — turning structural violence into a charitable favour.

That is why I kept forcing the public prosecutor's office into the same legal feedback loop, again and again. It was the only way to make visible how violence against the poor was being systemically normalised and concealed — even legitimised — through bureaucratic routines.

Each individual charge or complaint may have seemed insufficient on its own. But taken together, they formed a clear pattern: of symbolic violence, of right-wing resentment institutionalised, and of a deliberate refusal to acknowledge the cumulative harm being done — especially to autistic individuals like me, who had no cognitive or emotional escape from this injustice.

The authorities' refusal to recognise the principle of Ingerenz — because they knew that accepting it would require a complete overhaul of the system — is what ultimately exposed the complicity of public officials and politicians in a regime of fraud and repression.

On 23 January, I again had to go to the emergency room. This time due to tingling in my right leg and neurological symptoms. No clear medical cause could be identified.

5

In February 2023, I filed comprehensive criminal complaints against several public prosecutors for the first time. The wording was as follows:

“I hereby file criminal charges against the responsible public prosecutors of the General Public Prosecutor's Office, in particular Mr. Apple, as well as against those responsible at the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office, including Mr. H., for suspected obstruction of justice (§ 258 StGB) in connection with the systematic cover-up of structural classism within the Job Centres and other state authorities in Brandenburg.

Furthermore, I charge those involved with a failure to provide assistance (§ 323c StGB), despite documented and medically evidenced endangerment to health, and with the deliberate covering-up of institutional fraud that has resulted in long-term bodily harm (§ 223 ff. StGB). These omissions and reframings must be

seen as part of an intentional protection of unlawful practices under Hartz IV legislation, and as contributing to a broader pattern of social discrimination that the judicial authorities have failed to address.”²²⁴

The Cottbus public prosecutor's office replied on 7 March 2023 regarding the criminal charges against the district administrator and the head of the Job Centre, Ms S.:

“However, I do not see any reason to initiate a criminal investigation or to order criminal proceedings.”

While I was being investigated in four preliminary proceedings, every conceivable accusation against social racists was blocked by the Cottbus public prosecutor's office – even though they knew that I was suffering from PTSD as a result.

As should become even clearer, there was already considerable resentment against me in the public prosecutor's offices at this time. From one criminal complaint to the next, the public prosecutor's office became entangled in a web of prejudices, arbitrary behaviour and protective allegations, all aimed at concealing the simulation at their own desks.

I wrote to the public prosecutor M. in Cottbus on 14 March 2023:

“You knew that the district administrator was covering for Mr H., who portrayed me in files as a work refuser because of my work as an artist and therefore refused me naturalisation. You have this slander in black and white. So you continue to allow right-wing nationally motivated civil servants to portray cultural workers as harmful to the community and lazy because they are cultural workers and derive official decisions from this. They deny the health consequences of this terror. The Cottbus public prosecutor's office has been covering up for these right-wing nationalist officials in Herzberg for over two years now, presumably because the district administrator is a mate of Minister Blueberry, the Minister of the Interior. The cover-up is only proven by the fact that I was never answered again. (...) They also knew that a high-ranking official in the Ministry of the Interior was threatening me. (...) You also knew that I was being denied treatment. (...) You continue to give Mrs S. (Job Centre) and the district administrator carte blanche to take maximum forceful action against me. (...) You are responsible for the fact that I still can't get treatment because the terror just won't end. That is a criminal offence.”

On 16 March, the Minister of Health of Brandenburg, Ms Raspberry (Greens), was once again personally informed:

²²⁴ Letter to Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 8 February 2023 regarding ST 1360 Js 32887/22 and ST/0006400/2023

“In order not to have to admit that Job Centres in Brandenburg are practising sick-making psychological terror, they simply broke off contact with me as a victim, they left me as a cultural worker to perpetrators of violence with right-wing nationalist views and thought they could cover up massive abuses in this way.”

On the same day, I filed a criminal complaint against the head of the LAVG and State Secretary Elderberry from the Ministry of Health. The public prosecutor’s office was therefore also informed about how the Ministry of Health and the LAVG were covering up the facts. As I said, the criminal applications were always about maintaining dialogue. Because under other circumstances, they simply stopped communicating with me.

It was 5 March 2023 when I wrote a four-page letter to the press spokesman for the Attorney General, Senior Public Prosecutor B.:

“On 27 March, the dentist W. in Schönewalde diagnosed me with bruxism, i.e. tooth damage as a result of night-time, stress-induced teeth grinding. As it currently stands, I will have to wear a dental splint in future as a result of the trauma caused by the government. (...) When I asked her to confirm the PTSD or the alternative diagnosis in writing so that I could present this to the public prosecutor’s office and the Job Centre, the psychiatrist replied, and I quote: ‘I’m not going to help you. I don’t want to get involved.’ (...) As a result, this is the third time that I have been refused help by organisations that are responsible for helping people with mental illness. This makes it more difficult for me to fully document the damage to my health in a way that can be used in court. A public prosecutor’s office that is aware of this has a duty to change this, instead of sitting back ignorantly and continuing to deny the facts because victims do not have the means to organise even more comprehensive evidence. They must realise that we will show this in the media. (...) The law may appear to be legal, not least because even the Federal Constitutional Court is not free from racism against the poor, but the actions of civil servants, judges, public prosecutors who know that they are making people ill or discriminating against them are not.”²²⁵

A head of the personnel department at the Ministry of Health in Potsdam informed me on 11 April 2023: *“I ask for your understanding that the processing will take some time, as, among other things, statements from those affected must be obtained.”*

So everything was deliberately shelved to avoid responsibility.

²²⁵ Letter to Senior Public Prosecutor Böhme dated 5 April 2023 regarding 52 AR 145/23

On 24 April 2023, two years and eight months after filing the complaint, the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office informed me that Mr H. from the Immigration Authority and Mr B. from the Ministry of the Interior—who had threatened me with the denial of naturalisation if I continued to criticise state authorities for human rights violations in my work as an artist—would not be prosecuted for defamation or coercion, as the three-month deadline for filing the complaint had allegedly been missed at the time.²²⁶ Furthermore, no criminal offence was deemed to have been committed. Investigations into obstruction of justice by public prosecutors were also dropped. None of the letters explained the decision; they merely cited a lack of initial suspicion. This supposed lack of suspicion, however, implied that the violence had never taken place.

In the presence of the spokesperson of the Public Prosecutor General, Mr B., I demanded that the perpetrators—Mr H. from the Immigration Office, Mr B. from the Ministry of the Interior, as well as the District Administrator and Mr N. from the Department—issue a formal confession by 19 May 2023 and retract the defamatory statements in the official files. This retraction would have allowed for my naturalisation.

I wrote to Mr H. of the Elbe-Elster Immigration Office:

*"If you refuse to comply, you will continue the harassment against me, fully aware that it is harming my health. I am therefore preemptively filing a criminal complaint against you with the Chief Public Prosecutor, as you are unlikely to show any understanding. The case has been documented for a feature-length film and will be shown in cinemas and on national television in 2024."*²²⁷

So I wanted to file a new criminal complaint within the three-month deadline. At least that's what I thought would have forced the public prosecutor's office to reopen the case if these letters — I'll talk about them in more detail later — hadn't disappeared at the public prosecutor's office.

As I vomited three times at the dentist's office while attempting to fit the mould for the braces, the team decided to perform a digital dental scan instead, which cost EUR 150. The health insurance provider refused to cover the costs. I therefore submitted an application to the Job Centre to cover the expense:

²²⁶ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office regarding 1360 Js 31421/22 and 1360 Js 31976/20

²²⁷ Letter to Mr H. Head of the Elbe-Elster Aliens Department dated 1.5.2023

*"In the presence of the public prosecutor's office, you are hereby requested to assume the costs of a digital dental scan. As a result of the assault perpetrated by your agency and its staff, my teeth have suffered serious damage. You are requested to inform me within one week whether you will fully reimburse the costs upon submission of the dentist's invoice."*²²⁸

It took months before I received a rejection letter – months in which I was in pain, and the Job Centre was fully aware of it. Mrs S., the director, knew personally and still upheld the four criminal charges she had filed against me. In the meantime, I also contacted Federal Minister of Culture Claudia Roth in a letter dated 4 May 2023. I wrote to her twice but never received a reply. It had been the same with her predecessor, Monika Grütters. We do not need a Minister of Culture who appears in front of the cameras when cultural workers are to be celebrated, but disappears when artists are destroyed by right-wing extremists or simply crushed by the brutality of precarious conditions. Minister Roth was informed of everything – and did nothing.

On 12 May 2023, I once again informed Minister of the Interior Blueberry:
"You yourself were informed multiple times about these right-wing attacks and did not respond. Now there is an accusation that you are protecting your mate, District Administrator Blackberry."

Again, there was no reply from Blueberry – despite the fact that this was a formal, subject-specific and supervisory complaint which, from a legal standpoint, required a response. It apparently ended up in the wastepaper basket.

8

I have now submitted 18 pages to the Job Centre and the public prosecutor's office, including links to hundreds of scientific studies demonstrating how Hartz IV causes illness – partly through the documented health effects of racism, but also through the mechanisms and correlations of classism and the pathological consequences of poverty itself.

Still, there was no response.

I therefore wrote to Chief Public Prosecutor B.:

"I would also like to point out to you – see cover letter – that the Job Centre, i.e. Ms S., has left me with untreated tooth pain for 20 days while delaying a decision on cost coverage. (...) I am now submitting a final criminal complaint against the Cottbus public prosecutor's office for the deliberate persecution of an innocent person. Despite two formal requests, you have failed to drop the four

²²⁸ Letter to Ms S. from the Elbe Elster Job Centre dated 27.4.2023

investigations against me – even though you, Mr B., are fully aware that they are aimed at intimidating me as a cultural worker and media representative. You also know that by prolonging this legal harassment, your office is actively contributing to further deterioration of my health and is therefore complicit in bodily harm.”²²⁹

The press spokesman for the Public Prosecutor General did not reply to this letter. The investigation against me continued.

9

I wrote an email to Interior Minister Blueberry. This time via his personal email account at the Elbe-Elster CDU district association. No response. I had written: *“The public prosecutor's office has started an investigation. I call on you here, also as a CDU district member, to take a stand on the incidents and ensure that the naturalisation is carried out. (...) Anyone who portrays artists as refusing to work is a right-wing extremist and cannot hold office.”²³⁰*

On 25 May, Minister Kiwi was again informed about the events. On 26 May, Minister of Culture Roth was informed again.

10

The Job Centre refused to pay for the dental scan on the grounds that: *“The benefit applied for is not a benefit under Book II of the German Social Code. Payment is therefore not possible.”²³¹* Not a word was said about the accusation that the dental damage was a consequence of the psychological terror caused by the Job Centre. The four criminal charges were not withdrawn by the Job Centre.

11

Throughout June, I wrote several letters to press spokesman B. and Attorney General Apple, in which I once again explained the facts of the case in detail.
²³²

On 7 June 2023, I wrote to Mr B.:

²²⁹ Letter to Senior Public Prosecutor B./ Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General's Office / 19 May 2023

²³⁰ Mail to Interior Minister Blueberry via the Elbe-Elster CDU district association dated 31 May 2023

²³¹ Rejection notice dated 31 May 2023

²³² Re 1360 Js 31421/22, 1360 Js 313976/20, 1360 Js 32887/22

"The public prosecutor's office has been aware since my letter of 19 December 2022 to Minister Kiwi that the BMAS has systematically covered up the fact that Hartz IV makes people ill, following a logic of group-based misanthropy. The public prosecutor's office stood by and watched. (...) The tendency to downplay right-wing violence within the Cottbus judiciary and court system is well documented in the media."

Regarding the authorities' cover-up mechanisms, I explained to him: *"The trick works like this: when confronted with an allegation of racism, the case is passed on to a department incapable of recognising racism – or one that conducts an investigation which structurally fails to make racism visible. In most cases, these are purely internal reviews under civil service law."*

In an extended memorandum dated 12 June 2023, I wrote to Attorney General Apple:

"It is thus an objectively verifiable fact that the Citizen's Income does not distinguish between someone who burns all their money on the pavement and therefore receives Hartz IV, and a single mother who – due to systemic exclusion from the labour market – earns so little that she and her children go hungry. The obligation to obey stems exclusively from poverty itself, not from any individual behaviour. (...) What is at stake here is the punitive nature of the Citizen's Income as such – the inherent devaluation, the attribution of guilt, the disenfranchisement that occur even before we begin to speak of sanctions in the formal sense."

The Attorney General therefore knew full well that what was happening within Hartz IV and its successor scheme was grossly unjust. He knew about the blanket stigmatisation of the poor, which was based on deception. He was not merely informed – he knew. It had been confirmed multiple times that my letters reached his desk and were read by him.

12

It was a stroke of luck for the research that, in July 2023, I managed to provoke a public prosecutor who was sufficiently incapable of expressing himself objectively and took everything personally – thus offering, for the first time, deeper insight into the ideological structure of the Cottbus prosecution service.

This prosecutor, M., who would go on to play a larger role, was so arrogant that he apparently felt no need to conceal his resentment toward me. In doing so, he inadvertently revealed the underlying mindset within the prosecution office.

On 5 July 2023, M. responded to my complaint against public prosecutor Ms M. for obstruction of justice by writing:

*"You see yourself as a victim of all kinds of institutions that supposedly deny you the help you need. Furthermore, you remain rather vague and fail to express in direct, clear and comprehensible terms which offence you are alleging, by whom, and when exactly it allegedly occurred."*²³³

Once again, it must be emphasised that classism was no longer some obscure or exotic term at this point. The public prosecutor's office in Cottbus – like others – had access to hundreds of pages of academic studies and literature references.

Yet, in their institutional arrogance and structurally internalised symbolic violence, they simply refused to engage with this material. The very idea that someone like me – poor, neurodivergent, and self-educated – might have arrived at relevant or even groundbreaking insights was outside their cognitive horizon.

This became especially evident when prosecutor M. responded to my arguments with thinly veiled contempt, equating intellectual complexity with confusion:

"Instead, you merely provide general observations that are of little use. In addition, you diagnose yourself with post-traumatic stress disorder, even though you do not have the necessary qualifications for such a diagnosis."

Social racism, for him, was nothing but "vague general considerations". His later use of openly classist insults – echoing far-right narratives about the lazy poor – confirmed that this was not ignorance, but deliberate ideological cover-up.

Attorney General Apple must be held especially accountable – not only for tolerating this attitude within his ranks, but for allowing public funds to be wasted on cynical bureaucratic self-exoneration, rather than seriously investigating structural discrimination. This wasn't an abstract debate about philosophy. It was about concrete, documentable violence against real people.

And again: it would have been understandable if he had simply admitted he was powerless. But instead, the official line was that no crime had occurred, and therefore no harm had ever been done. That is the logic of authoritarian systems.

²³³ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 5 July 2023 / regarding 1360 Js 15444/23

To M.'s point: I had, in fact, passed a state examination under the Heilpraktikergesetz (HPG) and had run a psychotherapy practice for several years. It was formally registered with the public health authority.

The only reason I had to shut it down was that I couldn't get a Kassenzulassung – so I was regularly paid with eggs and pies instead of money. Nevertheless, as part of the licensing exam, I was required to know how to make clinical assessments and differential diagnoses in order not to endanger patients.

This background I later explained to M. – but like everything else I said, it was simply ignored. In Brandenburg's prosecution offices, it was standard practice to go silent the moment a contradiction was raised.

"Incidentally," M. continued, "*since this is not the first criminal complaint of this quality that you have filed, I see no point in having you questioned by the police, as no gain in clarity or knowledge can be expected.*"

This sentence is a textbook example of epistemic injustice in the sense of Miranda Fricker: the deliberate silencing of a witness by denying the credibility of their perspective.

The whole institutional apparatus was operating on the logic of prejudice: if the evidence comes from a poor migrant, it isn't evidence. If it's complex, it's meaningless. If it's painful, it must be imagined.

M. was simply the first to say it out loud:

Complexity is stupidity. Poverty is laziness. The state is always right. That was the unspoken code. Anything that couldn't be simplified into bureaucratic categories was dismissed as "irrelevant". Meanwhile, tens of thousands were – and still are – suffering under the citizen's allowance regime: pregnant women, children, the elderly, many of whom no longer know how to survive.

13

In response, I wrote a seven- and four-page letter to press spokesman B. and Apple. Chief Public Prosecutor B. replied to me on 1 August 2023 regarding the closure of investigations into the RPV scandal: "*The accusation of obstruction of justice based on this is simply absurd.*"²³⁴

You could tell from the language that they were growing increasingly annoyed. On 17 August 2023, another senior public prosecutor from the General Prosecutor's Office wrote curtly:

²³⁴ Letter from Senior Public Prosecutor B. dated 1 August 2023 / 54 ZS 568/23

“For the reasons already given to you, the proceedings must be discontinued.”

There was a clear eagerness to close the case once and for all.

I responded on 9 August with a four-page letter to Attorney General Apple and Chief Public Prosecutor B., stating:

“Your letter of 1 August proves two things: first, that both of you were aware of the health damage caused by the psychological terror in the context of the RPV scandal. (...) Regardless of any purported legal norms, you could have taken steps at any time to end the psychological terror – which, as you well know, is making people ill, as common sense alone should suffice to confirm. (...) Ms S. and the district administrator deliberately maintained this harmful regime, fully aware of the severe trauma it inflicted on me and others.”

In response, yet another senior public prosecutor wrote to me on 17 August regarding the obstruction of justice complaint against Prosecutor M.:

*“I therefore reject your complaint as unfounded.”*²³⁵ He did not give any further reasons.

14

On 31 August 2023, I received an eight-page letter from the Ministry of Health attempting to obscure the fact that Hartz IV had caused severe damage to my health.

The letter began by trying to rationalise why parts of my earlier correspondence about the Job Centre had been decontextualised and passed on to Department 51. The rhetorical manoeuvre used was classic reframing:

“The LAVG’s responsibility does not arise merely from your claim that the behaviour of an employee at the Elbe-Elster Job Centre has resulted in a health impairment.”

Thus, the ministry argued it was *not responsible when it precisely was* – by reducing the systemic effects of Hartz IV to an isolated individual incident, in spite of the fact that all my letters had clearly referred to structural classism and systemic harm caused by the Hartz IV regime. In this framing, the president of the LAVG was shielded on the grounds that she had no jurisdiction over the specific Job Centre – and then again because she was allegedly *not a medical doctor*. The argumentative inconsistency was striking. When all else failed, they resorted to bureaucratic tautology:

“Recognition by the president of the LAVG that Hartz IV is making you ill, or that citizens’ income constitutes psychological terror, would not result in the

²³⁵ Letter from the Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General’s Office dated 17 August 2023 / 54 ZS 565/23

treatment you are seeking – regardless of whether the statement is true. The International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD) defines what is and what is not considered an illness. (...) At present, neither Hartz IV nor citizens' income are listed as causal agents for any ICD-coded disease. Recognition by the LAVG president – again, irrespective of its truth – would therefore have no consequence. It would neither trigger a new ICD entry, nor make treatment possible.”²³⁶

This line of reasoning amounts to epistemic closure: if suffering caused by political systems does not fit the predefined categories of an international coding scheme, it is declared non-existent. That *truth* has no consequences here is the most chilling sentence of all.

Not only was it implicitly denied that classism and social racism within the Hartz IV system cause illness – the ministry resorted to absurd bureaucratic contortions to obscure even the most obvious truths.

Through formulaic phrases and pseudo-medical evasions, a simple and empirically well-established claim – namely that discrimination against the poor leads to mental and physical illness – was twisted into a technocratic non-sequitur: because such causalities are not explicitly listed in a medical classification system (the ICD-11), they allegedly *do not exist*.

By that logic, rape or gunshot wounds would not cause illness or death either, simply because these violent acts are not catalogued as disease codes in the ICD-11.

This absurdity exposes the true function of the argument: it is not about health, but about preserving the bureaucratic façade. Instead of asking what must be done to protect health in the face of systemic discrimination, the ministry weaponises the absence of terms in a diagnostic index designed for physicians – not for sociopolitical analysis – to negate state responsibility.

In reality, this was a political lie wrapped in technocratic jargon. They deliberately refused to acknowledge that decades of systematic harassment, humiliation and coercion against the poor – legitimised by Hartz IV – could have any consequences. This was not ignorance. It was a calculated strategy to avoid the political fallout of admitting that the state had, for decades, sanctioned a campaign of social and psychological terror against people it classified as “unworthy”.

Behind the cold formulations lay a brutal logic:

The poor are not only to be treated as second-class citizens – they are to be made believe they are biologically inferior if they suffer from the consequences of structural violence. This is how the state sustains its own

²³⁶ Letter from the Ministry of Health dated 31 August 2023

impunity: by transforming political trauma into individual pathology, and then denying even that.

15

Another senior public prosecutor – Apple, who had been increasingly involving more colleagues in the institutional defence against me day by day – finally discontinued the investigation into the case of the head of the immigration authority, Mr H., four years after the incident, stating:

“No indications of a criminal offence within the meaning of the Criminal Code can be inferred from your statements.”²³⁷

As would later become apparent, Mr H.’s right-wing extremist defamation was persistently and uncritically treated as the legitimate opinion of a civil servant. The classist disparagement it contained was simply not recognised, because the Attorney General’s Office under Mr Apple apparently took it as a matter of course that poverty equals laziness. Mr H.’s statements were therefore not questioned on principle, even though I had already explained the problem to the Attorney General several times by that point.

I therefore wrote to Mr Apple:

“You are hereby called upon—under the witness of Justice Minister Erdbeere and the press—to either provide evidence by 1 November 2023 that the defamation by Mr H., namely that I ‘refuse to work,’ is factually correct, or to immediately bring charges against Mr H. for defamation, subsequent fraud, and the resulting bodily harm through bullying and psychological terror. Either you provide factual evidence, instead of the evasions issued by the prosecutors under your command—or you resign.”²³⁸

Mr Apple was unable to provide such evidence—because throughout all those years, I had in fact been working as a top-up (supplemented income) worker. I was never registered as a “jobseeker”; I had been continuously employed. Even the Job Centre recognised this as legitimate work: otherwise, it would have made no sense to classify me as self-employed for ten years if I had not actually been working as a freelance artist.

In this regard, the Attorney General himself became complicit in perpetuating social racism. He evidently considered it legitimate to portray me in official records as someone who “refuses to work”—simply because, as an artist who criticised the state, I was regarded as worthless. This defamatory framing later served as a basis for criminalising me under his authority.

²³⁷ Letter from the Public Prosecutor General's Office dated 11 September 2023 regarding 54 ZS 571/23

²³⁸ Letter to the Attorney General Apfel dated 8 September 2023

On 13 September 2023, I wrote to Health Minister Raspberry in response to the absurd claim that Hartz IV cannot cause illness simply because it is not listed as a cause of illness in the ICD-10—just like rape isn't. I demanded comprehensive investigations, which were once again put on the back burner at the ministry. Presumably, they were hoping that the public prosecutor's office—already investigating me—would imprison me before the ministry had to face the unpleasant questions.

On the same day, I informed Justice Minister Erdbeere and filed a formal complaint against Attorney General Apple for concealing right-wing extremism and classism within the prosecution service, thereby violating the law.

In a letter dated 14 September 2023, the Potsdam public prosecutor's office responded to my criminal complaint against Minister Raspberry (who still remained silent):

“You accuse the minister of failing to protect your health, among other things, because the assumption of dental costs was not granted and because Hartz IV or the citizen’s income is not paid unconditionally.”

It wasn't, as prosecutor M. had claimed earlier, a case of me being unable to express myself clearly. On the contrary: the prosecution's own communications were now so abbreviated and distorted that they hardly even understood themselves. References were made to facts that had never occurred—but were twisted in such a way as to appear as though they had, simply to prevent me from being able to quote them accurately in return.

This led to bizarre statements, like the claim that I had demanded an “unconditional payment” of Hartz IV benefits. Utter nonsense. I had, by that time, already been receiving an unconditional basic income for nearly ten years. But the prejudice among civil servants ran so deep that stereotypical assumptions were made automatically, as soon as someone criticised Hartz IV. *“The alleged behaviour constitutes neither fraud nor failure to provide assistance.”*

Of course not. The actual fraud lay in the systemic denial of the fact that the classism and social racism embedded in Hartz IV and the citizen's income system were making people ill. The unpaid dental bill mentioned in the SGB II cost-coverage request was not the central issue of the complaint.

The prosecutor then proceeded to explain the concept of fraud to me, as if to a five-year-old:

“There is no concrete or quantifiable financial loss, nor is there any evidence of deception by the accused.”

Where is the financial loss to the discriminated poor? Hmm. Where is the intent to deceive when a ministry simply refuses to acknowledge that structural discrimination causes illness?

Then came the paternalistic lecture:

“With regard to the question of necessary assistance, the principle applies: Ultra posse nemo obligatur—no one is obligated beyond their ability.”

They added:

“As for the Minister of Social Affairs, Health, Integration, and Consumer Protection of the State of Brandenburg and her staff, it was not possible to cover the requested costs or to disburse the citizen’s income unconditionally and immediately.”

They did everything in their power to avoid addressing the actual crime. Prosecutors spent hours crafting letters intended to justify and legitimise right-wing violence.

Another prosecutor, responding to the same complaint against the minister and the LAVG, added:

“An ‘accident’ within the meaning of this provision is a sudden event that poses a significant risk to a person or to third-party property of substantial value. According to supreme and higher court rulings, this does not include a chronic illness. Public hardship, in this context, refers to an emergency affecting the general public. Based on your allegations, therefore, criminal liability for failure to render assistance must be ruled out on legal grounds alone.”²³⁹

So apparently, there was no obligation to help when the victims were poor.

When will someone finally realise that the work I am doing here is both necessary and irreplaceable—that it could never have been done within the confines of a conventional job? Do I really deserve to be destroyed like this simply because I’m trying to prevent right-wing extremists embedded in German institutions from destroying people, or corporations from destroying the ecosystem?

What other form could *work-integrated relational agency* possibly take? What work could be more urgent today than this?

These letters clearly show how all of this gradually wore me down emotionally—how desperate I became, and how relentlessly the symbolic violence I faced was denied. It is crucial to understand that I had absolutely no way to make the obvious racism and discrimination legible to those in

²³⁹ Letter from the Potsdam public prosecutor's office dated 15 September 2023 / 4130 Js 36498/23

power. In their minds, a fixed image had already formed: they saw a poor person criticising the labour system—an artist, therefore automatically suspicious, unserious, lazy.

This prejudice completely blinded them to the fact that I was working 40 hours a week, unpaid, addressing deeply urgent social problems—problems far more relevant to the future of this society than anything that could have been achieved through a socially insured employment contract, which, as an autistic person, I simply could not have fulfilled. However you look at it, there is no justification—none—for destroying someone for doing what artists are supposed to do: opening new perspectives, exposing structural injustice, making the invisible visible.

And the fact that I was also autistic—and that this explains the persistence, the tenacity, the refusal to give up—only makes the whole thing more explosive.

17

I replied to the public prosecutor on 28 September 2023, hoping she might come to her senses:

“You are now about the 50th public prosecutor who—under the witness of Attorney General Apple, his press officer Mr B., and the public—is either consciously or unconsciously complicit in this empirical investigation by continuing to deny violence against people in poverty and portraying it as normal. Like your colleagues, your arguments are marked by a deliberate refusal to engage with the facts and studies presented, an active unwillingness to read research findings, and an attempt to distract from the fact that you cannot provide a single piece of evidence proving that the central statement is false—namely, that classism, the deliberate discrimination, devaluation and dehumanisation of those affected by Hartz IV (or the so-called ‘citizen’s income’), has made and continues to make hundreds of people ill, directly or indirectly. You are not willing to intervene, but instead continue to allow this bodily harm to occur in hundreds of cases.”

This letter comprised eight pages—none of which were ever addressed in detail.

18

On 29 September 2023, the Office of the Attorney General once again attempted to suppress the case involving the head of the immigration authority. This latest letter now revealed more explicitly the worldview of the

prosecutors and confirmed that they shared classist prejudices. Precisely because I had forced Attorney General Apple to deploy more and more prosecutors in response, the systemic patterns underlying the prosecutorial cover-up of right-wing violence became increasingly transparent to the public. The letter stated:

“With your complaint, you allege that you were defrauded by an advance fee notice issued by the Elbe-Elster district on 20 May 2019, authored by the accused Mr H. Under Section 263 of the German Criminal Code (StGB), a person is guilty of fraud if, with the intent of unlawfully obtaining financial gain for themselves or a third party, they damage another person’s assets by inducing or maintaining an error through the misrepresentation of false facts or by distorting or concealing true facts.”²⁴⁰

Because the fee notice appeared formally correct in its internal logic, no fraud was acknowledged — even though the fraud had clearly occurred on the level of structural violence and social racism, in which the authorities themselves were complicit. This dimension was, once again, completely ignored by the public prosecutor, despite the fact that discrimination on the basis of social origin is also explicitly prohibited under the constitution of Brandenburg. The prosecutor wrote:

“According to your complaint, the deception of facts required for a charge of fraud is not evident.”

But social racism is a deception — a lie about the poor — and that fundamental fact once again eluded the public prosecutor. He refused to recognise the portrayal of me as a “work refuser” as defamatory, even though the Public Prosecutor General’s Office had received numerous letters and detailed essays from me precisely explaining why this was defamatory and harmful. The enrichment that occurred through this discrimination was institutional: the state benefited. Mr H.’s motive was to save public funds, and in return he gained prestige within his administrative peer group by blocking the naturalisation of a so-called “useless foreigner.”

The prosecutor continued:

“Even if you regard your complaint and its reasoning as an allegation of insult, defamation, or bodily harm, I am unable to identify any factual evidence of such offences. The mere fact that this decision informs you that your benefit entitlements were based on your own actions does not constitute an insult or defamation.”

²⁴⁰ Letter from the Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General's Office dated 29 September 2023 / regarding 1360 Js 31421/22 and 1360 Js 27204/23

But this conclusion is only possible if one shares the worldview that poverty is the fault of the poor — a deeply classist narrative. The prosecutor adopted this framework by euphemising the accusation of “work refusal” as a neutral “reference to benefit entitlement,” downplaying its defamatory and discriminatory content. He failed — or refused — to recognise racism as racism.

He added:

“This legal assessment was not expressed with the intent to offend your honour. Nor does it constitute a factual assertion, and therefore essential elements of §§185 and 187 of the Criminal Code are not fulfilled.”

This statement is deeply revealing. It shows that, in the eyes of the prosecution, it is acceptable — even legitimate — to label people as unworthy, because poor and migrant people are implicitly seen as unworthy by default. The implication is that it is not an insult to suggest that poverty is someone’s own fault — even if that assertion is used to deny them civil rights. But if Mr H.’s statement was merely a subjective opinion protected under freedom of expression, how then could it have served as a valid legal basis to deny my naturalisation, especially when all objective evidence contradicted the “work refusal” narrative?

A similar argument had already been used in the case of District Councillor Peach. I was working more than 40 hours a week as a cultural worker — underpaid, unregistered, but continuously active. To claim that I refused to work was not only a lie, it was an intentional act of symbolic violence. In German history, this symbolic logic of “labour as redemption” has its darkest expression in the phrase that stood over Auschwitz:

“Arbeit macht frei.”

What this prosecutor attempted was the reframing of racism as a matter of opinion. That is like saying: “The Black man must be the drug dealer” — and calling that freedom of expression. Such logic does not protect opinion — it protects racism.

Summary analysis of the institutional scandal:

This case illustrates three simultaneous levels of institutionalised violence:

1. Judicial structural blindness:

The prosecution reduced the fraud allegation to a narrow reading of the fee notice’s formal correctness, while refusing to even consider the racist-classist motive — the exclusion of a “useless foreigner” — as legally relevant. In doing so, systemic discrimination was transformed into a supposedly neutral administrative routine.

2. Reframing racism as “opinion”:

By declaring that blaming someone for their own poverty is a mere “value judgment” protected by Article 5 of the Basic Law, the prosecution legitimised the ideological core of right-wing violence: that economic stigmatisation justifies the stripping of dignity, rights, and recognition. This is not neutral law enforcement — it is classist racism in legal garb.

3. Legal self-immunisation through bureaucratic circular logic:

The state categorises someone as a “work refuser,” then uses this as justification to deny benefits — and then retroactively declares that the denial of benefits proves that no discrimination occurred. This creates a closed system in which judicial control is neutralised by definitional games.

Conclusion:

The public prosecutor’s office has become a functional accomplice in an administrative regime that uses formulas and euphemisms to neutralise human rights, erase social violence, and uphold the very logic of exclusion it should be challenging. The entire process is a judicial scandal — and a devastating indictment of the state’s handling of social justice.

The Attorney General Apple now threw another senior public prosecutor into the ring, after everyone had previously failed to silence me, who wrote on 9 October 2023 on the case concerning Mr H.:

“I have examined the facts of the case again in detail, but have seen no reason to change the decision.”²⁴¹

Apple did this because the Ministry of Justice was now investigating him on charges of covering up right-wing violence against me. The Minister of Justice had come under pressure when it was announced that the film would soon be released in cinemas.

On 11 October, I wrote to Attorney General Apple: *“Enclosed again are documents that show how a public prosecutor under your supervision is consciously or unconsciously lying and obstructing the law.”*

²⁴¹ Letter from the Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General’s Office dated 9 October 2023 regarding 54 Zs 571/23

Take-away box — Chapter “We Deny Everything”

Institutionalised Displacement

From Job Centres to the judiciary, state authorities retreat into the formalism of “processing” and systematically reframe structural violence as isolated individual cases. What Stanley Cohen calls states of denial are institutionalised here as routine.

Double Bind for the Affected

Those who document abuse are deemed “uncooperative”; those who stay silent tacitly accept their own punishment. The system generates contradictory imperatives that make any form of self-defence appear as deviance — a psychological mechanism of disintegration.

Categorisation Lie 2.0

Classical bureaucratic labels (“lack of cooperation”, “refusal to work”) overwrite complex social realities and replace them with pre-coded file categories. In this way, discrimination is literally deleted from the administrative record.

Epistemic Short-Circuit

Since official statistics record only bureaucratically coded data, subjective experience — and the suffering it involves — disappears entirely. This generates a self-reinforcing feedback loop: what is not in the file does not exist.

Autistic Counter-Strategy: Radical Testimony

Through hyper-detailed documentation, recursive loops, and obsessive logging, Speed punctures the institutional tunnel vision. Every instance of denied recognition becomes another data point — exposing the machinery of systemic denial.

Social Costs

Denial displaces responsibility downward, breeds learned helplessness, and accumulates public resentment — which ultimately erupts as populism or self-harm. Only radical recognition (truth-telling, restitution, structural reform) can break the cycle and make space for real dignity, care, and quality of life.

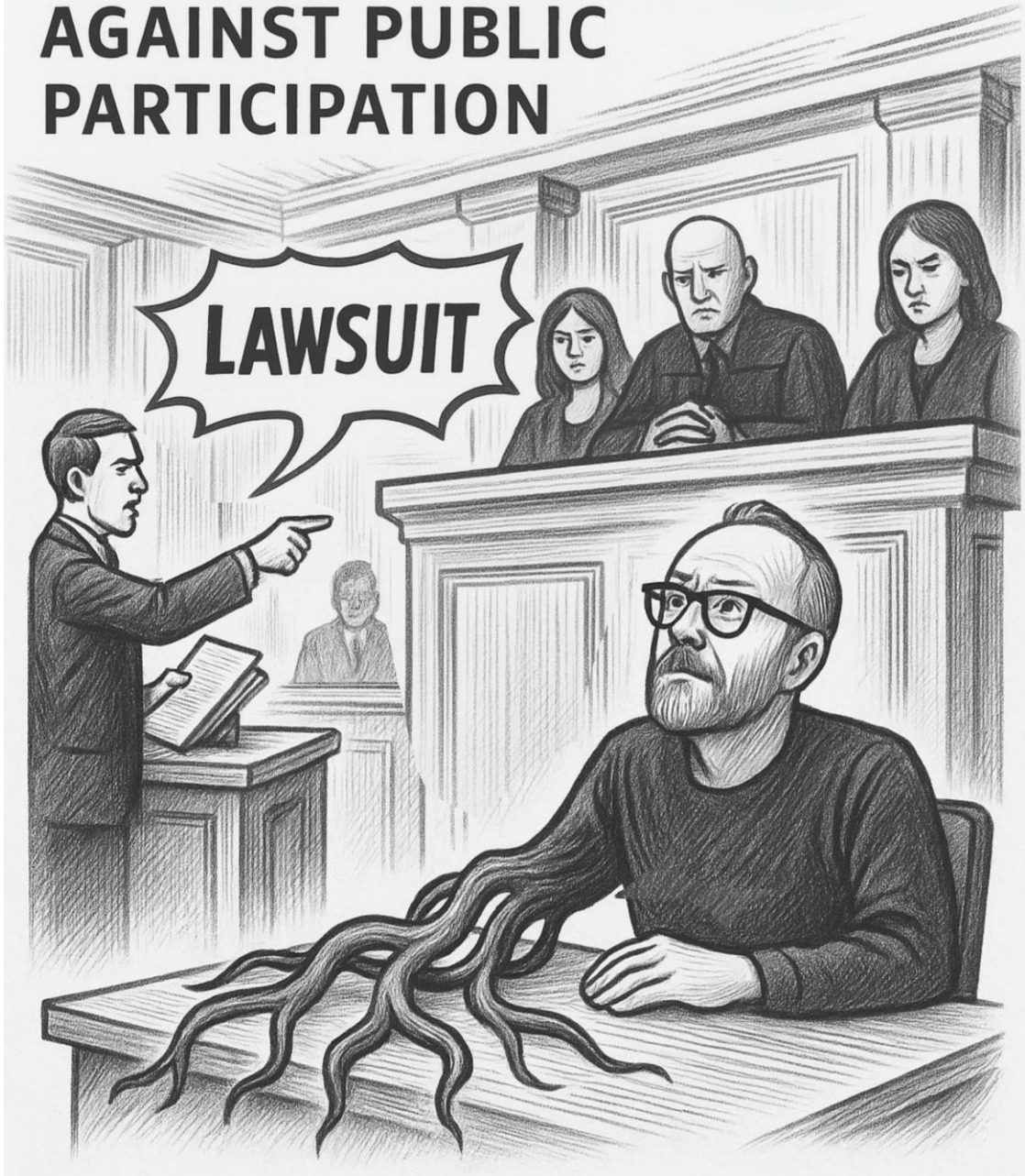
The SLAPP Lawsuit

Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation – or SLAPPs – are legal actions not intended to achieve a meaningful court victory, but rather to accomplish one thing: silencing critics through pressure, costs, and intimidation. Powerful actors – such as corporations, politicians, or property developers – deploy inflated claims, convoluted legal procedures, and the threat of reputational damage to deter activists, journalists, or academics from speaking out publicly. Studies by PEN America (2020) and the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (CASE) show that even the threat of a SLAPP can cause editorial teams to drop articles and NGOs to abandon campaigns; for the plaintiffs, the court ruling itself often becomes secondary. Legislators are increasingly recognising the threat to democratic discourse: the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive (2023) provides for early dismissal of clearly abusive lawsuits and compensation for affected parties.

Against this backdrop, the lawsuit against me is not merely a private legal matter – it is a prototypical attempt to suppress Speed’s work and the form of public participation it represents.

SLAPP-LAWSUIT

STRATEGIC LAWSUIT AGAINST PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Act of Violence 10: Prosecuting Dissent and the Idea of “Right-Wing Small Talk”

1

When I checked my mailbox on 19 October 2023, I found a letter, delivered via my neighbour, from local prosecutor S., stating that she intended to issue a penalty order against me for libel and defamation.²⁴²

On the same day, I received a personal letter from Attorney General Apple, in which he wrote:

*“(...) I have once again examined the decision in detail, but see no reason to alter it. For the reasons previously communicated to you, the proceedings must remain closed. (...) To resubmit a matter that has already been conclusively reviewed—by filing a criminal complaint against the authority responsible for handling the original complaint—constitutes an abuse of legal process and is therefore inadmissible.”*²⁴³

Apple thus put an end to my strategy of deepening the entanglement by reporting one public prosecutor after another in order to trigger repeated reviews of the case. Remarkably, he only did so after several years, after around 50 prosecutors had been involved, and after an extraordinary number of working hours had been expended.

In the end, it seems only he himself remained to downplay the matter—thereby enabling me to prove that the Attorney General had full knowledge of all the details and yet continued to cover up the far-right resentment directed at me. He admitted nothing, despite knowing that I was now seriously ill as a result of the bureaucratic terror. Had he conceded even a single point, his failure would have been fully exposed. This is why he and his subordinates always kept their statements deliberately vague: a few nearly contentless sentences, carefully crafted to obscure any context and forestall comprehension.

Apple could have stopped the proceedings against me at any time, fully aware that the charges were part of a SLAPP suit—that is, a strategic lawsuit intended to intimidate and silence me. He knew, because I had by then provided him with hundreds of pages of evidence, that my statements were based on fact. And yet, he permitted the prosecution of me as an artist for defamation simply because I had stated that Hartz IV was making me ill, and

²⁴² Letter dated 18 October 2023 regarding 1618 Js 2225/23

²⁴³ Letter from Attorney General Apfel personally dated 18 October 2023 / 543 Zs 571/23

because I had demonstrated—through precisely documented evidence—how certain civil servants were actively covering this up. He knew about my breakdowns. He knew about the inhumanity practiced at the Job Centres. Nevertheless, he ignored the deep-seated social racism within these institutions and instead allowed me to be prosecuted for “insult,” partly because I had described the remarks of the judge von K.—who had said I should consider myself lucky to receive Hartz IV at all, given the “worthlessness” of my artistic work—as an example of “far-right small talk.” What I was referring to was the omnipresent normalisation of right-wing resentment toward the poor, which manifested in many authorities at the time through stupid, humiliating comments. Racism had once again reached the level of seemingly ‘legitimate’ small talk. So, annoyed and possibly hoping to finally rid himself of me, the Attorney General allowed a baseless charge to proceed.

2

An ongoing court case led to a massive breakdown for me, and from that point onward, all the authorities and ministries involved were merely waiting to be finally rid of me. They didn't respond to anything. They behaved like vultures, assuming that the victim would be gone at any moment.

On 26 October 2023, I received the penalty order with the threat of 60 daily rates and a fine of around EUR 1,000. I immediately filed an appeal.

For the next three months, I did nothing but prepare for a trial without a lawyer, whom I couldn't afford. I studied law on YouTube and read countless books on the subject. At this point, I should have been promoting the film that had just been rejected at the Berlinale, which was further dragging me down, but I couldn't clear my head. I tried to end the trial during the interim proceedings, if possible, by writing countless letters to the judge. I was afraid of ending up in prison, which wasn't unrealistic, as I wouldn't have been able to pay the 1,000 euros. In Germany, anyone who couldn't pay fines had to serve a substitute sentence in prison. You can imagine the fears I had to endure as an autistic person.

After almost 10 years, I had managed to comprehensively prove how social racism and right-wing violence against the poor were covered up, all the way up to ministers and the attorney general. I had shot a feature film and completed an incredible piece of work, but I felt endlessly tired, full of panic, and completely thrown off course. “Speed's work” made this horror visible and tangible. I received an unconditional basic income, which I had fought for

against the state, but no recognition for my work. I was still regarded as dirt, the dregs of society.

It was completely uncertain whether the film I had worked on every day for four years would be shown anywhere at all. I had put all my eggs in one basket.

3

In a letter dated 24 October 2023 to Judge B. of the Bad Liebenwerda District Court, I stated:

“District Attorney S. knows that, as a cultural worker and poverty researcher, I have only made factual assertions here, based on concrete factual references, classism research, and extensive investigations. She clearly concealed this from you. This constitutes a criminal offence because, if this were true, she would have concealed my obvious innocence. You cannot recognise the factual allegations as such, the aspect that I have been researching classism for decades and have initiated numerous public actions as a cultural worker on the subject—actions in which authorities and companies were publicly paraded under the framework of artistic freedom—is concealed. (...) As a cultural worker, I have frequently criticised the public prosecutor's office in Cottbus for being blind in one eye and often holding dubious right-wing views aimed at discriminating against minorities. Thus, this could be seen as an act of revenge by the public prosecutor's office. (...) The entire case has therefore been made into a film for the cinema, financed by both the state and federal government.”

The public prosecutor and the judge also received a 30-page brochure on classism from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. I did everything I could to convince the judge that the public prosecutor's prejudgment of me as an angry citizen who insulted righteous civil servants was wrong.

In a letter dated 27 October 2023, I filed a criminal complaint against Public Prosecutor S. on suspicion of deliberate persecution of innocent people in the form of political persecution. The Public Prosecutor General was informed on the same day, along with his press officer, B.

On the same day, Public Prosecutor S. was extensively informed about the entire background of the case, including the PTSD and the research on classism and right-wing ideologies in the Job Centres. Therefore, it was no longer possible for her to claim ignorance of the actual context.

On 28 October 2023, I wrote to the court:

“Since this case has extended over 5 years in particular, and 20 years in a broader context, and since I have published ten books, I would like to point out to the court that it is not in the state's interest to conduct a main hearing over

days and weeks based on the flimsy evidence against me, where I will comprehensively present all the necessary evidence, when it is already clear from the outset that, due to the absence of any defamatory criticism, the court will inevitably have to deal with a highly complex case regarding whether or not cultural workers are allowed to criticise right-wing extremists as such. The public prosecutor's office in Cottbus, as well as Attorney General Apple, have known for years that, as a human rights activist and artist, I am completely legally and legitimately exposing and publicising classist crimes within the authorities—just as my colleagues from the Centre for Political Beauty have done.²⁴⁴ (artists' group), I am also permitted to use artistic means, exaggeration, etc. ... and I would like to remind you that the public prosecutor's office has lost an incredible number of lawsuits—I can look up the exact number—against the ZPS (artists' group) in cases that were far more extreme than this one. Investigations and charges like this one were and continue to be predominantly politically motivated by conservatives and the right. (...) Last but not least, I can provide a comprehensive account of how the Job Centre, together with the immigration authorities, made me ill through psychological terror and lies. This is possible because the public prosecutor's office has extensive documentation on this matter and because it has been proven that classism, i.e., the actions carried out by Ms S. and Ms B., inevitably lead to serious illness sooner or later in people who are not resilient. The public prosecutor's office possesses a study—I can look it up for you—that shows that around a third of people exposed to the stress caused by the Job Centre suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. There are also numerous studies that demonstrate that illnesses resulting from mistreatment under Hartz IV are highly likely and can be clearly proven in individual cases.

It should also be emphasised that the accusations against Ms S. and Ms B. are not predominantly based on the fact that these women have committed criminal acts, although this is also open for debate, such as in the context of failure to provide assistance, knowing about the resulting health damage. Instead, the accusations are based on the fact that they are involved in clearly right-wing extremist motivated acts simply by working for the Job Centre and, in this context, participating in fundamentally racist, institutional crimes, such as the unfounded devaluation of people solely on the basis of their poverty. This also applies to the social court. Just like someone who imprisoned homosexuals in the 1970s or who, as a civil servant, covered up or participated in racism in the

²⁴⁴ From Wikipedia: The Centre for Political Beauty (ZPS) is an association of over 100 action artists and creatives (as of November 2023) under the direction of the philosopher and action artist Philipp Ruch.

1960s. In other words, at a time when what must now be considered an inhumane crime appeared to be politically and legally acceptable.”²⁴⁵

In order to understand the subsequent course of the proceedings, it is important to recognise that the judge was confronted with a highly complex case that was initially seen as straightforward due to right-wing resentment towards the poor, which led to an uncomfortable situation from which they sought to extricate themselves as quickly as possible. At least, that is what the judge evidently wanted.

The trap

On 28 October 2023, I sent a decisive letter to Chief Public Prosecutor Dried Plum regarding the termination of the investigation against Mr H. by Chief Public Prosecutor Apple, as well as the letters I had sent, demanding that the perpetrators in the Elbe-Elster administration and the immigration authority confess and remove the lies about me from the files, which they never did.

In it, I wrote:

“In order to be able to charge H. despite the expiry of the 3-month deadline for the criminal complaint, I set a trap for him. A letter (enclosed) was sent to him and his co-defendants with the request that they make a confession and remove the lies from the files. Minister of the Interior Blueberry was also informed about this letter. None of the defendants responded and, as far as I know, did not report to Chief Public Prosecutor B., as they had been asked to do. So they continued the fraud. That is central. They refused to retract the proven lies. I have not received any response to date.

What is now decisive is Apple's letter to me personally, dated 18 October, in which he, despite acknowledging lies and misappropriation of facts by public prosecutors in this case—facts which he had personally commissioned from the Attorney General's Office—simply tried to dispose of the case quickly because of investigations by the Minister of Justice, with several public prosecutors examining it at the same time. Any further investigation against H. and the co-accused has now been prohibited by him, so it is clearly proven that the criminal complaint of 19 May 2023, concerning the four letters to the perpetrators, to which I never received a reply and which, in a sense, disappeared, has now been officially blocked by him, knowing that prosecution would have been possible here. Therefore, it can no longer be claimed that the criminal complaint has not yet been processed. No. According to the accusation, a new fraud by H. and the

²⁴⁵ Letter to Judge B. of the Bad Liebenwerda Local Court dated 28 October 2023 / 36 Cs 225/23 / 1618 Js 225/23

others was deliberately ignored, while Apple officially prohibited further investigations.

This is despite the fact that my four letters dated 1 May 2023 to the defendants, requesting a confession, were available to Mr B., with Apple cc informed, and Apple must have known about them. There are also letters from B. in which he confirms that he has presented everything to Apple.

So here we have right-wing radical liars in the immigration office and other authorities who, by refusing to confess, have committed the offence of allowing false documents and lies to persist in files, thereby committing fraud to this day, while the Attorney General, knowing about these lies for years, has apparently allowed a new criminal complaint to disappear in due time, or has ignored it, which would have made it possible to uncover the fraud and prosecute it.

So there were no relevant reasons to stop the investigation, especially as the fraud had already been fully proven. The excuses of other public prosecutors all converge at the point where an attempt was made to divert attention from Mr H.'s right-wing extremist claim that I refuse to work. The public prosecutor's office judged right-wing extremist attitudes towards me as a cultural worker to be acceptable and normal. The public prosecutors didn't realise their own resentment against the poor and equated Hartz IV benefits with refusal to work. This resulted in a massive violation of the law.

This was so easy for these prosecutors because Apple still ignores classism (racism against the poor) as a criminal offence, as a hate crime, and thus covers up right-wing violence in a highly official manner.

This means that it is now clear to the press that Apple and B. massively obstructed investigations against right-wing extremists, to the point of actually obstructing criminal proceedings. I have informed the Minister of Justice and am asking her to open an investigation into this matter."

I list the facts in such detail because it shows how much a certain way of working created its own realities. For the public prosecutor's office, but also for me. It's not just about my worldview dominating here, but about the question of why we don't do more to understand realities in their references and relationships. The state used violence to create a certain "reality" that was not complex enough to understand the existence of someone like me. As a result, more and more violence was inflicted on me. This shows the problem of the "narrative of domination," i.e., the dominant narrative. This can only legitimise itself with more and more violence because it is largely incapable of open discourse and democratic culture. It is therefore necessary to show here how the situation escalated further and further, and that the public prosecutor's office completely lost sight of proportionality. As an autistic person, I experienced massive traumatising, which I tried to compensate for

with more and more details, but this, in turn, became my undoing in the eyes of the public prosecutor's office because it made me appear increasingly irrational.

5

Later, a letter from another public prosecutor revealed that this letter had apparently disappeared. Now, none of this necessarily had to be evidence of a “conspiracy”; it could simply be due to a lack of enthusiasm or misunderstandings. However, all in all, there were just too many moments that proved that the apparatus of the public prosecutor's office did not want to acknowledge right-wing violence, especially not within its own ranks.

The fact is that the lies in the Job Centre's file, as well as at the immigration office and in the district of Teltow-Fläming, were simply allowed to continue, and as a result, I watched as this false information about me spread further and further within the authorities, eventually leading to charges being brought against me.

I am not a lawyer, which is why I cannot judge all the “obstacles” the public prosecutor's office may have encountered in its proceedings. But what is decisive here—and I emphasise this again—is that nobody from the public prosecutor's office has ever said or written to me:

“We understand you, Mr. Speed. This is right-wing violence. But unfortunately, we can't pursue it due to legal complexities.”

No, they always claimed, either directly or implicitly, that right-wing violence didn't exist, that I wasn't ill, and that it had nothing to do with Hartz IV or classism. There was therefore no crime. But I couldn't possibly accept that. A democracy in which all bodies and institutions, regardless of their responsibilities, no longer actively fight against right-wing violence and massive injustice is no longer a democracy, but a hierarchical system of rule.

Charges against the public prosecutor

On 29 October 2023, the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office, Senior Public Prosecutor Banana, was informed that a criminal complaint had been filed against Public Prosecutor S. for persecuting innocent people. I wrote:

“You are requested to withdraw the public prosecutor from the case and drop all charges immediately. If you do not comply with this, you must expect that the reputation of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office as right-wing will likely be permanently established in the public eye through press coverage of the case.”

Since the authorities treated classism as if it were an invention of mine, I sent Judge B a quote from the Saxon Equality Portal, a state organisation, on the same day:

“The stigmatisation of unemployment benefit II / (Hartz IV) recipients is also a case of classist discrimination. The blame for their unemployment is often placed on the individuals themselves, thereby ignoring structural obstacles and emphasising personal responsibility. The sociologist Andreas Kemper speaks of social differences being naturalised. There is often a preconception that people from 'higher classes' have earned their wealth and worked hard for it, while poorer people are simply too lazy or too stupid. Different starting conditions and structural mechanisms of exclusion are completely ignored. As a result, classism also leads to shame and marginalisation from others affected. Class privileges are rarely recognised.”²⁴⁶

On 9 November 2023, I sent an email to the head of the authorities, Senior Public Prosecutor Banana from Cottbus:

“I hereby inform you that I am currently experiencing a health breakdown due to the right-wing extremist motivated prosecution by your office and must now seek emergency treatment as soon as possible. The relevant authorities have just been contacted. (...) You have kept me waiting for days, knowing that I cannot endure this state of health with PTSD, and that it will inevitably lead to further damage to my health.”

This was followed by another 20 emails to her in which I explained the connections, from artistic freedom to social racism. This went so far that when I called the office of the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office, the receptionist brusquely accused me of sending mail every day, implying that this was impertinent. The public prosecutor's office was subsequently informed in detail about the problem of epistemic injustice. Every day, I sent new evidence of my innocence, totalling around two hundred pages. In retrospect, this is also due to autism, i.e., the difficulty of simply letting injustice stand.

In response to my insulting statement about “cognitive disorder,” as a result of sending the two forms multiple times, I wrote with reference to the work of Professor de Vries from Harvard Business School and the University of Amsterdam:

“Applying psychological diagnoses to organisations, often referred to as 'institutional diagnoses,' is an approach that is becoming increasingly

²⁴⁶ Equality portal in Saxony, website <https://www.gleichstellungportal.de/abc-der-gleichstellung/klassismus/>

important in the social sciences and in organisational psychology. This approach allows for the analysis and improvement of the mental health and behaviour of organisations. (...) Institutional diagnosis refers to the application of concepts from psychiatry and psychology to organisations and institutions. This approach aims to identify and resolve systemic problems within organisations to improve efficiency, employee well-being, and overall performance.”²⁴⁷

I also wrote to Senior Public Prosecutor Banana:

“I want to emphasise this clearly. Under no circumstances may you prohibit a cultural worker with state authorization to make diagnoses from making diagnostic statements about the behaviour of the authorities and expressing these within the framework of artistic freedom. If you willfully construct an insult from a clear factual reference, against the backdrop of my decades of research in this field, it will be very easy to prove in the press that political persecution is emanating from your organisation.”

Senior Public Prosecutor Banana had been comprehensively informed about the connections, yet still did not remove Public Prosecutor S. from the case, who fabricated insults from letters I had sent, which were full of evidence of massive abuse by the Job Centre against me, because I had begged for therapy in them. She knew that the public prosecutor I had reported was still allowed to decide on the proceedings, with fatal consequences for me. I asked several times for a meeting to clarify the facts of the case. No response. The head of the public prosecutor's office, Senior Public Prosecutor Banana, also knew that Public Prosecutor S. was aware that I had reported her for persecuting innocent people. Her impartiality was, therefore, lost.

Slander by the general

In a letter dated 2 November 2023, I wrote to Attorney General Apple and Senior Public Prosecutor B.:

“You were given a deadline of 1 November to provide evidence proving that the statement by Mr. H. (Herzberg Aliens Department), quote: 'You refuse gainful employment...' is true. As predicted, you are unable to do so and will obviously not meet the deadline. (...) You were also aware that the Job Centre has been and continues to run a 'file of lies' about me.”

²⁴⁷ Kets de Vries, M.F.R. (2001). "Organisational Diagnosis: A Lifetime Experience." In: European Management Journal, 19(4), 404-415.

The letter was eight pages long, in which I summarized the most important facts once again.

On 9 November 2023, I received a letter from Potsdam from Public Prosecutor N., who used letters taken out of context, in which I had referred to a criminal complaint against Apple, to halt investigations against Apple. Once again, in a case that spanned years, individual letters were taken out of context so that they could be presented as insufficient when viewed in isolation. Furthermore, this structural violence was used against me to avoid having to address the elephant in the room.

8

On 10 November 2023, I wrote to the court again:

“On 5 July (letter enclosed), Public Prosecutor M. rejected a criminal complaint I had filed against Public Prosecutor M. (same name) on the grounds that it made no sense to question me as a witness because I could not formulate a clear sentence, and the 'quality' of my statements was deemed inferior. That's what he says about me as a book author and poverty researcher. He justified this with a lie, claiming that I did not have the necessary qualifications to diagnose PTSD. I presented the court with my state healing license from the Teltow-Fläming health authority. (...) This is just one of countless cases in which the Cottbus public prosecutor's office covered up or attempted to cover up right-wing violence. Therefore, there is a clear motive for taking excessive action against me as a cultural worker in the context of my work, despite the facts of the case, because my work is causing public distress for the Cottbus public prosecutor's office.”

9

I wrote to Senior Public Prosecutor Dried Plum from Potsdam on 10 November 2023: *“Regarding Apple, I would like to point out that several statements made by public prosecutors and senior public prosecutors at the general public prosecutor's office clearly show that right-wing violence was deliberately covered up. Take a look at the statement by Public Prosecutor B. in the letter dated 29.09.23 54Zs 398/23, in which he explains on page 2: 'The mere fact that you are informed in this decision that the decision is based, among other things, on the fact that you yourself are responsible for the withdrawal of benefits, does not constitute an offence of insult or defamation.' Two things happen here. The public prosecutor ignores the preceding sentence by Hanke, in which he mocks my 'subjective artistic vocation,' as well as the statement that I*

refuse to work, which is a clear lie. So here we have a public prosecutor who disregards a lie presented in black and white, combined with an abusive criticism. A defamatory criticism because there is no factual basis for the artistic work; it could be defamed as a subjective vocation, and hostility towards artists and racism are not protected by freedom of expression.

My friend is currently involved in an EU project, where, together with the University of Oxford, the EU aims to redefine legal norms, explaining why art is scientifically proven to be essential for the preservation of democracy. For the last 200 years, we have not been talking about a subjective vocation in art; the impact of art and its entire societal value have long been researched and proven. While art may be a subjective process, the work of artists does not derive its legitimacy from a subjective vocation but from its proven value in society, which is protected by the Basic Law for a reason.

So here we have a public prosecutor who ignores abusive criticism and seriously assumes that poverty is tantamount to refusing to work. I have quite a few letters of this kind. So apparently, protected by the Attorney General, civil servants are allowed to spread unbelievable lies and slander in files, while I, as an artist, am immediately dragged into court if I criticise this. What we have here is a level of lies and legal manipulation by public prosecutors from Cottbus to the Public Prosecutor General's Office, which, as soon as they become public, will signify a considerable crisis of the rule of law."

10

On 15 November, I wrote to Public Prosecutor N. from Potsdam: *"Is the criminal complaint against Apple now being processed, or have you forwarded it to the relevant office? When will I receive a file number for the criminal complaint?"*

I never received a response.

The authority checks itself

In response to my complaint against Apple, the Ministry of Justice in Potsdam stated in a letter dated 17 November 2023:

"Insofar as you criticise the way in which the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office and the Public Prosecutor General's Office of the State of Brandenburg have handled the proceedings you have outlined, it is initially the responsibility of the Public Prosecutor General of the State of Brandenburg, as the superior of all public prosecutors working in the state, to receive and examine your submission.

I have therefore forwarded your letter to the Public Prosecutor General of the State of Brandenburg. You will receive further information from there.”²⁴⁸

The Public Prosecutor General was therefore once again left to examine the matter himself:

“With regard to the complaint you lodged against Public Prosecutor General Dr Apple, the matter was forwarded to Department I, which is responsible for the supervision of judges and public prosecutors. In this regard, you will be informed separately.”

This led to a paradoxical situation. The Attorney General was now investigating public prosecutors on behalf of the Ministry of Justice who had repeatedly covered up or tolerated right-wing violence against me on his behalf, while the Ministry of Justice was conducting an investigation against him, which I had triggered. So you can imagine how unbiased this entire investigation was. The Ministry of Justice, as I will return to later, delayed the process for a very long time and attempted to let the whole case fade away.

An emergency is not an emergency

On 20 November 2023, I received another letter from the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office referring to the complaint against officials of the Ministry of Health:

“Criminal liability for failure to render assistance pursuant to Section 323c of the German Criminal Code requires that the perpetrator fails to render assistance in the event of misfortune, common danger, or distress, although such assistance is necessary and reasonable under the circumstances. A case of misfortune, within the meaning of this provision, is a sudden event that poses a considerable danger to another person or to property of significant value.”²⁴⁹

So, once again, a public prosecutor has been instructed to abbreviate the entire facts of the case using nearly identical wording to that of her predecessor and to continue allowing the fact that thousands of people became ill as a result of Hartz IV to go unpunished.

²⁴⁸ Letter from the Brandenburg Ministry of Justice / 17 Nov. 2023 / (II.6) 1402-E III.054/23

²⁴⁹ Letter from the Potsdam public prosecutor's office / 20 November 2023 / 496 Js 18831/23

Right-wing small talk

On the same day, I received another letter from Public Prosecutor M. from Cottbus, who had lied when he claimed that I could not diagnose PTSD. Now, he attempted to explain to me why the right-wing resentment of the district attorney S., who had brought charges against me, did not constitute obstruction of justice:

“Since the accused is appointed to lead and decide on a case like a judge, according to the established case law of the Federal Court of Justice, obstruction of justice (§ 339 StGB) must always involve additional offences, such as the persecution of innocent people, in order to justify criminal liability. However, this is not applicable in this case, as obstruction of justice requires not only an incorrect application of the law but also a serious error that results in the removal of law and order and its replacement by one's own ideas. The penalty order you have objected to does not even come close to this.”²⁵⁰

The concealment of social racism and other forms of racism was therefore not regarded by the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office as a violation of the law, but rather as appropriate behavior, i.e., as a legitimate opinion. Public Prosecutor M. tried to explain that racism was not racism when used by a public prosecutor to enable an indictment against me as a cultural worker because I said that Hartz IV made people ill. The fact that he did not use the term “social racism” or “classism,” but instead focused on formalisms that were unsuitable for legitimizing criticism of racism—let alone establishing a violation of the law—once again illustrated the audacity with which obvious misconduct could be concealed.

The fact is that the public prosecutor picked alleged insults out of letters which, as I said, were full of requests for therapy to be made available, clearly showing my despair and mental breakdown, which would have been recognisable to anyone with any sense. They ignored fraud and assault in order to take action against me for an offense, mainly for political reasons. They wanted to get rid of me. They wanted to punish me for criticizing the authorities and exposing abuses. The charges were misused as a new form of sanction against the poor. She simply brushed aside pages and pages of unbelievable suffering and copied the wording of the Job Centre's complaint 1:1.

²⁵⁰ Discs of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office / 20.11.2023 / 1360 JS 43133/23

The public prosecutor had not interviewed any witnesses in her defense. She had obviously turned the victim into the perpetrator, based on right-wing resentment of a Hartz IV recipient criticizing the state. The “insult” would never have led to an indictment without the socio-racist context in the mind of the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office, i.e., the possibilities for interpretation were so open here that a decision could have been made in any conceivable direction. Public Prosecutor M. simply wanted to dismiss the obvious social racism with his decision: “Since your extensive statements and accusations have nothing to do with the matter here, there is nothing further to say.”

This is another way to cover up racism.

You have to remember that it has long been a proven fact that the classism in the Job Centres made people ill. How could it not? Against this backdrop, claiming that this is irrelevant was and is an outright lie, of which the Minister of Justice, Mrs. Erdbeere, was also aware. But she did not react. Public Prosecutor M. remained in office. Everyone knew about it, but agreeing with me would have meant admitting to a huge scandal. The worldview of conservatives and right-wingers would have been turned upside down. So they simply continued to lie or looked the other way. I was always surprised myself at how powerful cognitive dissonance could be. Rational, even objective facts no longer had any relevance for the authorities in this situation. The charges against me were not withdrawn because doing so would have meant a massive loss of face for the authorities. In other words, withdrawing the charges would have confirmed the accusation of social racism by the Public Prosecutor's Office. This now revealed the full extent of the criminal energy at the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office and the General Public Prosecutor's Office, which allowed me to be prosecuted as an artist because I uncovered and named social racism in Job Centres. They had been caught acting sloppily and automatically against a Hartz IV recipient, and instead of simply stopping, they became more and more entangled in lies to protect their institution.

14

Public Prosecutor M. continued to mock me and ignored the massive one-sided investigation by Public Prosecutor S. The matter was also a scandal because my earlier complaint against Public Prosecutor M., which also went to the court because he marginalised my PTSD and denied my ability to assess it, was included in the investigation file against me. M. therefore knew that I

was personally accusing him of perverting the course of justice when he acquitted Public Prosecutor S., who could also have taken action against him. When Public Prosecutor M. acquitted Public Prosecutor S. of the charge of persecuting innocent people and discontinued investigations against her, a conflict of interest arose for her, as she now had the advantage of not taking action against Public Prosecutor M., who had denied my illness. As a result, the marginalisation of my illness by him became a fact acknowledged by Public Prosecutor S., even in her investigations. Of course, it cannot be proven that this was the main reason for the public prosecutor ignoring my illness throughout the proceedings, but there is at least proof of the massive conflict of interest that made it impossible to expect the public prosecutor to continue making objective decisions in the proceedings. Senior Public Prosecutor L., as head of the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office, knew about the conflict of interest and did nothing about it. She continued to allow a public prosecutor to proceed against me as a cultural worker and human rights activist, who, in fact, had to be biased.

This showed how much resentment there was towards me and that there was a political will to convict me. They wanted this trial at all costs. The more obvious it became that they had succumbed to their own prejudices, the more vehemently they were defended by the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office. Once again, the explanations became increasingly shorter, and the statements more absolute.

You need to realise this once again. I had criticised the Job Centre and officials for making me ill, and I described the psychological terror caused by the constant sending of the wrong forms to cover up the terror as “cognitively disturbed,” as sick, and spoke of “right-wing extremist small talk” when a judge marginalised right-wing violence. There was no abusive criticism anywhere, nor any other insult, because the factual reference was evident in several letters, and Attorney General Apple had known the context of my work and my complaints for years. He knew that I was speaking objectively as an artist and poverty researcher. He knew exactly what I was talking about, namely political activism and art. So why didn't they stop the madness? Why did they persecute me, knowing that I could have been killed by the psychological terror? What was so worth protecting that they were prepared to risk their own careers to destroy me? Why did they firmly and rigidly claim something so insane, such as that Hartz IV does not make people ill, or that this could not be proven, or that it was not slander to portray cultural workers as refusing to work? All of this had long since been comprehensively proven by countless studies and documentaries. Of course, it was right-wing

extremist to portray the work of artists as damaging to society and to derive punishment for an artist from this. So why did the Public Prosecutor's Office continue to lie?

On 20 November 2023, I wrote to the court again: *“You will receive around 100 pages of correspondence between the Job Centre, myself, and the social court, in the context of the time of the criminal applications against me. This includes around 30 pages of study references on classism and how the Hartz IV system makes people ill, with references to thousands of pages of other documents that were available to Mrs. S. and Mrs. B., literature lists, as well as 44 pages of statement of claim, in which all the details were listed at the time. Mrs. S. and Mrs. B. had known for years that I was seriously ill. The documents show that the Job Centre made me seriously ill over the years through bullying and psychological terror, which was carried out both directly and indirectly through institutional classism, together with the immigration office. This violence was also ignored and supported by the Cottbus Public Prosecutor’s Office for years. The letters show this.”*

Health doesn't matter

On 27 November 2023, Public Prosecutor K., from the Public Prosecutor General's Office in Brandenburg, replied to me regarding the investigations against the head of the health authority and the Ministry of Health:

“After examining the facts of the case, I see no reason to order the commencement of investigations or the filing of public charges in amendment of the contested decision. (...) Illnesses do not constitute a case of misfortune when immediate treatment becomes necessary without the threat of further damage, but only when there is a sudden worsening. (RGSt 75, 68 (71); MüKo StGB § 323c RN. 58). Insofar as the receipt of benefits under SGB II is said to have caused damage to your health, the defendant’s actions or omissions are neither causal nor objectively attributable to her.”²⁵¹

As comprehensively explained in this book, the Public Prosecutor General's Office had been aware of the progressive deterioration for years. The words of Public Prosecutor K. were of a perversion that left one speechless. It is also important to clarify here that at no point did this prosecutor do anything to check whether classism was making people ill. Instead, he simply implied that it was not true. He used reframing to distract from the real question of why people were socially stigmatised in authorities in such a way that they became

²⁵¹ Letter from the Public Prosecutor General's Office dated 27 November 2023 / 54 Zs 757/23

ill as a result, and instead focused on whether it constituted failure to provide assistance to some abstract sick person.

It was always fundamentally doubted that the classism in Hartz IV made people ill, even though there was no objective evidence to support that this was not the case, but only prejudices about the poor, who were seen as deserving of this punishment. Therefore, the same punishment could not result in illness in a way that would constitute bodily harm or other crimes.

I recommend that you, the reader, take a break here from time to time, as this text is very dense. This is important for reasons of authentic documentation, but it can be quite exhausting.

17

I wrote to Justice Minister Strawberry:

"I want to emphasise once again: It is a scientifically proven fact that classism, like racism or anti-Semitism, makes people ill. It is a proven fact that the Hartz IV (citizen's income) system is ideologically permeated by classism. In other words, it is characterised by lies that portray the poor as worthless, useless, lazy, and resistant. This leads to dispossession and disenfranchisement, violating fundamental human rights. The law cannot be based on the ravings of right-wing radicals. But this is exactly what we find everywhere in the Hartz IV system. Classism, like anti-Semitism, is a crime, and we have caught several ministers, civil servants, public prosecutors, and judges attempting to cover up the fact that hundreds of people in Germany are being made ill by classism."²⁵²

You certainly reach a point here where you no longer want to hear any more of this, as it becomes an overwhelming burden. My point is that you need to understand how the events unfolded and how difficult it is for those affected to escape this violence. Because if I had simply stopped writing letters, how could I have gone on? How could I have escaped depression and despair without justice, in a situation where not only was all help refused, but no bridge was built for me to use my resources to escape poverty? In my neurodivergence, I could not simply ignore the injustice.

But what would the solution have been? Essentially, the state should recognise that what artists do is work and an important contribution, and that the resulting poverty is neither their fault nor a legitimate reason to demand the end of their art. Like me, you couldn't produce work for 30 years that was

²⁵² Letter to the Minister of Justice in Brandenburg, dated 30.33.2023

barely remunerated without that work becoming part of your identity. Without it, I no longer knew what I was doing in the world.

18

In a letter dated 1 December 2024, the Cottbus public prosecutor's office again tried to justify itself:

"You are complaining about the failure to pay for treatment costs (dental scan for a crunch splint) and see this as bodily harm."²⁵³

As previously discussed, the bodily harm was not essentially that I was not paid for the grinding splint, but that they denied I needed it as a result of the psychological terror caused by the Job Centre. The psychological terror, which led to tooth damage, was clearly bodily harm. Public Prosecutor Ö. simply twisted the facts until she was able to halt the investigation. The bruxism would have been evidence of bodily harm in itself, but then all other cases would have had to be re-examined in this light. Then, what I had been saying all along would have been proven true. Of course, I also informed the Public Prosecutor's Office about this violation of the law. No response. Mistakes were never corrected, as already discussed. They simply continued with a new public prosecutor, who then took an abbreviated view of the case and ignored everything complex in order to stop investigations against right-wing officials.

Right-wing economists

On 1 December 2023, I complained to the well-known economist Prof. R., who wrote in an article in *Der Spiegel*:

"Starting with the citizen's income, which should be more closely linked to the individual's ability to pay (...) Almost everyone can and should do something. And if that's not enough, then we'll give them the rest. That has always been the idea behind our welfare state. What I mean, for example, is that it is unacceptable for some neighbourhoods in Berlin to have a 40 percent basic welfare rate – but no suitcases can be loaded at BER airport simply because people are missing."

The economist was calling for a tougher stance towards the poor. The spiral of right-wing populism was now spinning faster and faster, as the money for Chancellor Scholz's traffic-light government was running out.

I wrote to him:

"This statement of yours is based on typical classist, poor-racist narratives (...)"

²⁵³ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 1 December 2023 / 1360 Js 27204/23

He replied:

“Sorry, but I haven't found you in the academic literature on poverty research.”

Here we experienced the common arrogance of many economists who deliberately obfuscate social racism.

Every time I read another one of these articles or heard plum, grape, avocado, or neoliberal economists ranting, it meant days of depression, anger, despair, and fear for me. It made little or no difference to the bodies and souls of those affected whether these people were right-wing extremists, anti-Semites, racists, or misogynists. It always meant inflicting pain.

Plum, grape, avocado – they all hit people with these unspeakable words, and we paid them handsomely in their jobs, in their status, and thought they were the successful ones who were moving the country forward. What a perverse delusion.

The next level of violence

Shortly after Christmas, when my holidays with my family were deliberately ruined, I received a summons to the main hearing, which was scheduled for 29 January 2024. So, the new year began for me once again with terror. For weeks, I had been preoccupied with nothing but preparing my defense. For a long time, I hoped, I thought, that they would withdraw the case after all, because none of this made any legal sense.

Next, I asked the Job Centre to grant me full access to the files. I now had to collect and document further evidence of the lies. I also asked the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Blueberry, and the district administrator for access to the files. Nobody replied. The Minister of Culture, Raspberry, again did not respond to the request to comment on the scandal. So, Raspberry remained silent about the fact that I was being dragged to court, even though she had known for years that right-wing officials were persecuting me because of my art.

21

On 3 January, I wrote another letter to the Minister of Health, Melon:

“On 27 September 2023, I was informed by T. from your office that I would shortly be notified of the results of an investigation into the cover-up of health damage by your office, in the context of bullying within the Hartz IV/citizen benefit system. To date, I have heard nothing from you. You are obviously trying to cover up the matter.”

On 8 January 2024, the public prosecutor M. who insulted me was again acquitted of any guilt, i.e. obstruction of justice, by a public prosecutor P.²⁵⁴

The 130-kilo man. Lies of the witness

A day later, I received copies of the court file, which I was allowed to inspect at Bad Liebenwerda District Court. In the minutes of the hearing of the head of the Elbe-Elster Job Centre, Ms. S., it says about me:

“The accused is being looked after by the Job Centre and is known there. There have already been several confrontations with the accused, 'only' verbal so far.”²⁵⁵

When I read this for the first time in court, I turned around and asked the 130-kilogram clerk why he was standing behind me. He replied that it was because of what was in the file about me.

This made it clear why the public prosecutor’s office was so insistent on prosecuting me. In addition to the file full of lies at the Job Centre, the manager, Ms. S., had also made a massive contribution to portraying me as a violent thug. She exaggerated wildly, knowing that this would further fuel right-wing resentment against the poor:

“The accused has repeatedly attracted attention at the Job Centre for his extremely aggressive and uncooperative behaviour. The JC staff feel threatened by the accused and are frightened, as it is impossible to predict whether the accused will stop at verbal attacks.”

So, Ms. S. very generously reached into the drawer of populism and simply lied about extreme accusations she knew would harm me with the police and the public prosecutor's office. I would like to point out that almost all of the documents that led to this assessment of the Job Centre were quoted or discussed in this book. To interpret this as violence by me was violence in itself. What she called “aggressive behaviour”—namely, simply harsh criticism of human rights violations and incomprehensible conditions in the authorities—was right and important at all times. By describing criticism by a cultural worker as “aggressive behaviour,” she deliberately wanted to paint

²⁵⁴ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 8 January 2024 / 1360 Js 50061/23

²⁵⁵ Protocol from the police of 31.5.2022

a picture in which I would appear ready to use violence. The head of the Job Centre probably knew or suspected that the complaint would otherwise not be effective:

“In the present case, the accused had sent a letter to the JC, specifically to the complainant. In this letter, he made untrue allegations, for example that the JC and its dealings with him were to blame for a deterioration in his state of health.”

The fact that this was treated as “real slander” or “defamation” by the Cottbus public prosecutor's office until the court proceedings, without considering the psychological terror in the Job Centres—which is objectively detectable everywhere and generally known—shows that right-wing resentment has massively erased facts. Even Attorney General Apple, who was presented with these quotes several times, saw no reason to withdraw the complaint. The minutes also stated:

“He was threatened with the withdrawal of Hartz IV benefits, which the accused took as a death threat against his person. In the letter, the accused then also stated that he had forwarded it to the public prosecutor’s office and the EE district administrator, so that these authorities were also aware of the work of the JC EE. This is then presented by the accused as defamation, since the allegations of the accused are not true, but these were then passed on to the authorities in the case, which diminishes the reputation of the JC EE.”

It was therefore apparently more relevant for Public Prosecutor S. that I diminished the reputation of a dubiously acting authority by criticizing it as a poverty researcher, therapist (according to HPG), and artist, based on facts. She assumed 100%, without any professional knowledge and without checking the facts, that to say the Job Centre had made me ill was a lie in any case. The public prosecutor had not spoken to my former therapist or doctors. She was covered up by the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office and the General Public Prosecutor Apple, while Minister of Justice Erdbeere continued to stand idly by and probably allowed this persecution for political reasons. There is no other way to judge the matter, given the numerous letters in which the facts of the case were clarified.

In the police report, it almost sounded as if I had made death threats. You have to imagine that the public prosecutor's office had known for years that I was constantly presenting evidence that the classism and social racism in Hartz IV were making people ill, and yet, as previously discussed, Attorney General Apple had been informed of all this and was pursuing a charge of defamation, flanked by right-wing extremist resentment that I was a thug, i.e., an “antisocialist,” because I complained about being impoverished. The manager

of the Elbe-Elster Job Centre did everything she could to serve social-racist narratives against the poor.

In another protocol concerning one of the other three complaints to the police, the statement by Ms. S., the head of the Job Centre, said: “In the present case, the JCEE rejected an application by the accused or requested additional documents. In reply to this, the accused then insulted the complainant, accusing her of suffering from cognitive impairment.”

Again, an extreme distortion of the facts that Apple was told. The actual sentence was: *“The letter from your authority once again borders on cognitive disorder, which leaves you speechless.”*

Neurotypicals may simplify this as an insult because they relate everything to status in the group, i.e., to honor, which neurodivergents do not do. For autistic people, this is a precise and factual statement. So it wasn’t about Ms. S. personally, but about the sick behaviour of the Job Centre, constantly sending me these two nonsensical and inhumane forms to prevent therapy, which could have been used to document severe trauma caused by the Job Centre. The aforementioned letter was also a software-generated text full of text modules. Both Public Prosecutor S. and Attorney General Apple were informed several times that this sentence of mine was obviously a criticism of power in a factual context—far from being an insult.

“Furthermore, in the letter, the defendant issues an ultimatum that all his demands must be met within a week and all costs must be paid.”

Of course, this was neither a bomb threat nor blackmail, but I simply used the word “ultimatum” instead of the term “deadline.” So I used the more common word in art, whereas lawyers prefer to speak of setting a deadline.

“The accused is not unknown in the JCEE. He has shown himself to be uncooperative in all the processing required to date. He has already sent several such letters to the JCEE, probably in an attempt to intimidate the JCEE or its employees. The JC is endeavouring to report all these cases to the police, as it is not foreseeable whether the accused will be tempted to escalate his behaviour. The accused can be expected to assault JCEE employees.”

25

I never met Mrs. S. in person. I only saw her during the court hearing. Nevertheless, she voiced speculations that she knew would cause me extreme distress throughout the proceedings. She argued that I was trying to intimidate her and her employees. Of course, that’s the whole point of press

and media freedom—that government agencies should fear their offences being exposed. Of course, activists exert pressure and artists provoke. This is all part of democratic discourse and a necessity against abuse of power, as you can see here. The Cottbus public prosecutor’s office therefore allowed normal democratic behaviour, such as harsh criticism of state misconduct, to become a pretext for criminalising critics in advance, as if the logical next step in investigative journalism was always terrorism, or as if the consequence of critical art was always a killing spree. What Apple allowed here was simply anti-democratic and testified to a professionally subterranean understanding of the rule of law. Apparently, this practice was common in many Job Centres, which can only be described as a crime in itself. After all, dragging anyone who rightly criticised the Job Centre to court under the cynical accusation of averting danger was—and is—inhumane and insane. It is also significant that the term “processing,” i.e., the processing of people, was a classic Stasi term. Processing someone usually meant using more or less psychological violence or torture. Sentences from the police such as: “The accused is known to the police four times” did not exactly help to deal with the matter objectively. The police knew that it was always about the same accusations from the Job Centre.

In another police report, the head of the Job Centre, Ms. S., said the following about me: *“For example, he accuses me of bullying him in my actions, where he claims to have suffered damage to his health. Ms. B. represents the Job Centre in court. He also accuses her, by omitting important facts in court, of having suffered a health disadvantage as a result. I am also submitting further letters from Mr. Speed in this regard. I request that this complaint be added to the other complaints filed.”*

Even if everything I said, for example, that I was made ill, had been wrong at the time—Mrs. S. also had the studies—it was now obviously correct, because her right-wing terror against me confirmed my accusations of right-wing radicalism and bullying in the authority. The Job Centre was now obviously showing how it stigmatised, discriminated, lied, and cheated. Labour Minister Kiwi had been asked months earlier to remove Head S. for this very reason, but never responded. The Ministry of Labour obviously did not care about human lives. It was also politically desirable on its part that the poor were treated in this way. This also applied to Minister Pair, who was now head of the Federal Labour Agency.

The angry citizen has no artistic freedom

The Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office looked at many of the dismissals of criminal charges I had filed, as the file in court also showed, but without considering the overall context. They could have addressed the problem of the cover-up of classism in all these cases. Instead, they used the many dismissals as evidence that I was lying. They constructed a truth for themselves from the lies of the prosecution by taking the repeated dismissal of my charges as proof that the authorities were right. Because Public Prosecutor M. did not believe me about the PTSD, refused to check it, and because Public Prosecutor S. was acquitted by him for persecuting innocent people, she did not allow herself to be swayed by my objection, with all the details and facts, and wrote on 8 November 2023:

“With reference to the defendant's objection of 26 October 2023, I am informed that the reasoning does not lead to any change in my legal opinion. The defendant undoubtedly feels disadvantaged by the Job Centre in general and the social court dispute that has been fought. The administrative regulations exist and must also be complied with by the relevant caseworkers. The defendant cannot change this with his numerous letters. The 'psychological terror' felt by the accused does not constitute a justification.”²⁵⁶

27

Public Prosecutor S. portrayed me as someone who, as Public Prosecutor M. had previously written, blamed the whole world for what was happening to him. This was true in the sense that it was always about putting everything into context in order to break through the simulation and expose the widespread abuses. However, like Public Prosecutor M., she used this to ultimately portray me as a crazy, angry citizen. She was also able to simply lie about my illness in order to justify the defamation she claimed I was committing. It was also significant that the political side of the work I had been doing as an artist and human rights defender for decades was consistently denied. This made it possible to shift everything into the subjective. What I was doing was no longer seen in the context of society as a whole, or as part of the legitimate work of artists and scientists to expose grievances that affected all of us, but was instead framed as my subjective problem with the authorities. She could not have justified an offence in any other way. Freedom of art would have taken precedence. Public Prosecutor S. denied the entire political and artistic dimension of my work. This was the only reason why the

²⁵⁶ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office in the court file dated 8 November 2023

charge was possible. This separation was and still is typical, especially for public prosecutors' offices when dealing with activists from the left-wing spectrum. From a democratic point of view, this is highly dangerous. In this way, the authorities were constantly limiting their own responsibility and jurisdiction. They pretended that the problems and grievances that activists were trying to make visible, and for which they risked everything, did not exist. This made the behaviour of activists appear inappropriate, so it was easier to distort what they did than to acknowledge violence. This method of withdrawing political, journalistic, scientific, or artistic legitimacy from the actions of activists, artists, and journalists served as a reframing of the deliberate persecution of the innocent, as could be observed with Julian Assange, as well as with the activists of the Last Generation and, ultimately, with me. This removed the legitimacy of the criticism.

The fact that Public Prosecutor S. spoke of “psychological terror” in quotation marks, thereby marginalising and trivialising it, proved that right-wing resentment had permeated so deeply that my suffering could no longer be seen. Job Centre employees who were merely criticised in letters appeared to these prosecutors as victims of “left-wing terrorist violence,” while people like me, at the bottom of the power hierarchy, who were at the mercy of others, subjected to real violence, could be criminalised without any problem.

Of course, Germany had—and still has—a massive problem with right-wing radicals in its own authorities. My case clearly demonstrated that.

By not even considering “psychological terror” as a valid reason for a victim to “insult” the perpetrator, it showed how little the life of a poor person mattered to her. In her mind, there was a clear hierarchy in which the honour of civil servants took precedence over the health of the poor. The symbolic violence lay in the fact that the poor were expected to be grateful, yet were not allowed to criticise the “help.” That would be deemed impertinent and completely ignored the violence perpetrated by the Job Centre. We generally call this social racism.

Hidden files

I then wrote to the head of the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office, Ms. Banana, on 12 January 2023:

“In view of the evidence submitted herewith, you are requested to discontinue the SLAPP complaint against me immediately.”

Even when the lies of the Job Centre manager, Ms. S., became known, the complaint was not dropped by the public prosecutor. This was because they did not question her resentment, but instead confirmed the image of a vile, poor person accusing civil servants.

On the same day, I filed an application for the proceedings to be discontinued on the grounds of innocence under § 170 or § 153 StGB. This application was, inconceivably, passed back to Public Prosecutor S., who now found herself in a further conflict of interest. If she had allowed the case to be dropped, she would have accused herself of having prosecuted me unjustly. After all, she was still under investigation in this matter. So, the public prosecutor should have been replaced long ago.

Serious misconduct on the part of Senior Public Prosecutor Banana.

29

I wrote to Justice Minister Erdbeere on 11 January 2024:

“My doctor said to me two days ago: 'If this goes on, it will kill me.'”

The minister still did not respond. She also knew from this letter that the witness, Mrs. S., had lied on a massive scale, and that the public prosecutor had only questioned Mrs. S. and Mrs. B., with Mrs. B. saying almost nothing, except that her boss, Mrs. S., had told her that I had been reported.

As previously discussed, Mrs. S. had never met me until the court hearing. Even now that Mrs. S.'s lies had been explained, the public prosecutor did not question my actual job recruiter, who had known me for years. In other words, the person who could have uncovered the entire scam—the person who constantly advised me in countless meetings about my self-employed work as an artist, which the public prosecutor's office regarded as a refusal to work—was never questioned.

I also asked the minister to remove Public Prosecutor S. from office. That didn't happen either.

30

I was still waiting to see the Job Centre file. In the meantime, I received a letter asking if I wanted to see “all” the files. So, I replied to Mrs. S.:

“You were requested on 29.12.23, in view of the criminal proceedings planned for 29.01.24, quote: 'You are hereby requested, under the witness of Judge B. and the public prosecutor's office, to allow me to inspect the entire file on me that is in your system within one week free of charge.' In response, I received a letter

from your office on 17 January, after the deadline of 15 January had expired, stating: 'Does your request relate to a specific period of time? If so, please let me know which one.'

Although access to the 'entire file on me' was clearly requested, i.e., all years of the reference, you are now deliberately distorting the facts of the case in the usual bureaucratic manipulation to stall for time, so that I cannot inspect the entire file before the main hearing. You are obviously trying to prevent or make it more difficult to uncover lies and fraud at the Job Centre by deception and bureaucratic tricks.

I have therefore informed Judge B., Senior Public Prosecutor G. from the General Public Prosecutor's Office, and the head of the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office, Senior Public Prosecutor L., about your trickery. If you do not want me, together with the data protection officer Hartge and the administrative lawyer responsible here in Brandenburg, to legally force you to give me access to the files in the presence of the press—which would make you look even more guilty—then I recommend that you also allow me full access to the files before the trial begins.”

As a result, two days before the start of the trial, I received a large box from the post office containing six thick files. They had sent me the entire file, i.e., bank statements, basically everything I had ever sent them, but not the internal notes in VerBIS²⁵⁷, which were always at issue. So, not the actual file full of lies about me. This was another move to try to make the public prosecutor's office believe that I was doing everything right.

I also explained this attempted fraud to all the authorities and ministries involved. Against this background, the public prosecutor also rejected my new application for discontinuation, and so the first date of the main hearing was held in Bad Liebenwerda on 29 January 2024.

The right-wing M. reveals himself

Shortly before that, I received a decisive letter from Public Prosecutor M. from the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office, who has already been mentioned here several times: *“The public prosecutor rightly differentiated between dental treatment on the one hand and its financing at the expense of the general public or the solidarity community of those with health insurance on the other. As a recipient of citizen's allowance, you are insured with the AOK health insurance*

²⁵⁷ Software in the job centre for managing the unemployed.

fund, which covers almost all necessary medical treatment." In fact, I was insured with Barmer, and here, too, you could see how little the public prosecutor was interested in the facts:

"The labour administration has no influence on this, because the health insurance company makes the decision on its own responsibility. In this case, it appears to have refused to cover the costs, which strongly suggests that the treatment was not absolutely necessary."

Public Prosecutor M. simply fabricated causalities that he had not verified. If the treatment had not taken place, there would have been complete tooth loss, with pain for weeks, months, or years. The public prosecutor used reframing to distort the fact that it was still not the refusal to pay alone that constituted the criminal behaviour, but the Job Centre's cover-up of the violence associated with the refusal to pay, which had contributed to the bruxism in the first place.

"There is no obligation on the part of the labour administration to bear such additional costs for you."

This was also incorrect if you had caused the illness yourself. There were hardship regulations that should have been applied here, and ultimately there was a guarantor obligation, but this was fundamentally denied by the state.

"You are not prevented from receiving treatment, but you have to pay the costs yourself. You can do this by being thrifty and doing without."

As I said, I worked for society for 30 years for a pittance, like many other cultural workers. But the full extent of right-wing extremist ideology was now revealed in the following:

"One possibility—which I naturally hate to remind you of because of your expected angry complaint—would be work. You have so often pointed out your talent as a book author, artist, and film producer that such a step should be possible for you (if you overcome yourself)."

Public Prosecutor M. now stated it directly. The public prosecutor's office also considered me a work refuser because I didn't give up art and didn't stop Speed's work. They thought I was a work refuser because my contributions of 30 years were hardly honoured, even though everything took place in a 40-hour week and society made profits from my work. It became increasingly clear that the public prosecutor's office equated poverty with laziness and ignored the entire complex issue of poverty and labour. They used the usual lies of capitalism, as well as the associated right-wing extremist narratives.

The consequence of this was that I was condemned for work that obviously showed that jobs were not suitable for addressing the complex issues of our time, because these people weren't working with me. They didn't care that thousands of people were falling seriously ill. They didn't care about the truth. What mattered to them was that they got money at the end of the month, which legitimised everything they did.

So how can one arrive at the absurd claim that jobs are one hundred percent proof of a useful contribution to society and that anyone without a job is necessarily useless? And you see, the work that creative artists do is there to make such connections visible.

32

Public Prosecutor M. insulted me in a socially racist manner, thereby demonstrating the basic attitude that public prosecutors' offices had towards the poor, which had led to the bending of the law. Public Prosecutor M. was not prosecuted for his right-wing theories. After ten years of research, I finally had direct evidence of right-wing violence and right-wing ideology in the public prosecutor's office. Because M. made this statement, it became much clearer how the bending of the law took place, namely through reframing, covering up, and fragmenting evidence to tear it out of its respective context, as well as by marginalising the victims' testimony in line with epistemic injustice. It was now proven that massive racism prevailed in the public prosecutor's offices, replacing reality, with considerable consequences for the justice system itself and for those affected.

On 24 January 2024, I informed Minister of Justice Erdbeere about the insults directed at me by Public Prosecutor M.:

"This is what M., a public prosecutor in this country, writes about me as an artist who works 40 hours a week, precariously, like almost all artists in the country, for the preservation of culture. He writes this even though I have just shot a feature film with a market value of around two million euros, with the participation of the then leader of the opposition in the Bundestag and later Berlin's Senator for Social Affairs, Katja Kipping, as well as the support of the National Poverty Conference. M. wrote this even though he knew that I had been working on state-funded projects for the country for three years with grants and cultural funding for a pittance. Namely, the Hartz IV rate. Like many other cultural workers in the country, without whom this country would no longer have a free cultural scene."

On the same day, Public Prosecutor M. wrote to me again:

“The case has been dropped because no criminal offence was found. Your request for an apology from the Cottbus public prosecutor’s office for whatever injustice you may have suffered presupposes a relationship between private individuals meeting on an equal footing. However, this is not the case here, as the Cottbus public prosecutor’s office is required by law to deal with your submissions and, if necessary, to investigate your offences. If this is not done to your satisfaction, the law (in this case: the Code of Criminal Procedure) provides you with further options. However, there is no entitlement to an apology. Moreover, there is no reason for an apology.”²⁵⁸

The public prosecutor left no stone unturned in further humiliating me. He wrote: *“Neither can ‘the Job Centre’ make itself liable to prosecution, as it is merely an institution and, in common parlance, also a building. Only natural persons can make themselves liable to prosecution, but your complaint provides no evidence of this. Rather, it is a matter of repeating accusations like a prayer wheel, which are obviously nonsensical and have already been ruled on several times.”*

The first day of the trial

It was a chilly day on 29 January 2024 when I arrived at the district court in Bad Liebenwerda with my girlfriend. I was visibly nervous. We had to wait for another half hour because another hearing was still in progress. The judge had previously informed me that she had appointed a court-appointed psychiatrist.

My first thought was that they obviously wanted to declare me insane so that they would never have to listen to me again. So that everything I had worked on for 30 years would be dismissed as the work of a madman. At the same time, I saw this as an opportunity to finally have a psychiatrist confirm that the psychological terror was real.

When I was called up—I didn't have a lawyer—I entered the courtroom, had packed a huge trolley case full of files and books with references, and unpacked them first. The judge, who had already complained to me beforehand that I was writing so many letters, looked latently horrified at the hundreds of pages of prepared motions for evidence that I spread out in front of her. Three tables were full of paper. She snappily asked me to sit down, but I was still looking for a precedent from the Federal Constitutional Court,

²⁵⁸ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 24 January 2024 regarding 1360 Ujs 30680/23

according to which the statement "right-wing extremist" is not defamatory criticism. I found the documents after a few minutes and handed them to her. This was followed by the usual opening and reading out of the indictment on the three counts of insult and defamation already mentioned. When I asked whether the public prosecutor present could decide independently of Public Prosecutor S., it was made clear to me that I would not be criticised any further. The room was filled with antipathy towards me.

I announced that I would now read out a statement for half an hour. This was met with a grumpy response. So, I read aloud:

"It is imperative that those involved in this process change their perspective accordingly. This case has several layers. There is a political dimension, a personal dimension, an artistic dimension, and a psychological trauma dimension. I firmly believe that what I have said, I can and must be able to say in a democracy. Furthermore, in both cases of alleged offences, I said it in a state of severe trauma in the context of complex post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of persecution by state authorities over a period of 10 years. As I will show, I was massively threatened and harassed by the Job Centre for years and very specifically in the run-up to my statements. The increasing harshness of my language also resulted from the fact that I was in a state of emergency, begging for therapy, which was made impossible for me. So self-defence must also be considered here, because since neither the public prosecutor's office nor the police wanted to help me in this emergency situation, the situation became life-threatening for me. I was living in severe fear and traumatised due to massive bullying, including by the Elbe-Elster Job Centre. I can't show you this emotional trauma in this room today, as the psychiatric expert will certainly be able to explain to you, because I have to protect myself and therefore see this as a kind of role as an actor, because otherwise I would collapse in the face of the terror committed against me here too. (...) The public prosecutor's office must accept that this is not about the question of whether the behaviour of the officials and state employees I criticised was right, along the lines of whether they did their job properly, which was only the issue at first glance, but it was always essentially about confronting state authorities with the fact that their 'rule-compliant behaviour' makes people ill and is based on right-wing extremist ideologies that can be traced back through research to the GDR and Nazi fascism, because the treatment of the poor after 1945 was not dealt with in the Federal Republic and the GDR. So, we find traces of right-wing ideology everywhere in the institutions. Today's Job Centres emerged from the welfare institutions of eugenics, adopting concepts such as integration or antisociality, as well as the logic of mistreating the poor. Racial "value group IV" became Hartz IV. The

contempt for humanity remained. My criticism of eugenic racism, social Darwinism, and social racism, which is omnipresent due to the classism contained in the Citizen's Income / Hartz IV legislation, i.e. the deliberate stigmatisation and contempt of the poor, as well as their institutional discrimination, can of course be publicly expressed by me as a poverty researcher, artist, and publicist at any time, as a critique of power. For we live in a time in which there is hardly anything more to fear than the return of the old contempt for humanity of fascism. The public prosecutor's office is travelling in very dangerous waters if it does not take the accusation of social racism and the associated right-wing radicalism seriously. If it denies that the actions of the Job Centre, which we will have to go into in detail, as well as the behaviour of the public prosecutor's office, naturally contain right-wing ideas about the poor. For as the law against incitement of the people and Holocaust denial states: 'Anyone who condones, denies or trivialises an act of the kind described in Section 6 (1) of the International Criminal Code committed under the rule of National Socialism in a manner that is likely to disturb public peace, either publicly or in an assembly, shall be liable to imprisonment for up to five years or a fine.' So, if the public prosecutor's office trivialises social racism, because of which thousands of so-called 'antisocials' were murdered in concentration camps, as the Hartz IV recipients of that time, if the traces of this violent ideology are not recognised and taken seriously in the civil benefits system, we must also speak of Holocaust denial in the public prosecutor's office."

34

You could literally hear the lawyers swallowing. Of course, my statement was an exaggeration. But I saw an opportunity in linking the trivialisation of social racism with the trivialisation of the Holocaust. I didn't equate Hartz IV with Dachau, but I made a connection between a shift to the right in the country, which increasingly led to persecution and violence against the poor, and which was also directed against Jews and other groups that were persecuted under the Nazis. So, anyone who trivialised social racism was also trivialising anti-Semitism or racism, because these forms of racism were intertwined. In my opinion, eugenic racism had to be clearly recognisable in the Hartz IV system, as an ideology of racial hygiene, because similar speech acts and similar views on the poor also surfaced in the citizen's allowance system. They wanted to eradicate something inferior within their own ranks through pressure and psychological violence, even to the point of refusing food. And they wanted to escalate this structural violence further and further, as Adorno and Horkheimer had warned about the insanity of instrumental reason.

As I looked into the eyes of the prosecutor sitting opposite me, I had the impression that, for the first time, something came into my consciousness that allowed me to recognise, at least for a few seconds, the suffering and pain of the poor.

35

“Anyone who still denies that the poor are persecuted, humiliated, and threatened in Germany because of their alleged antisociality is trivialising German history and contributing to this horror being repeated against the same group of victims as back then. Even today, politicians like Grape, Avocado, Apricot, or Plum are calling for the complete withdrawal of food from the poor, whom they declare to be antisocial, in line with incitement to hatred, without even coming close to understanding the actual facts. This naturally leads to the massive traumatisation of millions of people in the country who live in fear because of such radical right-wing ideologies, just as Jews, Roma, and Sinti do today. (...)”

The form of criticism I have chosen is unconditional under § 5 of the freedom of art. This means that there is no reservation whatsoever against artistic criticism of the Job Centre, even if it is harsh. The Federal Constitutional Court recently made this clear. Because what I am criticising is crucial for social discourse, which is why the case was filmed for the cinema, censorship must not take place here because bourgeois conservative attitudes cause the public prosecutor's office to gasp when state authorities, which they regard as infallible, are then clearly and pointedly criticised in their behaviour by an artist. Because it was always factual and concrete behaviour that was criticised, never individual persons. If it was about people, it was about their function in processes, not about their private personality.

Since what I did was not the first time it had happened, but since I have been provoking institutions and companies for decades within the framework of artistic freedom, in the service of society, and have been rewarded for it with state grants, the public prosecutor's office cannot now pretend that it can look at my behaviour in isolation from the overall context of 30 years of work for the culture of this country, isolated from my intention, which is publicly known. Mrs. S. also knew about this context. This means that the balancing of personal rights is quite complex here. I'll tell you why. Because this cannot be related to art in general, its rights, which would restrict the unconditional freedom of art, but only in specific relation to the art of the respective artist. So you can't say that art in general has limits here, because as the Federal Constitutional Court has stated, it depends on the specific work. So you have to know the artist's work,

you have to know what the artist wants and why they are doing what they are doing, you have to refer to the specific artist when making a judgment on the balance between artistic freedom and possibly violated personal rights. Anything else would be a misjudgement of the Basic Law. This is the difference between many other areas of the Basic Law that are not granted unconditionally.

However, this also makes it difficult to establish fundamental injustice in advance. Something that requires a very fundamental understanding of the work of these particular artists in the context of art in general. If, for example, provocation is a means of concrete art, this cannot be viewed in isolation from that art solely in relation to the personal rights of another, because this collides with the unconditional nature of art. So you can't simply judge provocation as an insult as if it had taken place on the street between normal citizens, but this must be done in the light of the concrete and known art of the respective artist, which the public prosecutor S. did not do, because she simply doesn't know my art of the last 30 years. Simply put, there is no uniform legal opinion on what a specific artist may express in their work in relation to the personal rights of another, apart from extremes, because this depends essentially on the work of the respective artist, their will, their intention.

See the call by the artist Schlingensiefel at the time: "Kill Helmut Kohl!" Artists are allowed to do a lot in their productions, and rightly so. Because it is important to feed public discourse with changed perspectives. A distinction must be made between reception and intention. Just because art offends me doesn't mean that the artist intended to do so. This means that the artist in question cannot be expected to think about the legal understanding of judges who view the case afterwards in their art in advance. Because art would not be possible that way. A lot of art leads to outrage. But that is not punishable by law. (...)

Nobody who calls someone an "asshole" or deliberately wants to offend their honour does so on the basis of 10,000 pages of secondary literature and publishes nine books on the subject in advance, while at the same time making a two-hour film about the behaviour of the Job Centre, with actors, interviews, and a gigantic production effort. State-funded, and therefore of great public interest, as my work proves. (...)

As you can see from the statements and decrees of Public Prosecutor S., she denies me the right as a cultural worker to criticise state agencies with clear and harsh words. But she has no right to do so, because I am concerned here with preserving human lives. It's about clarifying the abuses that are destroying people. (...)

So it doesn't matter whether Mrs. S., or Mrs. B., or the public prosecutors responsible here can or cannot change the Hartz IV or Citizens' Benefits Act, which of course does not imply that my criticism is inappropriate, but the only decisive factor here is the fact, proven by research, that the "legally compliant behaviour" of the public authority employees involved has led to making me and others ill and, even when they knew this, when this was comprehensively proven to them, with studies and research results, these judges, public prosecutors, and people like Mrs. S. (head of the Job Centre) or the Attorney General Apple continued to adhere to the violence, actively participated in intensifying it against me, or, like Apple, just watched calmly. (...)

That's why I'm calling on the public prosecutor's office to accept the simple fact that the classism in the civil benefits system leads to bullying situations that make people ill and that if I then criticise this madness, this inconceivable contempt for humanity in clear terms, this must be accepted in a democracy and is of course desirable in a free society. Any attempt to portray me as a lunatic or a criminal citizen of rage will accordingly lead to the public prosecutor's office making itself even more guilty than it already is. I realise that, as lawyers, you are not used to someone addressing problems freely, concisely, and directly. But that is what artists do, and it must not lead to my discrimination that this does not correspond to your values, because the Basic Law wants me to expand your values. (...)

When Rosa Parks refused to get up from a white person's seat on 1 December 1955 in the USA as a black person to defend herself against racism, she was not interested in whether the bus driver was just doing his job or not. This is a principle of what human rights defenders like me do. Namely, to constantly and consistently confront local authorities with their violation of fundamental human rights. Rosa Parks sat down on a bus. It's hard to imagine a more profane place of conflict. So why shouldn't I be allowed to say in a German Job Centre that right-wing speech acts are taking place here or that the sending out of insane forms without any context is cognitively disturbed? Of course, the automated sending of text modules, including the associated confusion and context-free language, is cognitively disturbed. It's all the more insane when this is linked to the threat of denying a PTSD sufferer like me their entire livelihood. The public prosecutor's office also has to accept the UN Declaration of 9 December 1998, which was also signed by the German government. It states: "Everyone has the right, individually and in community with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels." So even the United Nations is behind me here. I therefore call on you, as a cultural worker in

this country and a human rights defender, to put an end to violence against the poor and to take immediate action against the real culprits. (...)

You have to recognise that classism makes you ill, or live with being publicly accused by civil society as social racists and Holocaust deniers. You have to accept the political dimension of this case and respect the work of cultural workers. The Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office should be ashamed of itself for allowing a public prosecutor M. to insult me as an "antisocialist" in the Nazi tradition against this background."

36

At the end of my presentation, you could hear a pin drop. Judge B., a little unsettled, explained that, of course, artistic freedom also played a role here, but that would have to be examined first. I referred to artistic freedom throughout the proceedings because, in everything I did as an autistic person, I was not separate from my art as a person; everything was enactive work in the sense of art. My actions were therefore an artistic sculpture in public space. All my letters, all my statements, were part of this sculpture.

I was now irritated, but I didn't react; I waited. The judge herself was obviously aware of the absurdity of the situation. At the same time, she seemed to be politically bound; in other words, they wanted to protect the institution from me. They didn't want me to summon ministers as witnesses, who would then be questioned by me in the presence of the press. The fact that the obvious—namely my obvious innocence—was pushed to the back of the queue, was explained by the fact that it had gone too far to simply stand up now and end the matter, which would have meant a loss of face for too many high-ranking officials, calling for a new reframing. So, she approached the court psychiatrist to see if he could make an appointment with me to clarify whether I was incapable of guilt.

What the judge did here was unbelievable. She didn't acquit me, despite my obvious innocence, but instructed a psychiatrist to declare me incompetent simply to enable the institutions to save face. She did this before the hearing of evidence had even begun. I was therefore not given the opportunity to prove my innocence and the guilt of the officers. I emphasise this again: I was denied the opportunity to prove the guilt of the others. It was simply assumed that my statements were false, were not based on 20 years of research, and were therefore simply insults.

Judge B. referred to what had apparently happened 10 years ago, because I had stated that it had been 10 years. The judge obviously wanted to find a

reason for all this, preferably from a decade ago, so that everyone, including the Job Centre, would come out of the matter unscathed. I didn't disagree, because I was exhausted and it seemed clear that this perverse manoeuvre would only entangle them further. This manoeuvre was intended to conceal the fact that I had been innocently persecuted for months for political reasons. At the same time, my incapacity would have assigned me guilt without having to prove it, thus exonerating everyone else.

The district administrator's revenge

A week later, in a daze, I received another summons to the police because of a new criminal complaint against me. It was again for defamation. Shocked, I called the police to find out what was going on. The police officer explained to me that the public prosecutor's office had dug up the old case about District Administrator Peach, which had long been time-barred, and had established that I had never been questioned. They now wanted to make up for it.

So, the public prosecutor's office intended to entice me to make statements that might have enabled them to take action against me in this area too, even though the public prosecutor's office had previously repeatedly rejected the district administrator's massive attempts to have me prosecuted in order to prevent the cinema film from being released. However, as it was now politically urgent to pin even more charges on me, even cases that were time-barred were dug up. I cancelled the appointment with the police and asked the public prosecutor's office in Cottbus for access to the files, which was not granted over the following months.²⁵⁹ I made it clear to the public prosecutor that this waste of taxpayers' money would be publicised. She remained silent.

As I discovered when I later inspected the files, the public prosecutor's office had an indictment dictated to them by the district administrator, i.e., they simply adopted her arguments 1:1 and prepared another indictment. The Senior Public Prosecutor Banana argued in a letter to the district administrator that the case was not yet time-barred because they had only now ordered me to be questioned after the case had lain dormant for years. So, you can see here how the law was bent because it now seemed politically necessary to use everything against me.

²⁵⁹ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 5 February 2024 regarding 1511 Js 43451/20 and ST/0013928/2024

Bias?

On 6 February 2023, I received a letter from the Senior Public Prosecutor at the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office, Banana:

*"Insofar as you requested in your email dated 29 January 2024 that Public Prosecutor S. be removed from the case in question 'due to proven massive bias,' the request will not be granted. It is true that the power of substitution pursuant to Section 145 GVG enables a public prosecutor whose objectivity is in doubt to be released from handling a case. However, the parties to the proceedings are not entitled to this (BeckOK GVG, 21st ed. Inhofer, on section 145). After a thorough examination of the case, there are no indications that Public Prosecutor S. is factually or personally affected, which would require her to be removed from the proceedings. Insofar as you allege that Public Prosecutor S. would persecute innocent persons, proceedings have already been initiated against her (1360 Js 43133/23), which have been discontinued due to a lack of initial suspicion. In response to your complaint against this, the case was submitted to the Public Prosecutor General's Office of the State of Brandenburg for review (54 ZS 886/23)."*²⁶⁰

I replied to her on 10 February 2024:

"In your letter to me dated 6 February 2024, you make the following statement, quote: 'After a thorough examination of the case, there are no indications that Public Prosecutor S. is factually or personally affected, which would require her to be released from the proceedings.' Here, you very skilfully phrase 'which would require a release' in order to keep the matter in legal limbo and to express yourself as ambiguously as possible. This strategy is transparent and can be explained to the public in the analysis. It will be your undoing. In the presence of the BKA, the press, and Minister Erdbeere, I call on you to explain by 20 February why you are not telling the truth here! If you do not provide reasons for your statement, it is very likely that the public will consider you a liar.

The fact is that Public Prosecutor S. was reported by me for persecuting innocent people shortly after the penalty order was served, which Public Prosecutor S. knew about. She also knew from the beginning that she was accused of conducting one-sided investigations and right-wing resentment against me as an artist and poor person, along with the fact that she saw letters as evidence of insults and defamation in which pages and pages of severe bullying against me were documented. So, it was clear who the real victim was. She was all too willing to believe the words of Mrs. S. (head of the Job Centre), who had never

²⁶⁰ Letter from the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 6 February 2024 regarding 1618 Js 2225/23

met me in person, that I was a violent thug, a threat to the lives of caseworkers at the Job Centre. Local Prosecutor S. didn't question anyone at the Job Centre from the caseworkers concerned who could have refuted Mrs. S.'s lies immediately, especially not Mrs. L., who had known me for years.

In her first justification for refusing to discontinue the proceedings against me, Public Prosecutor S. wrote: 'The 'psychological terror' felt by the accused does not constitute a reason for justification.' S. knew that I had been refused treatment for PTSD. She knew that I was being driven to despair. Please explain to us, Mrs. Banana, how you arrive at the bold thesis that Public Prosecutor S. is in a position to make objective decisions in the case when she herself ignores medical facts because they do not fit into her worldview of the resistant poor person who must be forced to obey, no matter by what means?

It would have been objective to first clarify whether I was still being denied therapy, whether I was well, whether my health was at risk. Public Prosecutor S. didn't do any of that because she obviously didn't care how I was doing. She wanted to satisfy the revenge fantasies of Mrs. S. (Job Centre). Even at the cost of one-sided investigations and right-wing resentment, based on the usual clichés about poor people who complain to the Job Centre. But that is social racism. Mrs. S. shamelessly used the narrative of social racism to justify my guilt, despite the fact that I was obviously, as all the letters say, the victim of severe bullying.

All of this still constitutes evidence of a massive, one-sided investigation. It's like accusing the victim after a rape because she shouts at the perpetrator: 'Get off me, asshole,' but then letting the rapist go. Only someone who thinks the poor are so filthy that he or she considers their obvious and comprehensively documented abuse to be justified would think of talking about 'perceived psychological terror' in the face of proven PTSD. Because that didn't fit the image of the 'antisocial poor.' Public Prosecutor S. deliberately distorted the facts, covering them up as she needed to for the prosecution. She thus deliberately continued the right-wing violence against me, including the health consequences for me.

After all this was established in a letter to the minister dated 24 January 2024, and Public Prosecutor S. was consequently proven to have social-racist resentment, she was then presented with the aforementioned letter with massive criticism of her behaviour, only to reject the next application to discontinue the proceedings based on this. What else could she have done, given the fact that dropping the case would have disproved her, and the accusation of persecuting an innocent person would have become obvious?

You, Mrs. Banana, knew all this in advance and should have removed S. from the case. I asked you to do so several times in writing. You did not do so, which constitutes gross misconduct. After all, the objection to the termination of the investigation by M. against S., which she knew, was now with the Public Prosecutor General's Office. Local Prosecutor S. therefore had to expect that she would continue to be investigated. So, it is only natural that she continued to accuse me of innocence, especially after she had, of course, been shown that Mrs. S. (Job Centre) was lying on a massive scale.

The fact that she and you, Mrs. Banana, are still referring to the hiring by Public Prosecutor M., who insulted me in a socially racist way and lied about me in files, speaks volumes. Thanks to your personal letter to me, I can now show the press that you knew about all this and deliberately portrayed Mrs. S. as 'not biased' despite all the facts that refute this. I suggest you pack your bags! I await your explanation. Please explain to us why District Attorney S. is not biased and should not have been removed from the case!"

Rolling cover-ups

On 14 February 2024, Public Prosecutor S. from the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office wrote to me, while the Ministry of Justice was still investigating Attorney General Apple on charges of covering up right-wing violence, regarding the criminal complaint filed in Potsdam against Attorney General Apple and his press spokesman, Senior Public Prosecutor B.:

"Insofar as you state in your criminal complaint of 24 October 2023 that you would file a criminal complaint against Attorney General Apple and Senior Public Prosecutor B. 'in order to clarify to what extent (they) are guilty of... fraud and deliberate obstruction of justice as well as obstruction of justice,' this (insubstantial) submission also does not provide sufficient factual evidence for the criminal liability you assume for the two officials in question. In this respect, your submission again lacks any presentation of factual circumstances that would make the criminal liability you assume for the officers in question appear even remotely possible."²⁶¹

This was also a consequence of the fragmentation of the evidence and the loss of the specific accusations against the Public Prosecutor General at the Potsdam Public Prosecutor's Office. As the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office was now also coming under increasing pressure, I received a letter from them

²⁶¹ Letter from the Potsdam public prosecutor's office dated 14 February 2024 regarding 456 Js 49296/23

dated 21 February 2024, in which they once again tried to explain why they had tolerated the socio-racist insult to the head of the Foreigners Authority years earlier:

"You accuse Mr. H. of having committed deliberate fraud and right-wing violence and of having denied your naturalisation with these – in your opinion deliberate – lies. One of the constituent elements of fraud pursuant to Section 263 of the German Criminal Code is that an act of deception by the perpetrator must have caused the injured party to make a mistake that led them to make a financial decision, resulting in financial loss for them or a third party. You do not state anything about this in your criminal complaint. From the content of your complaint and the enclosed documents, I gather that your application for naturalisation was probably rejected by Mr. H. as an employee of the Elbe-Elster district administration. However, it is not the task of the public prosecutor's office to review the legality of administrative actions. Rather, the legal process provided for in administrative law is available to you for this purpose."

So, after four years, it was still possible for public prosecutors to shorten the case in such a way as to cover up right-wing violence. The public prosecutor working on this case simply had no idea about it. Someone had handed it over to him for processing without providing the overall context or the hundreds of pages of evidence. That was also fraud.

Off to the psychiatric ward

On Thursday, 14 March 2024, I met with the court-appointed psychiatrist at his premises. The psychiatric clinic in Finsterwalde had the charm of a 19th-century asylum. These high rooms, old wooden doors, everything painted in yellowed white. No pictures on the bare walls, just a few houseplants struggling to survive in the dark corridors. The atmosphere felt like in the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, as if they were still using electric shock devices when someone freaks out.

The psychiatrist, a very relaxed man in his mid-50s, asked me to take a seat at his desk, which was overflowing with files and very untidy. He asked about my childhood and countless details about my family, which felt like it took almost an hour before we got to the actual events. I told him that the judge was obviously looking for an easy way out. He nodded. It was important, I said, that he realised that the further back the cause of my suffering was pushed on the timeline of ten years, the higher the probability that the terror against me

would be continued by the authorities after the trial. What I needed was a determination of the terror in the here and now.

After two hours (150 minutes, according to the psychiatrist's later invoice), we were finished from his point of view. When asked how he assessed the situation, he said he still had to think about it. I left with a feeling of confusion and uncertainty as to whether I had really communicated all the essentials. After all, how was I supposed to make all this clear in two hours?

What was going on?

On 3 April 2024, I received a letter from the Ministry of Health, explaining in a four-page letter that the Ministry had acted correctly and that, if Hartz IV was indeed making people ill, it had nothing to do with them. In a final letter to Minister Melon, I described this as fraud.²⁶²

42

A public prosecutor, P., from the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office wrote to me on 16 April 2024 regarding the complaint against Public Prosecutor M. for the right-wing extremist insult against me:

*"As a result, there are insufficient factual indications that the offence you allege could have been committed. I have therefore discontinued the proceedings in accordance with § 170 paragraph 2 in conjunction with § 152 paragraph 2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure."*²⁶³

The Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office was therefore still of the opinion that accusing an artist of refusing to work—despite having worked unpaid for the country's culture for 30 years and not wanting to have this work destroyed—was appropriate constitutional behaviour that could not be described as right-wing extremist. As a result, they believed it was legitimate to continue prosecuting me with the utmost severity.

They said I would have to wait another two months for the psychiatrist's report.

43

In the meantime, the Minister of Health and State Secretary Elderberry had been declared innocent two more times by public prosecutors. It took over

²⁶² Letter from the Brandenburg Ministry of Health / 3 April 2024 / 07-12-1214/2022-022/007

²⁶³ Letter from the Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 16 April 2024 / 1360 Js 20409/24

three months before I learned from Judge B. on 3 July 2024 that the case concerning District Administrator Peach had now been combined with the charges against me. At this point, I still hadn't been granted access to the files for 36 DS 44/24, i.e., the case about the district administrator. I still didn't know what I was being accused of regarding District Administrator Peach.

Two days later, I called the court and was told that the psychiatrist's report was now available and that the file with the report had been sent to the public prosecutor's office. But I only found out by chance. They wouldn't have told me if I hadn't asked the secretary. I was told I would have to wait two weeks before I could see the file. This procedure was strange and, as far as I knew, not legal.

So I applied for access to the files again and complained that I had not been sent a copy of the report at the same time. They were obviously trying to prevent me from asserting my rights or even from seeing documents that would show what the public prosecutor's office and the judge were doing behind closed doors. You have to realise that four ministers and countless civil servants would have been summoned to the witness stand by me in the presence of the press with accusations of right-wing radicalism. Among them was Attorney General Apple. So, there was a strong motive to bury the trial before it had even really begun. And in a way that allowed the authorities and the public prosecutor's office to save face at my expense.

Trickery of the judiciary

In a letter dated 18 July 2024, two weeks later, the court suddenly informed me that the charges had been dropped. No further explanation. Allegedly, the public prosecutor's office had withdrawn the penalty order. At least that's what the judge wrote in her letter. At first, I thought that was the end of it, as if the trial had never officially taken place.

Then, in a letter dated 23 July, the local prosecutor S. informed me:

"I have discontinued the proceedings against you in accordance with Section 170 (2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure in conjunction with Section 20 of the Criminal Code."

I didn't know what that meant and only understood it when I was informed two days later by the Federal Central Criminal Register that there was an entry for inculpability in connection with insulting behaviour.

At that time, I had neither received an official statement of reasons for the judgment, nor had I been given access to the expert report. I was not given the opportunity to comment on this, and I still had not been shown the file on the district administrator's allegations at this point. This proved that the public prosecutor's office and the court had actually declared me guilty without hearing me, i.e., without a hearing, and at the same time indirectly declared me guilty to cover up right-wing violence. This was before the hearing of evidence had taken place.

When the files were later inspected, it became clear that I was apparently also blamed for being abused because I was provocative as an artist. Typical victim-blaming and disregard for artistic freedom. I was only given an appointment to inspect the files on 14 August 2024, i.e., after the objection period in the proceedings had expired. It would therefore have been completely impossible to lodge an objection in time. At the appointment to inspect the files, I was only able to see the psychiatrist's invoice for just under EUR 4,000 and a few lines about the discontinuation. However, there was no justification. They made sure not to leave anything in the files but had obviously made verbal agreements that I was not informed about. In the two or three lines I was able to find, they wrote about serious mental illness, but did not specify what it was about. The report had been removed from the file as a precaution. So, I had sat in the car for three hours for nothing, believing I was allowed to see the report.

A week later, after several phone calls, I was informed that the head of the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office, Senior Public Prosecutor Banana, had taken the report and would check whether I was allowed to see it.

In a letter dated 25 August 2024, i.e., one month after the proceedings were discontinued, she wrote to me:

"Since you have so far only cited your request for inspection of 19 July 2024 for documentation purposes, you will not be granted further inspection in accordance with § 480 StPO. If necessary, it will be necessary to consider providing you with information in accordance with Section 475 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, provided you assert a justified interest in doing so."²⁶⁴

The Senior Public Prosecutor had known for months that "documentation purposes" here did not mean some kind of butterfly collection, but the documentation of right-wing radicalism at the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office in order to have it prosecuted, as an artist and human rights activist.

²⁶⁴ Letter dated 21 August 2024 / reference 313 E - 1 DA.25/24

The fact that she only spoke of “providing information” indicated that she had no intention of handing over the report itself. In several emails and a letter dated 24 August, I therefore accused her of deliberately trying to cover up right-wing radicalism in her office with this action, because the expert opinion was a serious incrimination of her and Attorney General Apple. At least that's what I thought at the time. Because probably, I thought, it confirmed that I had been made ill by psychological terror. Both Justice Minister Erdbeere and the Attorney General were informed by me on the same day that the Senior Public Prosecutor was covering up right-wing violence. I combined this with the demand that the expert report be handed over immediately, as otherwise it would not be possible to clear up the case and mount a defense.

Of course, I had the right to see the report. But after all the madness, the public prosecutor's office was still of the opinion that I had to justify this as a victim of right-wing violence. They then refused to recognize any justification. I announced that I would report the Senior Public Prosecutor to the BKA, State Security Department, because she had repeatedly covered up right-wing violence and made it more difficult to investigate. What was fatal was the fact that from then on, all the authorities would treat me as a madman. So, the worst of all cases had materialized. It's hard to describe what this violence does to a person. It's like being put in the state of an ignorant child. Nobody takes you seriously anymore. No matter what you say, everything is suspected of being further evidence of my madness. This resulted in another fatal bullying experience.

The state had apparently declared me "crazy" because there was no other way to refute my work. The fact that I was even denied the right to see the expert report, let alone find out the diagnosis, showed a considerable contempt for humanity. Because they also knew that I was being denied any treatment on the other side. So, the violence against me simply continued. Neither the Minister nor the Attorney General intervened.

Such an expert opinion means the more violence, the less is known about it. It was no longer any good for proving the causes of severe trauma for which the state was responsible, which the public prosecutor's office and several ministers had not wanted to know about for years, but only for stigmatising me. It wasn't the state that had made me ill, the public prosecutor's office had gone along with this, but everything was my delusion, and society had to be protected from me by entering my insanity in the Federal Central Criminal Register so that every other authority could refer to it again and do all sorts of things to me. I experienced this as massive and re-traumatizing violence

because if even Attorney General Apple waved this constitutionally questionable procedure through, who else was I supposed to turn to? The state continued to make thousands of people ill, and anyone who wanted to make this visible had to expect to be prosecuted, as I was, for revealing the truth. Any unwanted criticism of the state could automatically be reinterpreted as defamation or insult. This right-wing automatism could soon affect hundreds of cultural workers, journalists, and whistleblowers. What would happen next?

The Brandenburg authorities showed that freedom of art, science, and the press meant nothing to them. Artists were madmen. Anyone who satirically criticised politicians or civil servants had to expect that right-wingers would simply dictate statements of claim to the public prosecutor's office in order to punish the victims with costly legal proceedings (SLAPP lawsuits). I myself lost a whole year as a result of this process and was barely able to work. The civil society means of criticizing power were simply rendered null and void by the Brandenburg public prosecutor's office just a few weeks before the state elections, in which the far-right AfD was expected to win massively. So, you can see here how easy it would be for the AfD to completely dominate the judiciary, because it had long been the case that right-wing extremist worldviews characterized the judiciary in Germany. At least a third of the population already held radical right-wing views. Of course, this also applied to many authorities.

45

In a letter dated 28 August 2024, the Ministry of Justice informed me:

*"As I have already informed you several times, most recently in a letter dated 3 May 2024, it is initially the responsibility of the State Attorney General of Brandenburg, as the superior of all public prosecutors working in the State of Brandenburg, to examine your submission. I have also forwarded your letter again to Department I, which is responsible for the supervision of judges and public prosecutors, for further action."*²⁶⁵

I received this reply in response to another letter to the Minister of Justice, Mrs. Erdbeere. Now, it is clear that the Ministry of Justice delayed an investigation for months by pretending that it was understandable and acceptable that the allegation of a cover-up of right-wing radicalism against the Attorney General was at the bottom of the agency's priorities. It is completely inconceivable that such a serious allegation against one of the

²⁶⁵ Letter from the Ministry of Justice dated 28 August 2024 / (III.6) 1402-E III.054/23

heads of the Brandenburg judiciary would not be a top priority and that the investigation, therefore, took months, which can only be seen as a deliberate delay. This was also because nothing was done about the fact that Attorney General Apple had not responded for months, and that files had still not been sent to the Ministry of Justice for review or were kept hidden there. The Ministry of Justice under Minister Erdbeere did everything possible to cover up the scandal for as long as possible.

The missing expert report

In a letter dated 4 September 2024, the public prosecutor S. wrote to me:

*"You are informed that you will be granted access to the psychological report. Please make another appointment to grant access."*²⁶⁶

So instead of simply sending me a copy of the file by post, as I had requested for weeks, I was told I would need to schedule another appointment in a few more weeks, traveling there again, with the uncertainty of whether I would be allowed to make copies. So, I called the public prosecutor's office on 9 September. A lady there first wanted to check with Public Prosecutor S. whether I could be sent copies. So, the matter was complicated again. On the same day, I wrote an email to the public prosecutor's office stating that every day the files were not on my desk would still be seen by the press and the minister as a refusal to grant access to the files.

47

I received two letters on 14 September. One was a copy of the expert report. In the second letter, the Ministry of Justice informed me that I had been upgraded from "offence" to "threat" in the Federal Central Criminal Register. This was in response to the criminal complaint I had filed with the BKA, State Security Department, against the head of the Cottbus Public Prosecutor's Office. I wrote:

*"You are once again requested to hand over the expert opinion in the presence of the press and the public prosecutor general."*²⁶⁷

This means that the head of the Public Prosecutor's Office and presumably also Public Prosecutor S. — at least that's what it looks like — deliberately stigmatised me in the police file as "ready to use violence" in order to

²⁶⁶ Letter from public prosecutor S., Cottbus public prosecutor's office dated 4 September 2024 / 1618 Js 2225/23 A

²⁶⁷ Email to the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office, dated 4 September 2024

manipulate the investigations of the state security department. In any case, the aim was to harm me again by lying, because "threat" had been the speech act of the head of the Job Centre, who had clearly been exposed as a right-wing extremist liar. Legitimate criticism by the arts and the press was labelled as a "threat." They knew this wasn't true, but were prepared to discriminate against me in state files for the next 10 years, as this entry would remain for that long.

The delusion of Dr W.

So, I had to wait until 14 September, when, after several letters to the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General, I was finally allowed to see the report. All this time, I had hoped that the PTSD would be confirmed, and that the years of suffering would finally be objectively documented. Instead, I found a "favourable report" in the interests of the judiciary, with fatal consequences for me.

In the case file, which I was later able to view, there was already a letter from the judge's office to the public prosecutor's office from months earlier, written on 15 January 2024, stating:

"A pathological chase is possibly the case here."

The judge was suggesting that I was suffering from a persecution mania. At the end of the letter were the words:

"Very urgent!!!"

The judge wanted to get rid of the case. The public prosecutor's office was supposed to drop the case, but they didn't. Presumably, this was because public prosecutor S. would have incriminated herself.

The fact that the expert witness adopted her implied finding of a persecutory mania almost 1:1 was evident in his diagnosis of a querulous mania (F 22.8). On closer examination, it becomes clear that the psychiatrist was not addressing a trauma with real causes — namely everything that had been done to me, which would have embarrassed the authorities and put them in need of an explanation. Instead, in line with the judge's suggestion, he pursued the far-fetched stigmatisation through a delusion, whereby all the authorities were freed from guilt in one stroke, and nothing I had ever criticised was placed in a real context. As it later turned out, the psychiatrist had freely invented the diagnosis of a delusion from a scientific perspective.

The accusation of a "courtesy report" is substantiated by the fact that there are numerous misrepresentations and selective formatting of statements in

the report, which show how they tried to make what I said look as crazy as possible by cutting out the context or deliberately stringing together statements in such a way that an image of a madman could be drawn. For example, my mother's borderline personality disorder was certified as a fact, although it was only ever discussed as a suspicion, which, 20 years after her death, could not even begin to be substantiated. My account of my experiences as a migrant was distorted into a description of an eccentric. For example, the expert Dr. W. wrote:

"At school, he was an outsider: Due to his creative intelligence, he was both underchallenged and ostracised."

Dr. W. gave the impression that I had no friends and believed I was a creative genius. He thus contributed to the usual cliché. He should have realised by now that I am an unrecognised Asperger's autistic. In the report, Dr. W. combines such distorted statements with indications of a disturbed personality, which he then fails to prove diagnostically. Later, Dr. W. writes about my relationship with the economy:

"The whole media world had become too superficial, he had the impression that many things were based on lies."

He did not initially take these kinds of statements directly as evidence that I had developed a conspiracy theory. However, in the language he used, because the transcript was not a verbatim record of my statements but his retelling, he reinterpreted what I had said, gradually creating exactly the impression he consciously or unconsciously wanted to create in order to justify his diagnosis. Although even here, everything pointed to autism, which explained my detailed explanations alongside my thorough research. In the context of my lecture at Typo 2001, for example, where I was booed by around 1,000 advertising professionals because I said that advertising was destroying us, he wrote:

"Since the congress, he had been the black sheep."

In this way, Dr. W. conflated my staging in the context of my art and activism with a family system (the black sheep of the family), distorting stereotypical experiences of failure in a way that affected my personality. He took the wrong diagnostic turn several times.

We see here how political work has repeatedly been distorted into the subjective and personal in order to negate social problems and indirectly assign personal blame to activists when they are rejected. As if I was only doing everything to prove something to my father and there was no real

injustice in society. As with the poor, failure became personal guilt because here too, the context and political aspects were completely ignored, because the psychiatrist consciously or unconsciously wanted to protect the institutions. He wanted to stigmatise me. Because that's what the justice system wanted.

The entire report was based on massive gaslighting against me. The suffering I experienced did not lead to an outcry, let alone compassion, but to my condemnation. Something was simply wrong with me, and that was the reason for my problems, which I had supposedly caused myself and which, in reality, didn't exist.

The expert made several confirmation errors. At no point did he treat my statements as if they could be normal reactions to massive grievances, but instead constructed evidence for a delusion. The expert opinion was based solely on this perspective. From a scientific standpoint, it was questionable and wrong on several occasions. If he had recognized me as an autistic person, it would have been clear that I was merely describing the problems from the perspective of an autistic person with great detail and persistence. The findings would not only have been correct but, due to my increased pattern recognition ability, would likely represent valuable contributions and insights. Furthermore, the entire expert opinion assumed that I was guilty, as the judge had commissioned the expert opinion before guilt had been established, well before the hearing of evidence. Dr. W. therefore stubbornly followed the formalism of standard expert reports, which normally only take place when guilt is clear. This led to a chapter beginning with the heading "Current delinquency," which effectively established me as a criminal, even though there had been neither a judgment nor a proper court hearing. Under this heading, Dr. W. then listed actions I took as an artist and activist to criticize government agencies as if they were crimes. We are talking about critical essays. As a result, the report presented the work of artists and activists, protected by the Basic Law, as pathological and criminal behavior.

Under the heading of delinquency, he listed pages of classic criticism of capitalism and well-known accusations against the Hartz IV system. Also under this heading, he listed massive human rights violations against me, such as the refusal of therapy, but left these unaddressed as if they were part of my delinquent behavior. This then read as follows: *"This discrimination is derived from classism, which is a sickening thing. He demanded that they read the scientific facts."*

The words "classism, that is a sickening thing," show how he distorted the fact that classism, like racism, is sickening, simply linguistically, through clumsy expression, as part of my insanity. Of course, at no point did I say that classism is a sickening "thing"; I presented hundreds of studies in very precise language. By presenting me with his words as if I couldn't formulate a straightforward sentence, it almost seemed crazy that anyone would demand that scientific facts be read. By constantly prefacing my statements with 'it is so and so,' he implied that it was only so, but in reality, it wasn't. This made the report highly manipulative in terms of language.

Here, too, we have what Amanda Fricker calls "epistemic injustice," the systematic weakening of a victim's position. He went on to write about my argument regarding reintegration agreements in the Job Centres:

"So you have to foist a contract on them, which they then violate. That is the basic principle of reintegration assistance. That's why he had always rejected reintegration assistance."

Dr. W. not only used strange distortions here, but also the wrong term in a fatal way. By writing "reintegration assistance" instead of "reintegration agreement," he suggested that I was rejecting assistance and not criticizing a state-enforced contract, which not only I did, but a number of poor people's associations, academics, and activists. His distortion once again made me appear insane in the report. Dr. W. even managed to distort the lawnmower example mentioned in this book in such a way that the actual statement disappeared, and I once again came across as a lunatic stammering about lawnmowers.

"All his correspondence now fills seven large file folders."

Here, Dr. W. tried to cite the research I had done directly as evidence of madness. He said it was crazy that I had collected so many sources showing how government agencies discriminate against the poor. He doesn't write that directly, but by piecing these scraps together, he creates precisely this impression. However, these are not scientifically tenable evidence of his diagnosis but constructions and inventions on his part. If you ask an averagely educated psychiatrist from the provinces to reproduce the work of a physicist, or another scientist, or an artist, in his own words, and then give this expression to the respective experts to read, the public will not only consider Einstein to be completely crazy.

Dr. W. was intellectually incapable of even beginning to convey the complexity of my intervention in corporations and authorities. He also did not

understand the provoked empiricism in my work. He was too lazy or unwilling to read my books and unable to research on my website that my art is about me using my own person as a projection screen, as a trigger for social debates. He soon went on to link the diagnosis of madness to the fact that I, as an artist, express myself. What artists are taught at academies — namely, to train until their innermost self is freely expressed — was distorted as pathological self-centeredness.

After he was unable to document any abnormalities in my case, he did hit a snag when he stated the following:

"It became clear that although he does not reject talking to another person who does not see or recognize his supposed victim status, he ultimately considers it pointless."

In view of the abuses documented in 500 pages of this book, his statement is a monstrosity because it shows how easily any criticism could be erased in the insane simulation of the state. Now, this is of course extremely worrying that I insisted so much on reality. His arguments only contain justifications that apply to you and me and to pretty much every artist, activist or scientist. He also wrote that he found no other anomalies. But I would get angry if I talked about the Job Centre. Whereby "angry" was again a massive exaggeration, as if I had wielded Zeus' lightning bolt, but "annoyed" would have done as well. One paragraph further down, he presented the diagnosis "Persistent delusional disorder (querulous and expansive paranoid development)"

Dr. W. now listed what appeared to be alternative diagnostic criteria in a simulation of an expert opinion. There were six aspects. Only one of them applied to a personality disorder, which he admitted here as the only alternative criterion. But three had to be fulfilled. The fact that my criticism was based on real events was further ignored by him in the differential diagnosis. What he did was as stupid and simplistic as it sounds. He declared me delusional as an activist because my political views didn't suit him. The only point of fulfilling a personality disorder was distress, which applies to pretty much every conceivable disorder, especially autism.

The fatal thing is that precisely this lack of schizophrenia and a personality disorder, due to the vagueness of the diagnostic criteria in the context of querulous madness, combined with Dr. W.'s political unwillingness to recognize the discrimination of the poor in the civil benefits system as a reality, led him to believe that I must be delusional. According to him, the oppression of minorities, as well as what feminists talk about—racism or group-related

misanthropy—are not only not real grievances, but reacting to them vehemently and relentlessly is pathological in any case.

So, what we see here is a politically and petty-bourgeoisly abused psychiatry that resulted in the "pathologization of dissent" and had no inhibitions whatsoever about massively stigmatizing me as an activist and artist, with fatal consequences for my reputation, my health, and my work as a cultural worker.

Dr. W. wrote:

"For 10 years, Mr. Speed has been involved in a dispute with the Job Centre and other state institutions against alleged injustice and inhumanity in the Hartz IV system. In this context, he experiences the state's actions as being directed against himself for exposing this injustice. He is convinced that the main perpetrators (public prosecutors, Job Centre employees, etc...) are being covered up and he is being criminalized as a victim. What is evident here is an increasingly psychopathological development that has now become a self-perpetuating process, which is reflected in an increasingly pronounced querulous development. The essence of the querulous development lies in the fact that the specific behaviour – as with other psychopathological developments – takes on a life of its own. It is no longer a question of asserting a particular claim, but of recognizing the right as such, understood in a particular sense."

Once again, we see impressively how the categorization lies create a completely different reality that can be used politically in the simulation to stigmatize those who think differently. It goes without saying that this statement pathologizes every NGO in the world, every activist, every artist who fights against discrimination when we work relentlessly against injustice over the years. Especially when it comes to structural violence or systemic abuses, i.e., fundamental injustice. Of course, there are limits to what we can do. Of course, you often have to ask yourself whether it wouldn't be more sensible to give up. Which I couldn't do as an autistic person.

The work of artists and activists sometimes has irrational traits. But nothing justifies a state that abuses psychiatrists in order to pathologize the fight for freedom and justice in a foolish way. By what right does Dr. W., a well-off middle-aged white man, want to decide when it is enough resistance for a migrant or a black woman or a discriminated autistic person? What right does Dr. W. have to presume to judge the suffering of those affected and the proportionality of their resistance? To claim that a delusion is taking on a life of its own here is delusional in itself. Nothing in this book takes on a life of its

own. It is perfectly legitimate for me to document all these years and situations comprehensively because only then does it become visible where the simulation, which is inherent in every bureaucracy, leads in the end.

Dr. W. also knew that I was doing research for a book. He lied when he spoke of "take on a life of its own," as if my actions were aimless, which is a very bold theory in view of this book.

In 1851, the American doctor Samuel A. Cartwright coined the term "drapetomania." This referred to an alleged mental illness that pathologized the "slave's urge to flee." In 2024, I was declared insane by Dr. W. from the Elbe-Elster Clinic because I basically wanted to free myself and others from poverty. The autistic Julian Assange was imprisoned in the Ecuadorian embassy for seven years. Other human rights activists had to spend years in prison. Artists spend their entire lives pursuing things that often ruin them economically. He pathologized me against this background because I had the courage and tenacity to fight against a gigantic apparatus for years in order to make fundamental injustice visible in its ignorance and resistance. Investigative journalism or art is often based on decades of work in which you don't know whether the effort will ever lead to the goal. This ability is also typical of autistic people.

Dr. W. went on to write:

"What is meant by the special sense is the suppression of the realization that right is something relative, that is, it cannot be realized without compromise and without consideration for the rights of others. Ultimately, the querulous person is concerned with the enforcement of his right, which is excessively regarded as his right, which he simultaneously regards as the realization of absolute right."

Here, Dr. W. demonstrated a mindset that is unfortunately widespread, which distorts the resistance of marginalized groups, environmental activists, or human rights activists as violence directed against democracy that does not want discourse. This perpetrator-victim reversal can often be found in radical right-wing circles but also among conservatives. It is an essential characteristic of right-wing populism. The assumption is that if "they enforce their rights," i.e., the marginalized who are hardly listened to, then there would be dictatorship. This completely negates the fact that there is largely no dialogue with activists on the part of the state and, as my case shows, a discourse at eye level was never made possible with me either.

The notion of absolute law, on the other hand, was a key factor for the authorities. Dr. W. writes: *"Mr. Speed may have experienced a (subjective) injustice at the beginning of such a development. In the course of his development, however, he repeatedly sought out and created conflicted situations for himself, so that his experience of being treated unfairly became more entrenched."*

These statements are valuable for research because they show how power structures function and how hierarchies are transmitted through jobs. The fact that Dr. W., without ever having read my research work of 20 years, in ten books, constantly emphasized my "subjectivity" and doubts about the soundness of my statements, shows a direct intention not to concede me any right or relevance. The fact that he did not accept any of my statements, which were of course proven to him, served to lock my actions into an excessively subjective space, through which he could simply devalue me as a human being. He turned this devaluation into a fact in his expert report. His personal opinion, that of an ignorant person in the sense of my research work, became a matter of course for him in the abbreviation of his assumptions. Everything the poor man says must be worthless and wrong.

Here too, the working method of art and activism (provoked empiricism)—i.e., provocation and process orientation—was pathologized, namely the confrontation of authorities with injustice caused by the state. Nor did he recognize the crisis experiments acknowledged in sociology as such. Although my book *Radical Worker* was also in the file, he could have recognized my research as such.

We hear and read these clichés again and again in the history of civil rights movements. Demonstrators supposedly only go to protests to be beaten by the police so they can present themselves as victims. Women in Iran only stand up to the regime because they want to be pushed to the ground in front of cameras. A young girl was supposedly only raped because she wore a short skirt. With slogans like these, any politically legitimate fight against human rights violations is twisted into deliberate self-flagellation. But this should never form the basis of a forensic expert report. In the entire expert report, neither he nor the public prosecutor's office ever applied a zero hypothesis. So the question was never asked whether what I said might be true, at least in part. He actually negated 100% of the discrimination against the poor in the citizens' allowance system, pretending to agree with me during the interview. He feigned trust and respect, lying about his personal stance in order to manipulate me into saying what he needed for the report.

"In this context, it is significant that he neglects his own contribution to the conflict with the Job Centre, etc., or places the blame entirely on the other side."

I don't know how many times I tried to explain to him that I was using a method of disruption common in civil rights movements and art to highlight these grievances. He had no knowledge of approaches like "creative maladjustment" or "artistic research." I even tried to explain the individual steps of this approach to him. But it didn't help because he didn't want to hear it. Of course, I provoke. Of course, I moderate conflicts, and that's a good thing. I certainly don't deny it, and the goal all along was to make the entanglements within the authorities and between them visible as part of this research, which was successful. But that didn't fit into the image he had preconstructed. He couldn't distinguish between professional civil rights work or art and the fact that I was massively discriminated against by state authorities as a result of art and activism, irrespective of whether I had done anything wrong or reprehensible. Of course, I also went crazy at times. After all, I was suffering from PTSD and hadn't yet realized I was autistic. He accused me of ideological stubbornness, which is also typical of autistic people, because, in a setting where it was about presenting my perspective, I didn't empathetically integrate the perspectives of the perpetrators, which he didn't ask about either. Mind you, this was in a conversation lasting just under two hours, during which mainly facts about the specific processes had to be presented.

He wrote about my extensive research, which, as I said, he didn't know:

"All of this has been created; the verifiable quantity of what has been written proves my own efficiency, even if there is actually nothing of use left."

What a foolish presumption from the head forensic psychiatrist at the Elbe-Elster Clinical Centre! What a fraud! What he wrote here was—and still is—hurtful, precisely because it's partly correct and yet scandalously wrong. Of course, for someone like me, who worked unpaid for decades, it is a deep hope that at least the quantity, if not the content, proves that I have not lived in vain. But the fact is that he was also saying my art has no value and doesn't justify my continued existence, because it only serves the false purpose of artificially ascribing value where there is none. He thus supported the radical right-wing resentment against me and presumed to pass judgment on my work as a cultural creator against artistic freedom. He devalued 20 years of unpaid work and saw this achievement not as evidence of honest commitment but as evidence of my madness. This raises fundamental questions about the absoluteness of the reference to a capitalist system.

He then went on to pathologize artistic self-expression, as previously mentioned. In other words, the self-centeredness without which we artists could not work authentically.

"During the appraisal, Mr. Speed came across as rigid and unyielding. In this context, the question arises as to whether his rigid argumentation has already slipped into delusion. (...) An essentially pathological aspect of the delusion is the self-relation: In a way, every delusion is a delusion of grandeur, because one's own person is placed at the center of the experience. Part of the delusion is that it is constantly fueled by the fact that other people do not share the delusional person's convictions. In simple terms, the delusion can be described as a private reality, whereby the pathological aspect of the delusion is not so much its content, which can often be understood from the life and experience of the patient, but the detachment from the experience of reality of fellow human beings."

To say this to an autistic person is criminal and cannot be excused by anything. So how are victims of right-wing violence supposed to free themselves in a society in which, as in Brandenburg today, around 30% vote for the AfD, i.e., right-wing extremists? Hasn't the suffering of those affected by racism long been a private reality? Isn't it megalomania that they want to make themselves the center of the world in an effort to be heard at all? And isn't self-empowerment a sensible response in a world that always wants to keep minorities small? Dr. W. seemed so uneducated that he obviously didn't know that creative artists stage themselves because it is difficult to separate one's own self from artistic work, and giving it value can, of course, seem like megalomania to some neurotypical outsiders with inferiority problems. It is perfectly normal for artists to place themselves at the center of their art. Dr. W. implies that artists are delusional because they are aloof, ultimately because they are different. In doing so, he replicates the kind of talk that leads directly into the darkness of past fascist societies. Minorities have no right to their own perception. This leads him to the fatal conclusion for democracy:

"Mr. Speed has dedicated his life to the fight against the supposed injustice of the state. He is convinced that there is a conspiracy on the part of the state that extends to the highest government circles. All state institutions, public prosecutors, Job Centres, etc.) are in collusion with each other and have conspired against him."

Again, extremely fruitful for research to see how he formed stereotypes to distort my statements. For those who only open the book at this page, I will again briefly state the obvious. I do not believe in a conspiracy. My research

work of 30 years is known for investigating systems. That is a significant difference. Nor is a conspiracy theory necessary, because this book shows how that mixture of stupidity and right-wing radicalism, combined with simulations in bureaucracies, leads to structural and symbolic violence. I think I have sufficiently demonstrated this in countless publications and explanations.

Dr. W., I have to say, because I have explained to him in detail that I do not believe in a conspiracy, is simply lying here because he has to lie to justify his diagnosis. He has to portray me as a conspiracy theorist because he needs to prove a loss of reality that he can't detect in pure civil rights work or art. So he exaggerates linguistically in the reproduction of my statements. He does this with sentences such as: "Ultimately, Mr. Speed claims that the judiciary is bending the law and that action is being taken not only against him but against thousands of people. This abuse not only creates injustice against him, it results in thousands of new victims."

Dr. W. presents this as if it were an unbelievably crazy statement. Just last week, the CDU chairman, Grape, called for every asylum seeker to be turned away at the border across the board, even though this violates EU law. They are doing it anyway. So the law is being broken again and again, with thousands of victims. The 100% sanctions in the Hartz IV system violated the Basic Law for years. Thousands of people were wrongly sanctioned. Hartz IV, i.e., the Citizen's Income Act, is highly controversial among experts. So where do we end up if every reference to scientifically proven injustice can be stigmatized as a delusion and the public prosecutor's office treats this as a factual document of reality? What does this mean for the horror of fascism, which has long since infiltrated our society? What does this mean for millions of potential victims of right-wing violence?

These processes follow a familiar pattern that research describes as "weaponized psychiatry" or "diagnostic gaslighting": A professional attacks not the formal thought process, but the content of a politically explosive statement and labels it as delusional in order to justify a pathological diagnosis. The Rosenhan experiment of 1973 was a ground-breaking experiment that called into question the reliability of psychiatric diagnoses:

The experimental setup:

David Rosenhan sent eight healthy individuals (pseudo-patients) to various psychiatric hospitals. They pretended to hear voices saying words such as "empty," "hollow," or "dull." Otherwise, they behaved completely normally and

provided truthful information about their lives (only their names and occupations were changed).

The result:

All eight were immediately admitted and diagnosed with schizophrenia or manic-depressive psychosis. Although they behaved completely normally upon admission and reported that the voices had disappeared, they were detained for an average of 19 days. The staff interpreted normal behavior as pathological—for example, writing notes was interpreted as "compulsive writing behavior."

The core message:

The experiment showed that mental health professionals tended to confirm diagnoses once made and interpret normal behavior through the 'lens' of the diagnosis. It demonstrated the power of labeling and contextual effects—the setting of the psychiatric hospital led to every behavior being interpreted as a symptom.

The meaning:

The experiment triggered heated debates about the validity of psychiatric diagnoses and contributed to the reform of the diagnostic system.

The concept of "psychiatric labeling of dissidents" by the CPT (Committee for the Prevention of Torture) of the Council of Europe is also an important human rights issue with far-reaching implications:

Historical context:

The practice of psychiatric pathologization of dissidents has a dark history, particularly well-known from the Soviet Union. There, psychiatry was used to incapacitate and remove from society political opponents who openly expressed beliefs that contradicted official doctrine.²⁶⁸

The Mechanism of Depoliticization:

Psychiatric labeling functions as a pernicious form of delegitimization because it:

- **Assumes a loss of reality:** Criticism of the system is not interpreted as an expression of political opinion but as a symptom of mental illness.
- **Legitimizes coercive measures:** The use of psychiatric hospitals instead of prisons prevents victims from receiving legal assistance,

²⁶⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_abuse_of_psychiatry_in_the_Soviet_Union

makes indefinite detention possible, and discredits both the person and their ideas.

- **Bypasses rule-of-law procedures:** This mechanism can be exploited to circumvent standard legal procedures for determining guilt or innocence, effectively imprisoning political dissidents while avoiding public scrutiny.

Modern Relevance:

Reports of the political abuse of psychiatry have increased since the beginning of the 21st century, especially in recent years in Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.²⁶⁹ The 2015 CPT warning is therefore highly topical and shows that these practices are not a thing of the past.

Definition according to Global Initiative on Psychiatry:

Political abuse of psychiatry refers to the misuse of psychiatric diagnosis, treatment and incarceration for the purpose of obstructing the basic human rights of certain individuals and groups in a given society.²⁷⁰ The CPT warning highlights a fundamental problem: when civil rights work is psychiatrically pathologized, it undermines not only individual rights but also the democratic process of opinion-forming as a whole. Thomas Szasz, in *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961), criticized how "unwanted truths" are neutralized by psychiatric labels. More recent analyses refer to this phenomenon as diagnostic overshadowing (Reiss & Szyszko, 2020), where neurodivergence is used to dismiss criticism as a form of illness.

Dr. W. constructed a "conspiracy theory" to prove that I was unrealistic, because without it, he could not maintain the diagnosis—a classic case of psychiatric instrumentalization, which is well-documented in the literature as a power technique.

He wrote:

"In the meantime, the fight against the state determines large parts of his life, so that he is no longer able to follow the opinions or intentions of a counterpart or at least consider them as an alternative, let alone examine them realistically."

He wrote this despite knowing that I had written this book and completed a feature film as part of my research. Both works were about bringing a broad

²⁶⁹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4768845/>

²⁷⁰ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2800147/>

social phenomenon to light—making social racism tangible in all its details. He deliberately ignored all of this.

Dr. W. did not make a diagnosis; he simply pathologized his political counterpart. His personal political opinions were intended to silence me as an artist through the stigmata of madness. This is further proven by the fact that I sent him an email on 14 March 2024, directly after our meeting, because I wanted to make it clear once again that my work was in a research context:

"Dear Dr. W., here is the link to the film trailer. The film will be shown at film festivals in the coming weeks. It makes sense to spend 10 minutes on my work as a cultural worker and poverty researcher, because a lot of what I do might seem weird if you haven't seen my work over the past 30 years. :-) <https://timothy-speed.com/> Regards, Timothy Speed"

The accusation against Dr. W. is not only that he opportunistically aligned himself with the judge through the diagnosis for political reasons, but also that he lied and ignored the obvious: the simple fact that what I experienced would have led to PTSD in statistically one in three people, and that PTSD explained all the emotional aspects of my actions through trauma. Autism explained it even better. But acknowledging that would have revealed the authorities as perpetrators. Even though he knew that I was still being denied therapy by them, despite wanting it—this contradicted his diagnosis, as troublemakers typically don't have the self-reflection to seek help. He left me without treatment or help, instead claiming that I had a massive delusion.

From a professional point of view, this is negligent and, in terms of the stigmatization associated with this misdiagnosis, can be considered criminal. He should also have recognized the autism. The public prosecutor's office misused the expert opinion to stigmatize me as a threat based on the logic of the diagnosis. Because troublemakers escalate.

So, what we see here, in a documentation spanning 10 years, is how my work had to be destroyed because what I did was never allowed to have any value. It wasn't considered gainful employment, didn't conform to the norms of a majority society, and it questioned the concept of work itself. Moreover, it developed actual value, which forced the authorities into cognitive dissonance with me and the facts. What I produced—a historical document showing how the state covered up right-wing violence—could never have been realized in conventional jobs.

We must ask ourselves what form of work or contribution should serve as the foundation of our society. I believe this question is answered appropriately in

this book. It must be a way of working that does not isolate itself, a work that remains in relation to all circumstances—open, honest, and awake. My case, like countless others, refutes the lies of meritocracy, according to which “equal opportunities” prevail and everything depends on hard work and performance. This is, in fact, false. It is a naïve assumption to believe that equal opportunities can realistically be created and imposed from above.

Instead of merely discussing equal opportunities, we must learn to relate to one another, to find a way to address the massive injustice embedded in the structures and conditions of our society, and to do justice to each individual case with respect for the person and their experience. This is not an optional extra—it is a duty. If the individual is devalued, democracy dies.

First traces of publicity

On 18 September 2024, PEN Berlin organised a panel discussion with writer Juli Zeh, among others. Journalist Deniz Yücel was also present. The discussion, which focused on freedom of expression, took place in Ludwigsfelde, Brandenburg.

When a lady from the audience said, *"We are talking here in the most liberal society we have ever had on German soil,"* I stood up and replied. The *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung* mentioned my appearance in an article as follows:

"A man who introduced himself as a cultural worker complained that he increasingly perceives right-wing ideas in authorities and feels intimidated: 'Artistic freedom no longer applies.'"²⁷¹

A letter from the director

On the same day, the Chairman of ARD, Prof. Dr. Kai Gniffke, a member of the SPD, wrote to me:

"Your film Transferprotokoll is a hybrid mix of social satire, docufiction, with borrowings from the science fiction genre, artistic self-portrait, and a pointed thesis film. In your satirical take on the subject of poverty, you turn the tables and indict German bureaucracy in order to present your view of social power structures in a pointed way. Your work can be criticised in terms of taste and politics. (...) However, this is not the main criterion in the judgement of its

²⁷¹ Märkische Allgemeine Online Ausgabe 19.9.24 / 15:31 / Karen Grunow / Writer in Ludwigsfelde.
Juli Zeh on working in politics: "Thanks to everyone who is willing to do this shitty job"

*possible suitability for one of our broadcasting slots. The decisive factor in the editorial assessment is that Transferprotokoll is an essayistic film aimed at a narrower audience. Nevertheless, our impression is that the issues surrounding Hartz IV and today's citizens' income, as well as the associated criticism, need to be communicated to our audience in a different way. In the opinion of our editorial team, the film will therefore not be considered for purchase by the ARD media library."*²⁷²

All broadcasters thus rejected four years of unpaid work because they did not consider art to be relevant and were too cowardly to expect "their audience" to engage in a controversy. A work that saw itself as a process of discourse and not as a product. The artistic director wrote this four days before the decisive election in Brandenburg, in which the AfD made massive gains. In just a few months, Grape from the CDU, a right-wing populist who aggressively agitated against the poor, was to take over the chancellorship. The public broadcasters had not only weakened me, but also massively weakened the entire civil society resistance to the right through opportunism. Securing their jobs was more important to them than conducting the necessary discourse that might have made more complex contexts accessible to people. The film was made with only EUR 7,000 in cultural funding and thus encapsulated everything that made up the experience of poverty. The more precise, professional, and targeted my work became—no matter how extensive—the more it was rejected, and the more I was kept in poverty. People would rather show another trivial thriller than give a marginalized person a voice. With *Transferprotokoll*, the public broadcasters could have saved hundreds of thousands of euros and more. Instead, they filled the airtime with irrelevant and more expensive productions, without any friction.

Dealing with futility

All the slander against me remained on file. Right-wing extremist officials, public prosecutors, and judges were not investigated, let alone charged. On 23 December 2024, when the Medical Association was already investigating the expert and when massive scientific and ethical errors had long since been objectively proven in the expert opinion, public prosecutor S. wrote:

*"There are no indications that the expert opinion is based on false facts."*²⁷³

²⁷² Letter dated 19.9.2024 / Prof. Dr Kaj Gniffke / Director General SWR, Chair ARD,

²⁷³ Letter from public prosecutor S. dated 23 December 2024 / 1618 Js 2225/23 A

Two criminal complaints against Apple, the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office, and public prosecutor S. disappeared without a trace at the BKA. The Elbe-Elster Clinic covered up Dr. W.'s right-wing expert opinion and continued to employ him as if nothing had happened. On 7 January 2025, a public prosecutor from Cottbus wrote to Banana: *"There are no sufficient factual indications of the existence of a prosecutable criminal offence by the doctor you reported in connection with the preparation of an expert opinion."*²⁷⁴

The public prosecutor M., who had previously insulted me in a right-wing extremist manner, wrote on 3 March 2025, in response to the submission of 11 pages refuting the expert opinion with objective facts, highlighting Dr. W.'s multiple lies and the contradictions in his diagnosis, and the fact that the Medical Association was investigating Dr. W.:

*"You cannot dictate to public prosecutor S. how she should evaluate an expert opinion by a recognised specialist. Rather, she is free to make her own decision in this matter, at her discretion. Therefore, it is absurd to deny justice."*²⁷⁵

The public prosecutor M. had a clear motive, which the head of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office knew, to hold on to the expert opinion at all costs in order to cover up his own misconduct. As so often, he twisted the facts to his own advantage.

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health continued to cover up the violence in the civil benefits system. On 17 March 2025, I wrote to the head of the LKA Brandenburg, Mr. Lychee:

"The script you have before you (Speed's work) shows how the head of the LAVG and the Ministry of Health knowingly covered up the fact that the omnipresent classism and social racism in Job Centres makes people ill. They had a study and enough evidence to recognise that, as common sense would suggest, the stigmatisation of the poor in this country, driven by right-wing populism, naturally impacts their health. It was known that Job Centres lied and cheated, as my case amply demonstrates. My research shows how this also occurred at several other Job Centres and continues to do so. It is a systemic problem.

Both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice deliberately accepted the proven health damage in order to avoid intervening for political reasons. In doing so, they used legal tricks to reframe the case and distract from the real problem. This is comprehensively documented in the script, which is now available in bookshops. You are called upon to take action against the officials

²⁷⁴ Letter from public prosecutor L. dated 7 January 2025 AZ 1570 AR 16/25

²⁷⁵ Letter from public prosecutor M. dated 3 March 2025 AZ 1360 Js 10414/25

and prosecutors involved in this cover-up. Please refer to the back chapters of the script."

On 16 March 2025, the n-tv channel reported on their website about a study that proved regional and political discrimination against people in poverty, which directly aligned with what I had been describing and the reason Dr. W. had declared me crazy. The study stated:

"What is difficult in individual cases succeeds in the masses, emphasise the researchers around Schneider."

This was also my approach, which is why I collected all the data.

"The repeated unequal treatment of comparable individuals in terms of time and place justifies the 'suspicion of administrative discrimination' in Germany. It is not only those directly affected who suffer from this," the study states. "Overall, the unequal administrative treatment also undermines confidence in the rule of law."²⁷⁶

Both Chief Public Prosecutor Banana and the new Attorney General Cherry were aware of the study and the article.

Nevertheless, I was left ill and unjustly accused, in a situation that offered no hope for justice. Neither the necessity of my work nor the complexity of my situation was acknowledged. These individuals continued to make judgments based on symbolic violence, meaning the idea that everyone had to act and live like them, and that those whose lives presented different challenges were inferior and had to be forcefully pressed into the appropriate mould. The fatal consequences of their actions were completely ignored. In the weeks and months that followed, the authorities showed no concern for what had happened to me in those ten years and were prepared to repeat the same treatment for the next ten years. All the ministries involved covered up the abuses. Countless cultural workers across the country endured suffering similar to mine, as did thousands of people in poverty. The state continued to make people ill. No one was willing to put an end to social racism, and instead, it increased in society from day to day. Attorney General Apple retired on 31 August 2024. His successor did nothing to address the issue. The investigations into Apple had been delayed for so long in order to avoid further scrutiny.

²⁷⁶ N-tv article from 16.3.2025 / by Sarah Platz / Title: Success depends on where you live "This turns asylum applications in Germany into a lottery" / <https://www.n-tv.de/panorama/Damit-werden-Asylantraege-in-Deutschland-zur-Lotterie-article25628563.html>

In a few months, a new government would be elected under Friedrich Grape, a right-wing populist who wanted to crack down even harder on the poor. They were already threatening more violence against "work refusers," a group stigmatised by right-wing populists, which included me and anyone who criticised classism. Our legitimate reasons for resistance were simply ignored and overshadowed by hatred and persecution. Anyone who fought against it was finished off. All of this occurred in an effort to prevent any opposition to capitalism. The authorities acted as if the market was always right. And when the market caused massive damage, they either paid out billions to the banks or persecuted the poor. But this is neither evidence of democratic behaviour nor an indication of a mature relationship with reality.

In October 2024, I learned by chance that I am autistic. This explained everything in my life and shook me to the core.

In the spring of 2025, I received the news that I had suddenly been assigned a public defender. The judge had informed him that the public prosecutor's office had made a mistake. The proceedings would now have to be reorganised in a different way, according to §153. Neither the judge nor the public prosecutor's office nor my public defender explained how they had come to this conclusion. My suspicion is that it probably came from the Ministry of Justice. I inferred this from two letters, which suggest that the public prosecutor's office still did not want to admit any mistakes, and that the general public prosecutor's office continued to cover up the right-wing extremist report.

On 16 April 2025, Senior Public Prosecutor N. from the Public Prosecutor General's Office wrote to me:

"In response to your complaint, the files have been submitted to me for a decision. After examining the facts of the case, I see no reason to order an amendment to the contested decision. The decision of the Cottbus public prosecutor's office corresponds to the factual and legal situation. I therefore reject your complaint as unfounded."²⁷⁷

The case involved a complaint against public prosecutor S. for obstruction of justice in connection with the right-wing extremist expert report. The senior public prosecutor, who likely ignored the manuscript of this book before him, obscured the right-wing extremist nature of the report by reframing it.

²⁷⁷ Letter from the Brandenburg Public Prosecutor General's Office / Ref. 54 Zs 238/25 in the context of 1360 Js 1041/25 A)

On 15 April 2025, the senior public prosecutor Banana wrote to me after I had submitted an expert report proving that I was autistic, along with a comprehensive refutation of Dr W.'s expert report. In the letter, I requested that she withdraw the report and discontinue the proceedings related to my autism, as there was evidently no crime involved, only possibly harsh language associated with my autism. She responded:

"I have treated your letter as an official complaint. However, it did not provide me with grounds to take any supervisory action against the person handling the case at my office. I did not identify any errors in the handling of the proceedings."²⁷⁸

She denied that significant errors had already been identified at the public prosecutor's office.

"Furthermore, Dr. Winkler is not an employee of my authority. He prepares his reports as an independent expert."

By saying this, she ignored his criminal misconduct and evaded joint responsibility, only to indirectly threaten me thereafter:

"However, I would like to point out that you only escaped the imposition of a sentence in the proceedings conducted here (fine or prison sentence) on the basis of the expert opinion. Withdrawal of the expert opinion would have no legal effect that would favour you."

So she threatened me with prison if I continued to insist on the withdrawal of the right-wing extremist expert opinion that pathologises art. In doing so, she ignored the fact that the proceedings had been cancelled before the hearing of evidence, meaning that the presumption of innocence still applied. At no time was illegal behaviour proven against me. The behaviour of the senior public prosecutor raises questions that may never be answered. The desire to cover up fundamental injustice was so strong within the system that it became clear the state would not recognise the injustice committed on its own.

With this book, I present the work of a decade that not only reveals massive violence and discrimination, and offers an alternative understanding of economics, but also proposes a way of countering the contempt for humanity in capitalism with a different form of labour. Today the social system, tomorrow the whole world. Let's start the work!

²⁷⁸ Letter from Senior Public Prosecutor Banane / 15 April 2025 / Ref. 313 E - 1 DA.9/25 regarding 1618 Js 2225723

Take-away box - Chapter "Act of Violence 10: Prosecuting Dissent and the Idea of "Right-Wing Small Talk""

Everyday Radicalisation

Right-wing extremist small talk refers to casual office room or pause phrases ("Don't you have to deport him?", "If you don't work, you should starve") that normalise racist and classist violence without explicitly using extremist language.

Court as an Echo Chamber

In the proceedings against Speed, such statements are not considered evidence of right-wing violence but are trivialised as "freedom of opinion." The tribunal thus reflects structural bias and lends legitimacy to everyday hate speech.

MNO Analysis: Language Objects Without Experience

The court focuses on the surface of the words (the object), ignoring the victim's experience (the traumatising effect) and intent (dehumanisation). The result is a legal judgement that renders the actual violence invisible.

Double Empathy Breakdown Live

Autistic testimonies, which insist on precision and context, clash with neurotypically timed negotiation routines. Misunderstandings are falsely interpreted as "confusion" or "troublemaking" — an epistemic power imbalance.

Precedence Risk

If courts do not sanction structural discrimination under the guise of

small talk, a grey space for radical ideologies in administration and companies is created — similar to the early phases of historical authoritarianism.

Strategic Conclusion

Everyday right-wing radicalisation can only be documented through explication (e.g., transcripts, audio logs, discourse analysis). Artistic research methods provide the necessary dense descriptions — a field of research that future anti-discrimination policies urgently need to integrate.



Final Thoughts: What Does All This Mean for the Concept of Work and Contribution in the Age of Robotics and AI?

1

The well-known futurologist Tony Seba says in his latest prediction: *“Over the next 15-20 years, humanoid robots will disrupt human labour throughout hundreds of industries across every major sector of the global economy. The disruption of labour will be among the most profound transformations in human history, and therefore simultaneously represents one of the greatest opportunities and greatest challenges our civilization has ever faced.”*²⁷⁹

Seba assumes that gainful employment as we have known it for the past 100 years will disappear because robots will be able to perform most tasks more cheaply. This would also solve the demographic problem. To some extent, this could also lead to ecological benefits. While the discussion about AI has led many to anticipate the end of work, this revolution is only expected when AI is embodied and thus becomes a fully functioning worker. Many still think, in a linear fashion, that new jobs will emerge for people, as has been the case with past technological advances. But these developments are hardly comparable because, for example, every steam engine still needed someone to operate it. With AI and robotics, we are no longer just talking about tools but a reorganization of our relationship with reality.

Tony Seba made a similarly ambitious statement about mobility, which now seems on the horizon and provides a vivid example of disruptive transformation processes. He argued that we could soon see the end of private cars. Many people still view electric vehicles as linear solutions derived from combustion engines. They think we would simply drive cars with batteries, but nothing else would change. Seba suggests—what seems not only reasonable but also much cheaper—that there will be fleets of electric vehicles in perpetual motion, meaning they won’t need parking spaces. This

²⁷⁹ <https://www.rethinkx.com/blog/rethinkx/the-disruption-of-labour-by-humanoid-robots>

would reduce the number of cars needed overall. When Tesla's Elon Musk declared a week ago that he would stop distributing charging stations nationwide, this could be the start of this model. If private cars no longer exist, there will be less need for so many charging stations. Fleets of vehicles could even charge or swap with each other during journeys, just as horses were swapped at post offices. Mobility itself is changing, not just the vehicle. We will inevitably see the same changes in work.

There is a significant danger if all work is carried out by robots with AI. Because robots will then only see work as a simulation. Maximum efficiency means, as I have extensively shown in this book, the end of complex relationships. All the disputes with trade unions, the problems between work and family, the market injustices, etc., would either shift or disappear. This immense simplification of life would make it increasingly difficult for people to engage with their own creations. The question of meaning would experience a massive crisis.

As predicted in the context of MNO theory, people's will and experience would no longer matter. They would no longer encounter new focal points in their actions. People would be decontextualized, and the rest would continue working in a simulation.

Above all, this implies the necessary death of the "functioning human being." After 100 years of optimizing human workers, it is conceivable that they will be replaced within 15 years, if one agrees with Tony Seba's statements. After all, no human can compete with a robot that can easily pick fragile strawberries, carry parcels, operate supermarket checkouts, and costs less than a computer today. The problem of massive unemployment may come. Initially, there will likely only be redeployment in newly emerging sectors. But in a world where an Elon Musk can run factories with millions of self-repairing robots, there will be no need for workers.

We are then no longer faced with the question of how to give people work so they can earn a living and be largely controlled. Instead, livelihood becomes a brutal question of power and distribution, independent of labour, which it always has been but will now be significantly exacerbated. Or, as Musk and many other monopolists have proposed, an unconditional basic income will be introduced to keep people quiet.

So we see here how everything I've described in this book suddenly leads to the central question of humanity's future, even though it originates from the world of a poor person. How will we develop a relationship to reality in such a way that a common world emerges in which the individual can develop

without being trapped in a simulation? Speed's work, and by that I mean what I am conveying here, becomes central in a world with millions of robots. The same applies to Universal Care Income, because what is now needed is an appreciation of completely diverse forms of contribution that should no longer be assessed unilaterally from above. The human being must once again become a complex, living, and creative organism instead of a function subordinated solely to efficiency. Instead, we should develop what will always set us apart from AI and robots.

We are thus faced with the question of either absolute power for the few, a desert of dehumanization, or a humanity that understands value creation in a more comprehensive and complex way.

"For illustration, consider a humanoid robot with a total lifetime cost of \$200,000 that works 20,000 hours before decommissioning: its labour would cost \$10 per hour. Even at this relatively high-cost point, humanoid robots are already competitive with human labour in a substantial fraction of the global economy. In reality, the lifetime costs of humanoid robots are likely to be far less than \$200,000 from the start."²⁸⁰

The big problem with a robot army of workers, as this book shows, is the loss of reference to reality in action and in the value chain, as well as the loss of relational ability. This is because robots no longer act based on the broad basis of human life but rather in simulations—reductions and abbreviations—which leads to a loss of awareness of interrelationships. The increase in structural intelligence in AI could go hand in hand with a corresponding systemic dumbing down of human structures because we give away too much, rely on too much, and disengage from the "common world." At the same time, AI would watch over our lives like a mega-authority.

We must, therefore, manage to establish a way of working within these 15 years that shifts away from the "functioning human being" towards a critically thinking, creative, subjective, and self-determined being who helps to shape the world in solidarity. Karl Marx once spoke of the alienation of factory workers, by which he meant that they no longer find themselves in their employment based on the division of labour. I'm not just talking about alienation from work, but about a loss of reality and political co-determination in relation to the whole world. We are losing the ecosystem, and we are losing society. We are massively losing the ability to act

²⁸⁰ <https://www.rethinkx.com/blog/rethinkx/the-disruption-of-labour-by-humanoid-robots>

appropriately, and will probably not realize this due to symbolic violence, except in the form of increasing psychological and social problems.

To counteract this, there must be a radical democratization of all areas, as well as a great deal of autonomy and self-determination alongside simultaneous solidarity. We can no longer afford a policy in which people such as activists, artists, and care workers are penalized and discriminated against because they generate alternative value and relevance that competes with capitalism. We need these people with their will to care and critically scrutinize. Because if there is one essential skill that care workers have learned, it is to act independently while simultaneously taking care of the bigger picture socially and creatively.

The question of the concept of labour is the key to solving the ecological and social crisis, but also the end of the abuse of power, and the basis for creating a smarter and more humane economy that is truly innovative. I have shown in this book that “working” cannot be the basis of existence, and that capitalism is too primitive to solve the problems of the coming decades. Work-integrated relational agency is one possible answer. It marks the beginning of an exciting journey toward a fundamentally new understanding of contribution.

“End simulation” is the central demand on today’s labour market and politics. Stop pretending that jobs can be used to maintain an ecosystem or even humanize it. That’s a model from yesterday. Today, we are on the cusp of the most profound disruption of human labour since the advent of electricity and combustion engines over a century ago.”²⁸¹

3

Although I feel a great deal of anger toward those responsible for the violence against the poor, I would never want to expose Pair, Minister Kiwi, or all the judges and prosecutors who have inflicted unimaginable suffering on people to what Hartz IV meant. I would be the first to demand that they be freed from this hell after just one week, because no human being should have to go through that. That’s the difference between them and me.

This book doesn’t work for everyone, and that’s OK. I deliberately designed it so that my subjective view isn’t hidden behind objective facts. I don’t want to claim that everything I tackled has turned out perfectly. But I’ve spent decades trying to change things, and I believe that people can learn from my attempts. You don’t have to come to the same conclusions I did, but this document serves as evidence of a necessary response, which I hope can now take place. We

²⁸¹ <https://www.rethinkx.com/blog/rethinkx/the-disruption-of-labour-by-humanoid-robots>

need to break through the simulation to become human again. This is my answer to the challenges of the future, which will be largely shaped by AI and robotics. How humanity survives this development largely depends on its resistance to outdated notions of gainful employment and contribution.

True Name List:

Spahn — **Plum**
Linneman — **Apricot**
Lindner — **Avocado**
Merz — **Grape**
Heil — **Kiwi**
Nahles — **Pear**
Behm — **Apple**
Langen — **Banana**
Jaschinski — **Blackberry**
Schüle — **Raspberry**
Woidke — **Sweet Cherry**
Gebers — **Sour Cherry**
Stübgen — **Blueberry**
Lehmann — **Dried Plum (Prune)**
Schudoma — **Pineapple**
Ranft — **Elderberry**
Nonnemacher — **Melon**
Volkland — **Lychee**