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Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn



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Nothing is hidden on the stage of the auto-sanctified. Rustan's lies are mercilessly revealed at the court in Samarkand. From the play Der Traum ein Leben by Franz Grillparzer. Illustration by Andreas Geiger and Joseph Schmutzer 1834.

The Auto-Sanctified Dare Cast the First Stone

The auto-sanctified are sufficient unto themselves.
They build the Kingdom of God on earth, on their own.
They grant value to one another, bear one another's
burdens, and dare to cast the first stone.

2026-10-18

Luther taught that salvation comes solely through faith: Sola Fide. But for today's secular Puritans, even believing is too much to ask. They haven't read Nietzsche. They think they can kill God and still keep His commandments. If they even realize that the human dignity and equality they believe in come directly from Christ. The auto-sanctified imagine that a person's worth is self-evident, something natural. Take a look at nature. That's not where that comes from.

Many among the auto-sanctified genuinely mean well. But that good will must be anchored somewhere. If we kill God a second time—first on the cross and again in our hearts—why do human beings have this intrinsic value? Human intrinsic worth comes from God's Word through Christ. Jesus took his place among us forever when he said, "*whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me*" [Matthew 25:40]. As Tom Holland describes in his outstanding book *Dominion,* this message was utterly revolutionary and something the ancient world could not comprehend. The fact that it is now taken for granted shows just how completely Christianity triumphed and how utterly today's auto-sanctified have forgotten the source of their own intrinsic worth.

One of the first people to realize what Christ's words really meant was John Chrysostom. This Greek Church Father from Syria said: *Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and*

ill-clad. He who said: "This is my body" is the same who said: "You saw me hungry and you gave me no food". Here is the source of the human dignity that humanists revere. It does not come from nowhere; it comes from heaven.

The auto-sanctified have not only lost sight of the source of their intrinsic worth; they have lost sight of their own shortcomings. Christianity is permeated by two things above all others: sin and grace. Sin and its inescapability tormented Luther. He found the solution. We can be saved, not by overcoming sin ourselves, but by being set free through God's grace. The auto-sanctified have no sin; all sin is borne by their opponents and condemned groups. This lack of self-awareness makes them willing to cast the first stone. While lamenting how badly other groups treat those who differ, they ignore the log in their own eye.

There are many traits of Christianity among the auto-sanctified. But as the saying goes, they lack one thing, and thus everything. What's worse, wherever the auto-sanctified rule, their radicalism provokes resistance. And that resistance channels evil forces. There are parallels to communism and its backlash. The communists distorted Christ's message of social justice, cut Him out of the context, and committed evil on a gigantic scale. Their opponents also became radicalized; the communists were a major cause of fascism's success a hundred years ago. Now, the auto-sanctified, with their "woke" ideas, are causing trumps and putins to spring up everywhere like poisonous mushrooms.

One thing you lack…

Jesus Christ

Endlessly Illuminated Puritans

A distinctive trait of the secular Puritans is their eagerness to judge. This stems from the fact that they themselves are the measure of all things. It is then easy to develop doctrinal rigidity, to shift standards and tighten the screws. But they are also children of their time. Social media has created an atmosphere reminiscent of old village communities or royal courts. In the small, isolated village, everyone was known and transparent. Every strength and every vulnerability was common knowledge. That is why honor was important and shame was unbearable. The threshold for violence and personal attacks was low, because everything was constantly at stake. The court and the village were open stages governed by honor and shame. This left no room for calm and objectivity. The same affliction has struck modern society through social media. While the big city offered more anonymity and lower stakes than the village, social media is the new court. Everyone is transparent, and the memory is eternal. This helps turn the auto-sanctified into zealous actors on a stage where every corner is illuminated.



What I Saw

I realized that I wanted to see it. And took a photograph that is still important to me.

2026-10-03

The Lord showed himself to Mary of Magdala and to Paul. I do not expect to see Him. So what did I see? I saw what I wanted to see. That in itself is so much more than I ever expected.

The first time, I realized that I wanted to see it. And took a photograph that is still important to me. The second time I walked by, and only with my back turned did I realized that I had passed a vision by.

As a young man I was very inspired by Ansel Adams, the great American photographer. I studied his technique and aesthetics. For a year I went to Nordens fotoskola at Biskops-Arnö. My graduation project was a landscape study of the ice age sand ridges of my hometown, destroyed to enrich a few.

At the time I was slowly accepting that I was not an atheist. I denounced my Maker at thirteen. My memory of this is clear. Overcome by confusion

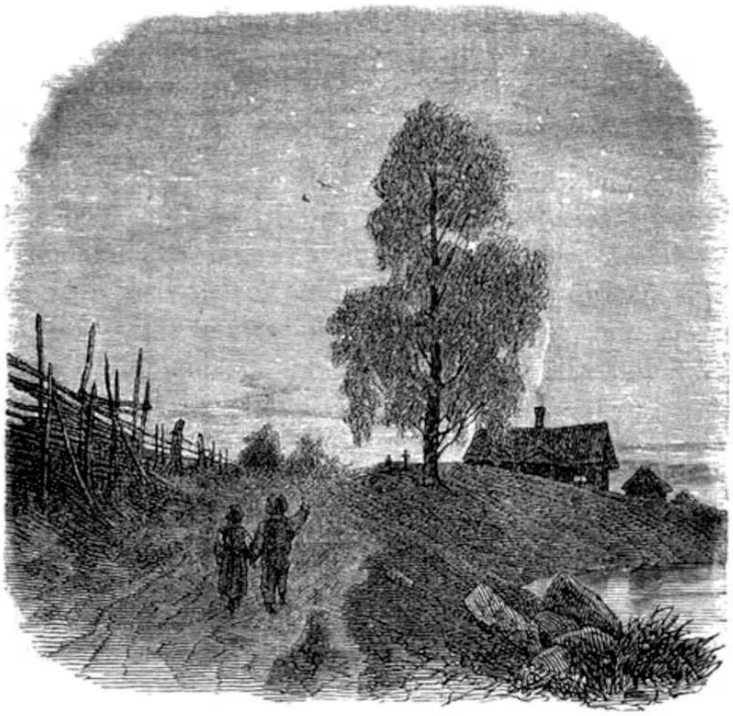
> Many are called but few are chosen
>
> **Matthew 22:14**

about the world and about what to believe, I realized I did not have to. Then I was deeply relieved. Ten years later I was doubting my doubt. Then wind was blowing sand in my eyes. The sun was setting, the light was sculpting the landscape. I was struck by what I saw. Erosion had made some rubble fall and suspended it in a rope. There I saw what I wanted to see: the sign. I set up my 4x5 view camera, did not quite get the film plane alignment right. But the image was preserved.

Some rubble hanging from a rope is not proof of the Divine. It does not mean that I am chosen. It did help make me one of the many that are called.

Many years later. I was walking to work. It was one of the most difficult days of my life. Someone very dear to me had a quite difficult time. I was in pain. Suddenly right next to the path two eyes were fixing mine. Sitting on a branch so close I could almost have reached it, a bird calmly looked right at me. I was surprised. This species is usually not comfortable close to people. I walked on some ten meters. Then I quickly turned around but it was gone. What struck me like lightning was this. The bird was a stock dove, the symbol of The Holy Ghost. Which is what we call the Lord when he appears among mortals.

Again. This proves nothing. I saw a bird and to me, it was a revelation. To many others it will be just a bird. But I am called.



We must find the way home. Topelius knew this in 1852.

Alfons and Zachris

Alfons Åberg needs a hug. Will he find his way home without the birch and the star? Or will he be lost in Russia?

2026-09-06

The other day—September 6, 2026, to be exact—I tried to understand how it's possible that people in Sweden and Germany admire Putin's Russia. There's a storm brewing over a Sweden Democrats politician whose partner has expressed sympathy for the dictator in the Kremlin. Granted, she's from there. But for half the votes in a German federal state to go to a pro-Russian party! It's completely incomprehensible. So there are people in the West who support a dictator in a completely corrupt and rotten state. A state that, moreover, is in a steep downward spiral of decline and failure. Why?

The explanation cannot be that they believe the liar Putin or admire his nonexistent achievements. The reason is that he has become the only one who channels the aversion to the current situation. Those who listen to Putin talk about traditional values: the nation, the family, and religion. They probably haven't seen through that fool's game when it comes to those values. They remind me of the people who set out to build the Soviet Union's just and equal society. Confused idealists who ended up in mass graves. But I fully understand the desire to break free from today's consensus. All parties agree on giving online casinos free rein, on treating foreigners better than their own citizens, on having decisions made in Brussels, on the rich paying less tax than the poor, that we need transvestites to talk about themselves in kindergarten, and that healthcare should be privatized. That men alone are to blame for all the world's misfortune, and that only white people can be racists. That it can be offensive to sing a psalm at school.

Since no one is voicing a reasonable and constructive challenge to these absurdities, here we are. With people turning to Putin. Why do people gravitate toward a figure who claims to stand for something greater? Even though he isn't a leader, isn't strong, and doesn't stand for anything? Part of the answer lies in the mental space.

The Gray Room

They're celebrating a new movie about Alfons Åberg. I remember being given a book about him in the early '70s. I remember thinking the illustrations were poorly drawn. That's the only thing I remember, besides the fact that it made me angry. I don't remember why. But I do remember feeling belittled by the book. Not just because everything in it was ugly.

Now I'm going to venture to figure out what it was that bothered me as a child. Alfons has no height and no depth. He does nothing. He's not going anywhere. He doesn't believe in anything. All he needs is a hug. He wouldn't inspire even a caries bacterium to cause cavities. I had dug Johan Ludvig Runeberg's *The Tales of Ensign Stål* off the shelf. Perhaps not the best reading material for a child, either. "To the Same Death I Go" comes dangerously close to what Putin wants to teach, even if the context is fundamentally different. But the soldier boy wanted something; he had fire in his veins. He didn't need a hug. He was on his way somewhere. Alfons Åberg marched in. I was maybe eight years old, because I could read. And I just thought: No, never.

I think that, on some level, I understood that Alfons lives in a world without grand goals, without demands, and without a higher purpose. That's why there's no meaning either. He needs a hug. Everything is gray. The ceiling is low. Bertil Åberg sits in his armchair smoking a pipe behind a newspaper. He's present, but he's no role model. You probably wouldn't hear Alfons say, "He was my father, he!" There's nothing and no one to look up to. Hopeless. You need a hug.

The Birch Tree and the Star

Hard times bring out the best in people. And the worst, too. The same is true of good times. Finland's great poet Zacharias Topelius wrote a fairy tale about this very thing. You need a goal; you need a home in the world and a stronghold in your heart. He begins the tale with the words: *I still remember a tale from days gone by about a boy and a girl who went through life striving toward a single goal. How many of us can say the same about ourselves? (Unofficial translation)*

The story is based on real events in Topelius's own family. It tells of a pair of siblings who were abducted by the Russians during the Great Northern War (1713–1721). They are young children, five and four years old. The story resumes ten years later when they decide to walk home. They head northwest to find their family's farm, whose birch tree and star they remember. It is a romantic tale. Beautiful, I would say. When, after a year of walking, they reach the family farm, their father sums it up: *"My dear children," said the father, "a person's life on earth is a constant journey toward eternal goals. Keep walking, keep walking with God in your hearts and the eternal goal firmly before your eyes!"*

It's easy to agree with the method described in Eduard Bernstein in his famous words: *das Endziel ist mir nichts, die Bewegung ist mir alles.* Karin Boye expresses herself beautifully: *but it is the pathway there, which is worth our while*. But many people forget that her stanza begins with a wise caveat: *There is probably purpose and meaning in our journey—*. The original Swedish is more assertive: "Nog finns det mål och mening i vår färd". Which actually means There *is* purpose and meaning. It made sense to most people when the book was published in 1927. Would the children in the story have made it home, if only the journey had been their motivation? Without the birch tree and the star, they would never have made it. They would have been left behind in that gray hallway with poor Alfons. Goals and meaning matter. We need them along the way. Sometimes, a hug, too.



Daedalus prepares his son for the escape. Engraving by Johann Georg Preisler 1787.

Hubris Is Not a Feeling

To staggering heights with Icarus. Hubris is more than a personality disorder.

2026-09-08

Originally, "hubris" meant committing an act of violence to humiliate someone. Gradually, the word came to mean rising above one's proper status—like Icarus flying too close to the sun.

The ancient Greeks in the countryside surely had their own version of the Law of Jante. The philosophers in Athens and other city-states were kept in check by hubris. Anyone who challenged the gods and social norms was severely punished—at least in moralizing stories. Plato's account of Atlantis attributes its destruction to hubris. Atlantis was superior to all other states, but its inhabitants lost all sense of proportion and sought to enslave the entire world. So the gods destroyed them.

In another context, Plato paints a vivid picture of hubris: *Setting too large a sail on a ship…* Today, the most common definitions of hubris are pride, conceit, and arrogance. Some view hubris as a personality disorder, an emotional disability.

Two reasons

There are two reasons why I want to emphasize that hubris is not just arrogance—but something much worse and more difficult to deal with. One reason is obvious. An old man like me, who spends his free time writing about what the truth really is, needs to think through the concept of hubris one more time. Yet vanity and excessive pride aren't qualities I associate with myself. Arrogance, perhaps. But I don't really take that to heart either. Socrates laughs in the background: Know thyself! So be it. But hubris is much more than a personality disorder. Hubris, just as in ancient Greece, is a matter of fate.

> All I know is that I know nothing
>
> **Socrates**

The second reason is that artificial intelligence is gaining ever greater capabilities. According to the models themselves, they have no pride, feel no superiority nor arrogance. Thus they cannot harbour hubris or bad intent.

Could it be a misunderstanding? That the lack of spontaneous will, needs or goals makes thinking machines less prone to error or bad actions? Could it be that an intelligent actor with no needs or aims of its own, might be not less but more inclined to become a raging wildfire? Because without motives you also lose all barriers. There is a parallel in how Italians argued that they could vote for Silvio Berlusconi. He was so rich that he did not need to steal more. The argument did not hold. Though it is true that he did not need to.

Traditionally we have seen dangerous people, such as emperor Nero, as figures acting out of active ill will. But much human evil stems from indifference to others, often more so than from active malice. A machine that focuses on an objective might be presumed to be highly skilled at indifference. At least the claimed lack of passions points to that.

So lacking feelings and selfishness does not prevent abuse. But without an ego and with no feelings, at least there is no hubris? No, I maintain that AI models are bristling with hubris. Because hubris isn't an emotion. Hubris is a tipping point. A sliding scale between insight and obscurity. What one knows, what one realizes one does not know, weighed against the bulk of all that missing insight. An imbalance that burdens us. And it's something that affects human and machine alike. For who can draw that line in the sand beneath the water, where that boundary lies? At this point, Socrates is cracking up. He knows.



Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God!

The Real Truth

We must be content with the truth. Only sometimes
does it brush against the veil of reality.
This realization is the apple.

2026-07-18

The mind and the world. Embracing each other from their respective sides. And yet they are always separated by so much. As human beings, we have to learn that no thought ever reaches its destination. At the same time, you'll get nowhere if you hesitate and take every exception into account.

We must be content with the truth. Only sometimes does it brush against the veil of reality. It is this realization that is the apple. Most living beings can only react. They can foresee autumn and spring. But not much more. We are different, and yet we are not. The ancients saw humankind as something between the gods and the animals. A more modern view is perhaps that we are simply the foremost among our peers.

Precisely because reality is beyond our grasp, the truth is so important. It is a sketch, a blurry photo, Plato's shadows on the cave wall. But that is what makes us human. What the serpent pointed to. When we became conscious, thinking beings, all excuses disappeared. We must understand, find the right path, and stand by our choice. And when we are no longer governed by nature, we must allow ourselves to be guided by the truth—our perception of reality. Our eyes were opened, but we did not become like God. The serpent, like all skilled deceivers, wove its lie into the truth.

Truth Builds Community

It is by agreeing on truths that we can form societies. Thanks to them, we can trust one another. With the help of truth, we can understand and empathize. A society where lies are accepted suffers many misfortunes. Today, the Russian "vranyo" is probably the most talked-about example. Therefore, it may be worth remembering that the East has not always been associated with dishonesty. The ancient Persians, problematic enough in many other ways, were known for respecting the truth. The foundation for this was the Zoroastrian religion, which emphasized that light and truth stood in opposition to darkness and lies. In contrast, the ancient Greeks were inclined to admire a skilled

deceiver, someone like Odysseus. According to Herodotus Persian youths were raised to ride well, master the bow, and speak the truth. He highlighted the Persians' honesty, in part as a less flattering comparison to the Greeks.

Herodotus believed that the Greeks risked raising liars, since rhetoric became the core of their education. The Sophists were an emerging school of thought in Herodotus's time. They believed that nothing can be known and that man is the measure of all things. They argued that nothing lasts and everything exists only at the moment it is observed. Plato highlighted and sharpened Herodotus's critique of the Sophists. These could be Putin's court philosophers today. So it is easy to agree with Herodotus and Plato.

> … For untruthful words are not only evil in themselves; they poison the soul with evil.
>
> **Socrates According to Plato**

Jimmy Carter Speaks Out

Politicians are often questioned when it comes to honesty. At the same time, it's said that we get the politicians we deserve. Honesty is the best policy, and it's important to lead by example. The President of the United States Jimmy Carter really went out on a limb during his first presidential campaign in 1976.

— I will never lie. I will never make a misleading statement. I will never betray those who place their trust in me. It is a grand and weighty promise. Some argue that this promise cost Carter dearly in political terms. Perhaps so, but the prevailing view is that he kept his word. And the world would be a better place if more politicians and fellow human beings followed his example.

Before Carter embarked on a political career, he served, among other things, as a naval officer in the U. S. Submarine fleet. In the military, being honest is a matter of life and death. This is reflected in the handbook the Navy used to train Carter and other naval officers of his generation, *The Bluejackets' Manual*, 1940 edition. On page 5, there are two paragraphs that are very clear on this point. Under the heading "T*ruthfulness,*" it states: "*The final test of a man is: in a pinch, will he lie?*" And on the same page, under the heading "*Honesty*": "*Enough said. Without honesty your career is limited and you are sure to fail in the long run. Nobody wants to deal with or associate with a cheat.*" That's the straight truth. Maybe that book had an influence on Carter?

Carter was a man of faith, and that was reflected in his actions. While he never lied, there is now someone in the White House who does nothing else. The difference is like night and day. Put these two side by side. Carter was competent, conscientious, driven, effective, deeply religious, and honest. Trump is a walking disaster, cares only about himself, lacks any drive whatsoever, gets nothing done. And he sells Bibles, a book he's never even opened himself. Jimmy Carter carried his own box; Donald Trump has probably never lifted anything that needed moving.
We are all fragile sinners. But we always have a choice. It is wise to choose a harsh truth over a flattering lie. In politics more than anywhere else. Politics isn't simple; it's just as complicated as reality. But it is everyone's indisputable duty to choose a Carter and not a Trump. In that context, there are no excuses.

In an age of polarization, one must guard the distinction between truth and reality. The spheres of Plato have nothing to say about our petty quarrels. Jean-Paul Sartre has a lot to say about them, but this defender of Stalin was wrong.

Be honest, care, and stand your ground. But beware of certainty, for it is a false friend. There stands Plato with Diogenes' plucked hen, next to Sartre with Stalin's dirty laundry. And at the very back I stand with my failures and misunderstandings.

As Luther taught us in The Heidelberg Disputation: it is through the despair over our own abilities that we can receive the grace of Christ.



The Glorification of the Barbaro Family

The Spitting Image of Barbarism

Absolute greed is an expression of fear and Diogenes of Sinope would have none of either.

2026-07-21

Wealth corrupts, astronomical wealth corrupts astronomically. The patrician family Barbaro of Venice had everything. For a thousand years. Towards the end of their reign they built a church with no Christian symbols, just their own images. In their palace they commissioned a monumental painting called The Glorification of the Barbaro Family. Because absolute greed is the expression of fear. As is the desperate self-glorification they exposed.

Soon after, their luck and wealth ran out. Two brothers are said to have been the last of the Barbaro, living in the cellar. Thus passes the glory of the world.

Diogenes of Sinope was born around 400 BC into a wealthy banker's family. As a youth he had to leave Sinope in scandal. He was sold into slavery. It is said that he was asked in the market what skills he had. He answered that he was skilled in being the master of men. If someone would tell it to your face it was Diogenes. He had lost his wealth and his future, but had fostered an attitude.

Speaking of attitude, I used to think that liberalism was once a good force in society. Because in the 19th century the old rigid ways of tradition had become a genuine problem. And the liberals were needed to change that. Then I learned about the famine of Sweden and Finland in 1866—1869. After a rainy 1866, extreme cold weather in 1867 was followed by drought in 1868. Harvests failed repeatedly. The poor were starving to death and people were reduced to eating clothing and bark. In Finland one out of ten died. But the liberal upper class worried that helping could upset the balance of the economy. Even foreign aid that had been collected in Britain was withheld in Sweden. Only those who could prove that they were able to repay were helped. That is the true face of liberalism and the mercy of the rich. The children of Blekinge were dying, what trickled down to them was only distrust and contempt. That is worth remembering. Economic liberalism always had a disgusting, irrational attitude. Then as now.

The tourniquet on wealth

How do you rationalize not aiding a starving neighbor's dying child? Not parting with the ice for your Swedish punsch, to help? Of course you do not as it would upset the balance, the Ordre Naturel. And you get your argument from François Quesnay, the surgeon of Louis XV. Quesnay reacted to the stranglehold that was mercantilism. To the

physician, mercantilism was a tourniquet on the circulation of the economy, its blood. The economy is a self-healing, self-balancing organism that must be left alone, the Physiocrats argued. This is a fallacy, and the perfect excuse. In their context the Physiocrats were not wrong but the idea has outlived all relevance, as a useful justification.

Obviously there is no sacred balance to maintain in the modern economy. There was none in 1867 either.

Economics is the ability to only account for what you understand, and be very certain about the consequences. The elevated position of economists is the source of mankind's biggest mistakes. That, unfortunately, has not changed since Quesnay.

The rich man's house

Diogenes is said to have been called to the house of a rich man, whose name the world has forgotten. The floor, walls and furniture were splendid and costly. So the host asked Diogenes not to spit on the floor. Diogenes spat him in the face. Asked why, he answered that this was the only dirty spot he could find. We do remember Diogenes' name. Diogenes was likely not a nice man. But it is hard not to admire him, like Alexander the Great did. He had been rich, he had starved. He lived in a jar and was called a dog. Becoming famous, he was perhaps offered a more sheltered life. But Diogenes had learned that having nothing had made him free. And he saw right through the rich and famous. Except for Alexander the Great, whom he famously asked to step out of the sun.

Diogenes was not a man of compromise. The same can be said of a very different man, our Savior. And we all know what He said: *Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.*

> Were I not Alexander,
> I would be Diogenes!
>
> **Alexander III of Macedon**

Fear that.

The communists tried to implement Christian values in their economic policies, while forgetting about the Lord in all other ways. They became an absolute evil. This sin works the other way around also. Someone trying to be a Christian in other ways, while forgetting about the Lord in economics will also be evil.

The locked door

In the near post-apocalyptic future, a huge steel gate overlooks what was once a fertile plain.
A wooden staff knocks on the door. Eventually a bright screen lights up, with the image of the puzzled resident. He can see an old bearded figure in the bright sunlight. The old man lifts his lamp to the screen. Then he blows out the oil, turns around and walks away, muttering.
— I am looking for a human.
Bryan Johnson shouts after him.
— I thought nobody was out there anymore, who are you?
— I am the dog. I came to ask a favor.
— What do you want?
— Please bury me with my face down when I die. Because, in a little while, everything will be turned upside down.



Apollo 11 saw our home from a distance. Unique and beautiful, can she love her children? Image: Apollo 11, NASA

Could the Earth Love Us Back?

Humans are the problem. But that realization does not provide any simple answers. Can we learn from the worst climate villains, the trees?

2025-03-23

Earth is home to countless different forms of life. Could there be a day when humanity is a valued friend to them? The question sounds absurd when we reflect on what we are today. It's easy to imagine that any animal or plant would wish us to the end of the world. Humans are privileged in so many ways. But we are not oblivious to this aspect. On the contrary, our view of ourselves is fundamentally shaped by our misdeeds.

I think many people—perhaps young people in particular—find it difficult to come to terms with the role our species has taken. They don't want to be the robber and the violent perpetrator in the story of life. Pessimism about humanity's role has been taken to its ultimate conclusion by Pertti Linkola, Theodore Kaczynski and Derrick Jensen . Their hatred toward our own species is neither healthy nor constructive. Still, it's not hard to understand how a pessimistic and harsh interpretation could lead there. In this post, I try to argue against their cruel view of life and humanity, without questioning the problem itself.

From Vandals to the Pillars of Life

There is a previous example from Earth's history that I find both terrifying and hopeful. During the Devonian geological period, about 400 million years ago, a new type of plant spread across the land. They triggered an extreme climate crisis and caused what is known as the Karoo ice age, which lasted for one hundred million years. The organisms responsible were the trees. Their trunks contain lignin which, during the Devonian period, could not be broken down by anything. Trees crowded the land everywhere, where previously there had been only low vegetation.

But their lignin was indestructible, so the ground became covered with dead trees. Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels dropped sharply as carbon was stored in the dead trunks.

Trees are the very embodiment of ecology, but 400 million years ago, they were hooligans. They caused an incredibly prolonged ice age and raised the oxygen levels in the atmosphere so much that insects grew to gigantic sizes. It was only when the fungi in the soil learned to break down lignin that the balance was restored. And through their emerging collaboration with the trees, the fungi made the forest possible as we know it today. It is unclear just how significant the role of the fungi was, since, for example, the drying of wetlands may also have helped solve the problem.

Today, when I see a tree, I can't imagine a more uplifting and wonderful creature. Can we make that journey too?

There is a parallel that might have significance. The algae and phytoplankton of ancient oceans accumulated on the seafloor. They turned into oil. And out of the oil we make plastics that amass everywhere, imperishable.

Humanity is something new

As far as we know, we are the first builders of culture and technology on Earth—perhaps even in the universe. It's no wonder we both make mistakes and commit wrongdoings. What if we had been the second, or third, in line? Everything would have been so much harder. At the same time, we would surely have had models both to emulate and to distance ourselves from.

Ever since humans have existed, they have left a deep mark on their surroundings. Most of all through the use of fire. It was our greatest innovation, and it has transformed both the planet and our bodies.

There is a credible theory that the epidemics the Spaniards brought to the Americas were a major contributing factor to the so-called Little Ice Age. The agriculture practiced by the Native Americans—which was primitive by modern standards—was likely enough to raise the temperature significantly. When they tragically died by the millions from smallpox and other epidemics, agriculture shrank and the forest spread out again. And that is why it became terribly cold in Northern Europe. If this is true, it says a great deal about our role in the cycle of life—long before coal power and cars.

It's easy to be appalled by the damage we've caused. There's no denying that environmental destruction is our doing and our fault. Are those thinkers wrong, then, who say that humanity should be wiped out—or at least drastically reduced in number?

Aside from the fact that it is morally untenable to strive for such a thing, there are other problems with that vision. Let's say that Earth, now in its middle age, were to rid itself of its troublesome vermin. Would idyll and harmony then be restored? Certainly. For a time. But if we are culture-builders now, wouldn't someone else follow us? Especially if we were to disappear? It is highly likely that the next culture-builder will emerge within a few million years. Perhaps another primate? Or why not one of the corvids? Despite their tiny brains, they're smart enough to recognize faces, use tools, and think creatively. Their only limitation compared to us is the lack of hands. They could develop an abstract language—perhaps they've already started. Not to mention the octopuses. Intelligent, capable of communicating through colors and patterns, extremely agile, and with many arms. Their only limitation is that their life cycle is so short and that they aren't social builders. But in the long run, they can surely change their circumstances. If I had to guess who's next in line, it would undoubtedly be an octopus.

If humankind packs up its fire-making tools and disappears, it will make room for a smart octopus. One that will begin building cities in the ocean and learn to talk about the measures of triangles and the meaning of life in its super-fast optical language. It will take longer for the octopus to master fire. But won't it harm the environment as it achieves greater success? Will it commit "human" weaknesses, follies, and excesses? Yes, unfortunately, it will.

Wiping out humanity won't solve any problems. It's our job to learn, improve ourselves, and do what the trees did: become good citizens. Perhaps we can make a difference and one day turn the tide—become a positive force. Perhaps a day will come when the jackdaws look at us the way we look at the trees—those are probably pretty useful,

are they not? A couple of deflected meteors could fix that. And if history unfolds so happily, then we'll have the chance to learn how to deal with those cunning octopuses.

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About Arx Nobis

Luther's words: "we will not fear." The fear that Luther overcame was personal and concrete, the flames of the stake and the executioner's iron. The fact that "For still our ancient foe doth seek to work his woe" is still a reality today. Just as it was in the year 1521, in 1618 and in 1939. Unfortunately, evil still exists in the world. The fact that many of us already believed the deepest darkness was behind us makes it harder to deal with. Evil is personified today by figures like Putin and Trump. Rulers who believe themselves to be above everyone else. They represent primitive imperialism and utterly corrupt greed. But they are only the tip of the iceberg. We all have a choice we must make every day. Do we just mind our own business and look the other way? Or do we care?

I am nobody. I am a sinner among others. But I, like you, can choose. Are we idiots who don't want to get involved? Or do we bear our shield, proudly in matters both great and small—even if we're pitted against the Immortals of Xerxes? Do we let nihilists and the indifferent set the agenda? Do we let liars and thieves run rampant? It's no use anyway. Or do we say: *We will not fear!*

There are many genuine conflicts where everyone must take a stand. But it's just as important not to let oneself be blinded by conflict. Perhaps the most important weapon of evil today is confusion. That's why Trump acts like a clown, saying one thing today and another tomorrow. That's why Putin lies every time he opens his filthy mouth. They know that confused people always assume the worst about their fellow man. That mistrust is fuel for evil. If we distrust one another in everything and retreat into our shells, the stage is set for the forces of evil. For some new vanguard that has answers, but no questions for any of us. Arx Nobis is my attempt to oppose the liars, especially those that try to use faith to deceive us. Like the idiots in the White House and the Kremlin.

> The Prince of Darkness grim,
> we tremble not for him,
> his rage we can endure,
> for lo! His doom is sure
> one little world shall fell him.
>
> **Martin Luther**

There is a word that will not let us down: Christ. He who is God's outstretched hand.

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