Left-Wing and Right-Wing Identity Politics: A Comparison of the Post-structuralist Turn in Left-Wing Extremism with the Ethnopluralism and Nominalism of the New Right

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1. Introduction

In February 2019, the film *Black Panther* was awarded three Oscars in Los Angeles. Some reviewers embraced it for its anti-racist message against the resurgence of racism under U.S. president Donald Trump.[1] It tells the story of a black hero who tries to steer the development of an ethnically pure, isolationist hereditary monarchy in Africa. The imaginary state of Wakanda, which presents itself to the rest of

   1. Cf., e.g., Reggie Ugwu, "Did You Watch 'Black Panther'? Let's Talk Spoilers," *New York Times*, February 18, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/18/movies/black-panther-spoilers.html.

the world as a third-world country, has highly developed technologies at its disposal—at the same time, one recalls archaic African myths there.[2]

Film critic Richard Brody, in his review for the *New Yorker*, commented that Wakanda reminded him of an innocent and unspoiled Africa as it might have existed in a time before the original sin of colonialism. The country is portrayed as free from Western colonial devastation; its resources have not been plundered, and its cultural heritage has been able to be realized without break. Wakanda's technological achievements illustrate its rich material and intellectual resources. In Brody's view, the film propagates a positive self-image of the Africans and opposes their racially motivated disparagement.[3]

The author of the German–Austrian New Right[4] Martin Lichtmesz saw the film quite differently. He praised it for its identitarian message: "The film propagates a blatantly 'identitarian' message, which in itself is positive: 'Wakanda' is a kind of micro Pan-African, essentially ethnoculturally homogeneous nation…composed of various tribes, all of which have retained certain peculiarities.…Its inhabitants cultivate a passionate patriotism that is never questioned.…They live in seclusion behind dense borders and are meticulous about who may enter their country and who may not.…*Black Panther* depicts a civilization that has succeeded in squaring the circle, that has managed on the one hand to mechanize, modernize, and urbanize itself to the utmost but on the other hand has remained rooted, close to the earth and nature, religious, warlike (and at the same time peaceful-defensive), 'folkish,' even monarchistic."[5]

One might think that this film, which was even shown in American schools with reference to its anti-racist message, could become a cult film for the Identitarians because of its illustration of the concept of ethnopluralism. But Lichtmesz still comes to his criticism after the positive appreciation: "In the end, the

2. Cf. Nico Hoppe, "Vorsicht Ideologiekritik! Wie die vermeintlich fortschrittlichen Filme der Oscar-Verleihung die Regression befeuern," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, February 24, 2019, https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/oscars-scheinbar-progressiv-tatsaechlich-aber-regressiv-ld.1460623?reduced=true.

3. Cf. Richard Brody, "The Passionate Politics of 'Black Panther,'" *New Yorker*, February 16, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-passionate-politics-of-black-panther.

4. The New Right is an intellectual movement within the far right that originated in France and Germany. It emphasizes the need for a radical right beyond conservatism that avoids at the same time the taboos of National Socialism. For this purpose, it draws back to the so-called Conservative Revolution in Germany in the interwar period, which was profoundly anti-liberal, anti-pluralistic, and critical about parliamentarian democracy, without sharing the antisemitism and racism of National Socialists. The leading intellectuals of the New Right are Alain de Benoist in France and Armin Mohler in Germany.

5. Martin Lichtmesz, "Aufbruch nach Wakanda (2): Black Panther Supremacy," *Sezession*, February 25, 2018, https://sezession.de/58230/aufbruch-nach-wakanda-2-black-panther-supremacy.

'identity politics' of the film clearly comes at the expense of the whites and propagates a self-consciousness that is strictly forbidden to themselves. While 'black pride' is hyped up by the left-liberal press, in today's America even the simple statement 'It's OK to Be White' is considered 'controversial,' 'racist,' or 'neo-Nazi propaganda.' *Black Panther*, on the other hand, explicitly affirms black identity and 'black nationalism.'"[6]

What bothers Lichtmesz, then, are the different standards applied to the sense of identity of black Africans and American or European whites. Yet despite the expected criticism, the commonalities of Brody's and Lichtmesz's positive evaluations of the film are remarkable, showing after all that there are interesting commonalities between left-wing identity politics that seeks to combat discrimination against minorities and the identity politics of Identitarians and representatives of the New Right. Ethnically and culturally homogeneous Wakanda impresses Brody as a community that positions itself against the disparagement of blacks; Lichtmesz understands the ethnic and cultural homogeneity as an ideal for all, not just for oppressed nations. Both see the means of choice in measures that can be characterized as a strict hygiene of peoples and culture so that nations that have become victimized by over-foreignization [*Überfremdung*] and paternalism can find themselves—except that the victim in this case is "the black" and in others "the white male."

The agreement of both, despite their very different reviews, indicates that there are ideological commonalities between the identity politics positions of the New Right and the Identitarians, on the one hand, and those of leftists, respectively left-wing extremists, on the other. That especially the Identitarians took over their strategy and forms of action from the left-wing protest movements was noticed in the literature differently;[7] representatives of the Identitarians and of the New Right themselves point to these models.[8] Parallels between left-wing and right-wing

6. Ibid.

7. Cf. e.g., Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2019), p. 177; Andreas Speit, "Reaktionärer Klan: Die Entwicklung der Identitären Bewegung in Deutschland," in *Das Netzwerk der Identitären: Ideologie und Aktionen der Neuen Rechten*, ed. Andreas Speit (Bonn: Ch. Links Verlag, 2018), pp. 17–41, here pp. 19f. However, the strategy of targeted provocation was originally developed by Italian fascists. Cf. Thomas Wagner, "Nicht die Linken haben die Kunst der politischen Provokation erfunden: Es waren die präfaschistischen Futuristen," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, May 24, 2018, https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/nicht-die-linken-haben-die-kunst-der-politischen-provokation-erfunden-es-waren-die-praefaschistischen-futuristen-ld.1387869?reduced=true.

8. Thus, e.g., the former leader of the Austrian branch of the Identitarian Movement, Martin Sellner, quoted in Speit, "Reaktionärer Klan," p. 20. When Götz Kubitschek praises provocation, understood as "targeted violation of rules," as the necessary "right-wing strategy," he refers to the student

identity politics at the ideological level, on the contrary, have so far been barely systematically analyzed. An exception is a recent contribution of the German political science scholar Armin Pfahl-Traughber, who emphasizes differences and commonalities of left-wing identity concepts like "critical whiteness" and "cultural inclination" and such right-wing identity concepts as ethnopluralism, and shows that both sides relativize or reject universal values and human rights and substitute them with an emphasis on the homogeneity of cultural community and a cultural relativism.[9] Otherwise, the similarities of both directions are treated rather incidentally. The German sociologist Thomas Wagner, for example, notes that the common ground between "right-wing advocate(s) of ethnopluralism" and "left-wing supporters of the multicultural society" lies in that both are "not concerned with what is culturally common but rather with the emphasis on the specific, on the other."[10] This development began in anticolonial liberation movements: with the concept of "négritude," racist attributions were positively reinterpreted. According to Wagner, that is why Henning Eichberg, the co-founder of the New Right in Germany, was able to indicate as early as 1978 that "it was no longer only the Right that spoke of ethnic identity and national liberation."[11] The New Right and a Left that invokes post-structuralism, postmodernism, and feminism will find themselves in a common "animosity against a humanistic universalism that is at least partially perceived as repressive."[12] Other publications also point to these commonalities, but without examining them systematically.[13]

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movement, in which targeted provocation was an important part of the strategy of "extra-parliamentary opposition" (APO); see Götz Kubitschek, *Provokation* (Schnellroda: Antaios, 2007), pp. 22–26. For the relevance of provocation in the student movement, cf. Susanne Kailitz, *Von den Worten zu den Waffen? Frankfurter Schule, Studentenbewegung, RAF und die Gewaltfrage* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2007), pp. 107f, 124, 137f, 150f.

9. Armin Pfahl-Traughber, "Antiindividualismus und Antiuniversalismus als Konsequenzen: Die Gemeinsamkeiten von Identitätslinker und Identitätsrechter," *perspektiven ds: Zeitschrift für Gesellschaftsanalyse und Reformpolitik* 2 (2020): 137–52.

10. Thomas Wagner, *Die Angstmacher: 1968 und die Neuen Rechten* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2017), p. 79.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Political science scholar Francis Fukuyama and legal scholar Amy Chua see connections between the rise of left-wing and right-wing identity politics and emphasize that the turn toward identity politics on sides of the Left and in the Democratic Party in the United States, respectively, has been a major contributor to the strengthening of right-wing identity politics; cf. Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition* (London: Profile Books, 2018); Amy Chua, *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations* (London: Penguin Random House, 2019). Political science scholar Mark Lilla criticizes left-wing identity politics for turning away from the idea of a civil society that is about the community rather than what separates different groups in a society from each other; cf. Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal: After Identity*

This article shows that the commonalities trace back to a fundamental change in left or left-wing extremist thinking, which can be characterized as the replacement of universalistic interpretations of the world by particularistic ones. This change consists of a post-structuralist turn, which is directed against classical Marxism. The following section first presents the change in left or left-wing extremist ideology brought about by postmodernism and post-structuralism and shows their relevance in contemporary left-wing extremism (sect. 2). This is followed by an analysis of the ethnopluralism and nominalism of the New Right (sect. 3), before concluding by comparing post-structuralism as the foundation of the identity politics of the Left with the identity politics of the New Right (sect. 4).

With regard to the terminology used in this article, it should be pointed out that for the following analysis the exact demarcation between "left" and "left-wing extremist" or between "right" and "right-wing extremist" is of secondary importance. When we speak of "left" and "right" identity politics in the following, this also includes, but is not limited to, left-wing and right-wing extremist positions.

2. Left-Wing Identity Politics

Any struggle against oppression presupposes that the oppressed become aware of their collective situation and thus of their identity as the oppressed, and yet a specific left-wing identity politics has only developed since the 1960s (sect. 2.1). It was given particular impetus by the post-structuralist turn in philosophy that began in the 1970s (sect. 2.2). The connection of Karl Marx's critique of capitalism and his theory of exploitation and revolution with these new philosophical trends led to a reformulation of the universalistic revolutionary objectives to a radical-particularistic project. This transformation will be exemplified by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (sect. 2.3). Finally, the relevance of the post-structuralist turn in contemporary left-wing extremism will be demonstrated with the help of examples (sect. 2.4).

Politics (London: Harper, 2018). In turn, German politician Sahra Wagenknecht, among others, from the party The Left (Die Linke) sees the turn of the Left toward identity politics as a departure from its traditional role of fighting to reduce socioeconomic disadvantages; cf. Sahra Wagenknecht, *Die Selbstgerechten: Mein Gegenprogramm—für Gemeinsinn und Zusammenhalt* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2021). Political science scholar and member of the Fundamental Values Commission of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) Thomas Meyer contrasts left-wing identity politics with that of the New Right but avoids a comparison; cf. Thomas Meyer, "Identitätspolitik—worum es geht," *Neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Hefte*, October 1, 2018, https://www.frankfurter-hefte.de/artikel/identitaetspolitik-worum-es-geht-2572/.

2.1. Development of Left-Wing Identity Politics
since Karl Marx

Left-wing identity politics is based on the fundamental idea that a disadvantaged group will resist oppression and discrimination by another, dominant group. The liberation struggle of the former presupposes that it perceives itself as a unity. To this end, the negative foreign attribution by the oppressors must be transformed into a positive self-attribution by the oppressed. Identity can thus be understood as a "reaction to discrimination."[14]

In this general sense, every left struggle against oppression presupposes identity formation. This was already implicitly emphasized by Karl Marx, who saw the identity formation of the proletariat as a necessary precondition for successful class conflict. In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx reflects on how labor conflicts contribute to this: "Economic conditions first transformed the mass of the population into workers. The rule of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. Thus, the mass is already a class in relation to capital, but not yet for itself. In this struggle, which we have acknowledged only in a few phases, this mass comes together and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle."[15]

Here, Marx distinguishes between two stages in the formation of class consciousness. At the first stage, the workers recognize their common interests; the first attempts "to associate among themselves always take the form of coalitions."[16] But it is only at the second stage that the proletariat constitutes itself as a "class for itself."[17] For this it is necessary that the proletariat organizes itself and becomes "the political party."[18] At this stage a class consciousness is developed, which is based, among other things—thanks to the Communist Party—on knowing "the conditions, the course, and the general outcomes of the proletarian movement."[19]

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14. Jens Kastner and Lea Susemichel, "Zur Geschichte linker Identitätspolitik," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 69, nos. 9–11 (2019): 11–17; here p. 11.

15. Karl Marx, *Das Elend der Philosophie* [The Poverty of Philosophy], in *Marx-Engels-Werke*, 44 vols. (Berlin: Dietz, 1956–2018), 4:63–182, here 4:180f. Cf. also Jens Kastner and Lea Susemichel, *Identitätspolitiken: Konzepte und Kritiken in Geschichte und Gegenwart der Linken*, 2nd ed. (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2020), p. 40.

16. Marx, *Das Elend der Philosophie*, 4:180.

17. Ibid., 4:181.

18. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* [The Communist Manifesto], in *Marx-Engels-Werke*, 4:459–93, here 4:471.

19. Ibid., 4:474.

However, these considerations of Marx and Engels on the formation of an identity of the proletariat in class conflict are fundamentally different from modern left-wing identity politics. For, on the one hand, they assume that classes are real given conditions, whereas modern left-wing identity politics understands them as socially constructed. To use the words of German sociologist Jens Kastner and journalist Lea Susemichel, who, as supporters of identity politics concepts, composed a volume on their foundations in the history of political ideas,[20] Marx and Engels succumb to the "danger" of "essentialization."[21] On the other hand, modern representatives of left-wing identity politics do not ascribe social conflicts exclusively to class conflict as a fundamental social conflict. According to Marx and Engels, class conflict is one that explains all other social conflicts. On the contrary, modern left positions assume a plurality of conflicts.[22] Besides socioeconomically determined conflicts, there are above all those about equal rights according to ethnic and cultural origin and about women's or gender rights. In each of these conflicts, the groups each have their own collective identity, on the basis of which they struggle for recognition.

In their account of the development of identity politics, Kastner and Susemichel show that in the struggles against racism or colonialism, as well as against the discrimination of women and gender in the twentieth century, there was a clear development from essentialist to constructivist interpretations of the conflicting groups. For example, the identity politics of blacks in the United States and of black Africans in the struggle against colonialism and colonial alienation begins with the Négritude movement, launched in the 1930s by the French writer Aimé Césaire. It emphasized the cultural achievements of blacks in order to create a common identity in the struggle against colonialism.[23] The goal of the Négritude movement was to form a black self-consciousness by referring to a "very traditionally shaped image of black culture."[24]

This image was already criticized as essentialist by the French pioneer of anticolonialism Frantz Fanon in his 1961 volume *The Wretched of the Earth*.[25] From his point of view, the history of collectively experienced violence is the central start-

20. Kastner and Susemichel, *Identitätspolitiken*.
21. Kastner and Susemichel, "Zur Geschichte linker Identitätspolitik," p. 11.
22. Cf., e.g., Hardt and Negri's emphasis on plurality of struggles (sect. 2.3 below) and in the "triple oppression theory" (sect. 2.4).
23. Cf. Kastner and Susemichel, *Identitätspolitiken*, pp. 64f.
24. Ibid., p. 65.
25. Cf. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

ing point for anti-colonialism. In this struggle, the identity of the colonized is won not by reference to history and cultural tradition but rather by the struggle against oppression—it is "common mistake, hardly defensible," Fanon says, "to reassert the value of indigenous culture" in the struggle against colonial rule.[26] For the "colonized subject" has had to adopt "the culture of the oppressor and venture into his fold" and "to assimilate…the way the colonialist bourgeoisie thinks."[27] The liberation struggle is thus not only a fight for political independence but also a fight for the formation of a new self-consciousness freed from the thinking of the colonizers.

This self-consciousness, which forms the basis for a new identity of the formerly oppressed colonial peoples, develops, like Marx's class consciousness, in struggle, but unlike in Marx's case, here the group is not firmly defined in advance by economic and sociological structures. Other movements of blacks argue similarly to Fanon, such as the Black Consciousness Movement, founded at the beginning of the 1970s in South Africa, which represented the view that "blackness…is not a matter of pigmentation" but rather "a mental attitude."[28]

There is a comparable development from an essentialist to an anti-essentialist identity politics in the feminist movement. Classical feminists have been concerned with equality for women and specific women's rights since the nineteenth century, and then more strongly since the 1960s. This position has increasingly been replaced by the constructivist gender approach since the 1990s, which was largely developed by the American philosopher Judith Butler. Butler criticizes the concept of woman as a political subject defined by biological features. Biological sex is not prediscursive materiality; rather, its materialization is interpreted—following from the post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault—as the result of social processes. According to Butler, the decisive question is: "Through what regulatory norms is sex itself materialized?"[29]

The development from essentialist concepts that can be observed in the various fields of identity politics, which adhere to the fact that class, race, or gender actually exists as the subject of liberation struggle, to positions that reject[30] essentialism

26. Ibid., p. 177.
27. Ibid., p. 13.
28. Kastner and Susemichel, *Identitätspolitiken*, p. 66.
29. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 10; cf. Johannes Hoerlin, "Antiker und moderner Relativismus? Protagoras und Judith Butler," in *Die Sophisten: Ihr politisches Denken in antiker und zeitgenössischer Gestalt*, ed. Barbara Zehnpfennig (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019), pp. 167–94, here pp. 172–74.
30. In the public debate, this development is perceived above all through the increased appearance in recent years of supporters of the "critical whiteness approach" and the critique of "cultural appropriation"; cf., critically, Sandra Kostner, ed., *Identitätslinke Läuterungsagenda: Eine Debatte zu ihren*

and that assume the construction of the revolutionary subject in social discourses, is essentially shaped by the postmodern notion that the former positions are based on "grand narratives" that one must leave behind, as well as by post-structuralist theory, according to which the oppressed groups arise through linguistic and social construction processes. Since the 1970s, postmodernism and post-structuralism have been providing the theoretical foundation for a radical redefinition of left conceptions of liberation struggles.[31] The intellectual foundations for this development are the subject of the following section.

2.2. Postmodernism and Post-structuralism as Philosophical Foundations for Left-Wing Identity Politics

In the 1970s, opposition to the dominance of Marxism-Leninism arose in left-oriented theoretical debates. In France, where the opposition first emerged, it took aim at the preeminent role of the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who was close to Marxism. Michel Foucault, perhaps the most important founder of post-structuralist philosophy, wrote retrospectively in reference to Sartre: "When I was young, it was precisely him and everything he represented, the terrorism of 'Les Temps modernes,' that I wanted to free myself from."[32] There is a similar statement by the French post-structuralist philosopher Roland Barthes: "My generation felt the need to shake Sartre's enterprise, which locked man in the yoke of historical dialectics. I tried to restore the pleasure principle."[33]

Post-structuralism belongs to postmodern philosophy, which represents a radical particularism.[34] One of the most significant representatives of this philosophy is Jean-François Lyotard, who summarized its fundamental ideas in the

Folgen für Migrationsgesellschaften (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2019); Ulrike Ackermann, "Die Gesellschaft reibt sich auf in immer neuen Kollektiven," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, July 13, 2020, https://www.nzz.ch/meinung/die-gesellschaft-reibt-sich-auf-in-immer-neuen-kollektiven-ld.1565101?reduced=true; Pfahl-Traughber, "Antiindividualismus und Antiuniversalismus als Konsequenzen," pp. 140–42.

31. Cf. also the analysis by Rudolf van Hüllen, "'Vergesst die Aufklärung!'—Ideologische Umbrüche im revolutionären Linksextremismus," in *Jahrbuch Extremismus & Demokratie*, vol. 31, ed. Uwe Backes et al. (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019), pp. 59–79.

32. Quoted in Gabriel Kuhn, *Tier-Werden, Schwarz-Werden, Frau-Werden: Eine Einführung in die politische Philosophie des Poststrukturalismus* (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2005), p. 15. The journal *Les Temps modernes* was founded by Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in 1945 and was devoted to topics in literature, politics, and the humanities until its cessation in 2019.

33. Quoted in Jörg Altwegg, *Die Republik des Geistes: Frankreichs Intellektuelle zwischen Revolution und Reaktion* (Munich: Piper, 1986), p. 185.

34. Cf. Peter E. Zima, *Moderne/Postmoderne: Gesellschaft, Philosophie, Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Francke, 2001), p. 286.

introduction to his volume *La condition postmoderne* (1979; in English: *The Postmodern Condition*).[35] There, postmodernism is defined, "with extreme simplification," as "incredulity toward metanarratives."[36] Lyotard characterizes metanarratives as those philosophical discourses with which the truth criteria of knowledge are legitimized. This legitimization is achieved through the agreement, i.e., the consensus of scientists, which in turn is shaped by the design of the institutions in which they work together. The legitimacy of the truth criteria is thus dependent on the legitimacy of institutions within which the consensus about these criteria is achieved.

Postmodern philosophy is the consequence of the "crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it."[37] With this crisis, the discourses of legitimization evaporate into individual narratives as if "in clouds,"[38] each of which has its own particular validity and constitutes a certain, limited social cohesion. Within the resulting groups, decision-makers attempt to control the language (and thus the legitimation discourses) for the purpose of exercising power.

So what is the guiding standard of discourses on equity and truth? According to Lyotard, they serve to increase the effectiveness of the system and the power of decision-makers by excluding certain behaviors or people—not without the application of more or less "terror" (Lyotard speaks of "terreur" in the original).[39] Behind the talk of equity and truth, therefore, there is "in truth" the principle of the "logic of maximum performance"[40]—one could also say: the logic of the enforcement of the stronger. Although this striving for power gets entangled in contradictions, as Marx already noted, no expectation of salvation arises from these contradictions.[41] From the perspective of postmodernism, Marxism represents a metaphysical teleology of history, a metanarrative that stands in the tradition of the Enlightenment.

While Lyotard rejects the Marxian teleology of history, he holds on to the utopia of radical freedom from domination. The critique of domination as the

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35. Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Minuit, 1979); this and subsequent quotations are from the English translation: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984). For a summary of the position, cf. Zima, *Moderne/Postmoderne*, pp. 149–55, 190–201, 209–13.

36. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. xxiv.

37. Ibid.

38. Cf. ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid. (Fr.: la "logique du plus performant," p. 8). Cf. Zima, *Moderne/Postmoderne*, p. 152: Reason appears to Lyotard "not only as a repressive but at the same time as an equalizing force that levels all differences." Lyotard wants to assert the "irreducible plural" against it.

41. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. xxiv.

fundamental concern of Marx is retained, only the thrust changes[42]—since the freedom from domination is to be achieved not in a comprehensive collectivism but rather in a radical particularism. The goal of philosophy, according to Lyotard, is to become aware of the postmodern situation: postmodern knowledge "refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to endure the incommensurable."[43] In contrast, any striving for unity is equated by Lyotard with terror and totalitarianism.[44]

In the early 1990s, Lyotard notes that with the end of the Soviet regime, Marxism as the last major metanarrative disappeared.[45] He interprets globalization as the entry into a postmodern age: the claims to domination of modernity are spread globally; its inner contradictions lead to the overcoming of all universalisms, opening up the possibility of a new, radical particularism. Lyotard has only hinted at this transition into a new era; post-structuralist authors like Foucault have practiced a much more radical critique of domination. But what are the central positions of post-structuralism?

Classical structuralism, as developed by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), analyzes the structures of language and assumes that every sign (e.g., a word) establishes a relation between a signified object (signified, designated) and a signifying subject (signifier, designator). However, a linguistic sign receives its actual meaning through its relation to other signs and thus through the structure of language.[46] In this context, Saussure's classical structuralism assumes that signs are actually used to make statements about signified objects.

Post-structuralism also assumes that the meaning of a sign results from the relation to other signs—in this respect it ties in with structuralism.[47] Yet Foucault opposes the idea that a sign establishes a connection between a given subject and

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42. Cf. Zima, *Moderne/Postmoderne*, pp. 150f.

43. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. xxv. Behind it, strictly speaking, there is again an Enlightenment pathos: by elevating postmodernism to a program and calling for a universal particularism, it has the character of a new metanarrative.

44. Cf. Henning Ottmann, *Geschichte des politischen Denkens*, vol. 4, no. 2, *Das 20. Jahrhundert: Von der Kritischen Theorie bis zur Globalisierung* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2012), p. 255.

45. Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 70–71: "Marxism, the last offspring issuing from Christianity and the Enlightenment, seems to have lost all of its critical potency. It has collapsed with the fall of the Berlin Wall."

46. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), pp. 111–17.

47. A brief and comprehensible introduction to Foucault's thinking is given by Benjamin A. Hahn, "Freiheit, Relativismus und politische Praxis—ein struktureller Vergleich zwischen Protagoras und Michel Foucault," in Zehnpfennig, *Die Sophisten*, pp. 195–219, here pp. 203–15.

object. For him, there is neither the "thing-in-itself" in the sense of the philosopher Immanuel Kant, nor an autonomously thinking subject that designates objects by means of signs. Foucault wants to overcome the essentialist understanding of structure in Saussure (and also in Marx, although the latter was concerned with other—namely, economic—structures). Thought does not establish a relationship between an autonomous, self-directed subject and object but is itself steered by a structure: "the way in which people reflect, write, judge, and speak…, their whole conduct is controlled by a theoretical structure, a *system*, which changes with the era and the society—but which is present in all eras and all societies."[48] Structure is the "third dimension"[49] that determines the relationship between subject and object.

Foucault's central thesis is that the structures that determine thought are themselves products of power relations that change depending on the historical context.[50] Power is exerted through norms that create a realm of possibility for action: actions within this realm of possibility are socially rewarded; those outside this realm are sanctioned. Consequently, for Foucault, critique of domination means revealing the structures that constitute subjects and their thoughts and actions; the struggle for freedom is to expand the realm of possibility for action by changing social norms.[51] In his view, post-structuralist philosophy makes a decisive contribution to this by changing the perception of norms and making it clear that any claim to universality proves to be a product of historical contingencies and thus alterable in light of this philosophy.[52] The goal of post-structuralism is to expand the possible in thought and action—and thus to expand freedom.[53]

The anarchist author Gabriel Kuhn shows in his volume *Tier-Werden, Schwarz-Werden, Frau-Werden: Eine Einführung in die politische Philosophie des Poststrukturalismus* [Becoming Animal, Becoming Black, Becoming Woman: An Introduction to the Political Philosophy of Post-structuralism] how radical the political consequences of post-structuralism are,[54] which is no longer concerned with examining what is said about objects by means of language but how power structures are built up with it.

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48. Michel Foucault, "Interview with Madeleine Chapsal," trans. Mark G. E. Kelly, *Journal of Continental Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2020): 32, emphasis in original.

49. Michel Foucault, "Titel und Arbeiten," in *Schriften in vier Bänden: Dits et Ecrits*, vol. 1, *1954–1969* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014), p. 1075.

50. Cf. Hahn, "Freiheit, Relativismus und politische Praxis," p. 210.

51. Cf. ibid., p. 212.

52. Cf. ibid., p. 213.

53. Cf. ibid., p. 214.

54. Cf. Kuhn, *Tier-Werden, Schwarz-Werden, Frau-Werden*.

This approach implies a fundamental critique of the Enlightenment: the idea of an autonomous subject is rejected as a "conception in the image of God";[55] it is replaced by manifold processes of subjectification as "production of modes of existence or lifestyles."[56] Rationality is rejected as "imperialism of logos."[57] Truth is only "the product of manifold discursivations";[58] it is "inseparably connected with a procedure that establishes it"[59]—that is, with power. Truth is "the weapon of paranoia and power…, the signature of the unity-totality in the space of words, the return of terror. Let us fight, then, against the white terror of truth, with and for the red cruelty of singularities."[60] Morality is the most reprehensible expression of the striving for power, in which the claim to truth is revealed: "morality is the prime example of a theoretical instrument of domination."[61] It "serves the subjugation of the individual" and is "always the enemy of the plurality of living conditions."[62] This verdict also applies to all ideas of universal human rights or human dignity. Finally, in his summary of post-structuralism, Kuhn comes to the question of who strives for truth with the wrong categories of thought: it is man who understands woman only as a deficient counterpart. All oppositions like good and evil, rational and irrational, "thus have their weight not only there, where the logos is, but also where the phallus is, which thus stands for fullest being, while everything non-phallic means lack or nothingness."[63]

If being and identity stand for domination, oppression, and terror, then becoming stands for the opposite: "becoming plays a particularly important role in post-structuralism. Becoming is always revolutionary."[64] The respective majority determines what is to be considered as being (as good, truth, right, etc.) and subordinates everything else to these categories. Therefore, the process of becoming is reserved for the minoritarian. The minoritarian must not be confused with a minority—minority is a defined status, not a process.[65] Being minoritarian is also not a question of mere quantity: women are minoritarian in the phallocentric society not only when they are oppressed but also when they are appropriated and

55. Foucault, quoted in ibid., p. 37.
56. Deleuze, quoted in ibid., p. 36.
57. Derrida, quoted in ibid., p. 41.
58. Ibid., p. 27.
59. Deleuze, quoted in ibid.
60. Lyotard, quoted in ibid., p. 30.
61. Ibid., p. 29.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., p. 42.
64. Ibid., p. 177.
65. Cf. ibid., p. 179.

subjected to an "orgy of psychological and political understanding."[66] "Woman-becoming" then means constantly pursuing new, unexpected avenues and producing "revolutionary differences from prevailing conditions."[67]

To put it bluntly, becoming means fighting against everything that exists. Perhaps this is why Kuhn explains "woman-becoming" in less detail than "animal-becoming," because the latter is about the "break with the central institutions."[68] Thus Kuhn—following the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the French psychiatrist Félix Guattari—thinks of leopards, alligators, lions, bulls—but above all of wolves.[69] For the wolf embodies two things: First, "wolf-becoming means…to behave like a wolf in relation to the prevailing order, or with the wolf…to establish a revolutionary difference from it."[70] Second, "animal-becoming always has to do with a pack,…with a herd,…with a multiplicity"[71]—and there the wolf fits well into the picture.

Kuhn's remarks are interesting in several respects: First, it is striking that despite the critique of "phallocentrism," the ideas of the animal seem to be shaped by fantasies of masculinity. Second, the conceptions of the animal are very anthropocentric—the wolf as an animal (not as a metaphor) does not distinguish itself by establishing a "revolutionary distance" to a "prevailing order." Third, however, the connection of the wolf fantasy with the idea of the necessary resistance against the ruling order shows a remarkable parallel to the ideas of the leaders of the right-wing extremist single-perpetrator terrorism. In particular, the American right-wing extremist Tom Metzger has coined the image of the "lone wolf" for the resistance fighter who must be the spearhead of the "White Aryan Resistance."[72]

This leads to the core of Kuhn's interpretation of post-structuralism: the task of philosophy is to uncover the claims to power that underlie all norms and language. The claims of the Enlightenment to strive for truth and to establish a morality and universally valid norms are only expressions of the striving for power. In contrast, the many, the particular must be brought to validity. The minoritarian has to fight against the ruling order and to always create new differences. The revolution then does not consist in forming the working class for the struggle against capitalism,

66. Baudrillard, quoted in ibid., p. 179.
67. Ibid., p. 180.
68. Deleuze and Guattari, quoted in ibid., p. 181.
69. Cf. ibid., pp. 181f.
70. Ibid., p. 182.
71. Ibid.
72. Cf. George Michael, "This Is War! Tom Metzger, White Aryan Resistance, and the Lone Wolf Legacy," *Focus on Terrorism* 14 (2016): 29–61.

but in bringing the particular to validity. "Becoming" consists in realizing oneself in the struggle against the existing order—this is the central idea of a left-wing identity politics, which is not about standing up for the equality of certain groups or for the freedom of the oppressed, but about the development of the particular in the struggle against any notion of universal norms.

In large parts of left-wing extremism, this thinking has displaced Marxism-Leninism, which is based on universalism. In organizations like the German "Interventionist Left," a theory of revolution influenced by post-structuralism dominates today. An example of such a theory of revolution was developed by the Italian political philosopher and representative of workerism[73] Antonio Negri, who was sentenced to thirty years in prison in 1984 as a member of the left-wing terrorist "Red Brigades," and by the American literary scholar Michael Hardt. Their concept of the "multitude" as the new revolutionary subject sums up the basic idea of leftist discourses on identity politics (sect. 2.3) and at the same time proves to be highly adaptable for reception by left-wing extremist efforts (sect. 2.4).

2.3. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: Identity Politics and Post-structuralist Theory of Revolution

Hardt and Negri's theory of revolution will be outlined here on the basis of their volume *Empire*, in which they present the foundations of their theory.[74] The point of departure of the authors' argumentation is the observation that the class structures on which Marx's theory was based have dissolved. In particular, the proletariat as the bearer of the revolution must be reconceived in their view; it is replaced by the "multitude" of those who are generally oppressed by capitalist as well as gender and race relations. A new theory of exploitation and revolution is needed to understand this process, and it is developed by the authors through a postmodern and post-structuralist reformulation of Marx's theory of social division.[75] In doing so, they draw primarily on Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari.[76] In what follows, this section will show how Hardt and Negri understand the role of the "empire" as the

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73. Workerism (It.: *operaismo*) is a current in left-wing extremism that emerged in Italy in the 1970s and, in distinction from the Communist Party, opposed factory work, which was interpreted as a means of disciplining the proletariat.

74. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001).

75. Cf. ibid., p. 64.

76. Ibid., pp. 27–30.

subject of exploitation, that of the "multitude" as the subject of the revolution, as well as the means and the goal of revolution.

Hardt and Negri see the subject of exploitation in the formation of a global sovereign, the "empire," which replaces nation-state sovereignty. Globalization is characterized by the emergence of the empire, on the one hand, and the resistance of the multitude, which fights the exploitation by the empire, on the other. The clash of empire and multitude results in a dialectical process that leads to revolution.

The authors emphasize that the empire is not to be confused with the United States. Rather, in the sense of post-structuralism, it is understood as a completely deterritorialized and decentralized network of structures characterized by two features: On the formal level, it bases its power on a supranational, global value order, which is based on the notion of universal rights and, by means of the United Nations, fights everything particular through international police and military actions.[77] On this level, a radical particularism must be asserted in the revolution against the prevailing universalism. On the material level, the empire is based on the rule of biopolitics: the body and consciousness of individuals are subjected to an unrestrained rule, which manifests itself, for example, in racial discriminations and gender attributions.[78]

The multitude is the revolutionary subject that assumes the pioneering role that Marx assigned to the proletariat. According to the authors, the multitude includes everyone who is oppressed by the structures that constitute the empire, whose labor is exploited directly or indirectly and is subjected to capitalist discipline, or whose gender or race is discriminated against. The multitude is first seen in the many different local uprisings—as examples, the incidents in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the Intifada, the riots in Los Angeles in May 1992, the Chiapas uprising from 1994 on, and strikes in France in December 1995 are mentioned in the same breath.[79] These uprisings are the prelude to global freedom struggles: although they are directed against local opponents, behind each of them is the global empire and the biopolitics with which it wants to control people. The Zapatistas, for example, ostensibly fought against the Mexican government, but at the core they are against the free trade doctrine.[80]

77. Ibid., pp. 19–20.
78. The authors adopt the concept of biopolitics from Foucault. Cf. ibid., pp. 23f.
79. Cf. ibid., p. 54.
80. Ibid., p. 55.

The goal of the struggle of the multitude is—in the sense of Foucault's post-structuralism—the liberation of desire and the release of the creative forces that are inherent in the multitude.[81] The radical liberation is supposed to give us the possibility "to create and re-create ourselves and our world."[82] The ideal of freedom is radically reinterpreted here and understood as freedom for self-creation, which is about overcoming not only the constraints of society but also those of nature. The goal is that the liberated "desire…creates a new body,"[83] because it is the condition for the complete liberation of the human being: "The will to be against really needs a body that is completely incapable of submitting to command. It needs a body that is incapable of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of a traditional sex life, and so forth."[84]

Yet the path toward the liberation of desire and radical self-realization is bloody. First, the sovereignty of the empire must be overcome by the mere "*will to be against*."[85] This will expresses itself, as just indicated, in a radical "[d]isobedience to authority,"[86] with which the sovereignty of the empire is undermined at all levels through sabotage and desertion.[87] The path to the free society will become "necessarily…violent."[88] Based on Walter Benjamin's concept of the "new, positive…barbarism,"[89] the transition will take place through a new barbarian who sees only paths everywhere, but no obstacles: "What exists he reduces to rubble, not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it."[90]

The authors' understanding of Benjamin's sentence is not merely metaphorical, as their unconcealed sympathy for Islamic fundamentalists shows: "The anti-modern thrust that defines fundamentalisms might be better understood, then, not as a *pre*modern but as a *post*modern project. The postmodernity of fundamentalism has to be recognized primarily in its refusal of modernity as a weapon of Euro-American hegemony—and in this regard Islamic fundamentalism is indeed the paradigmatic case."[91] This assessment is only logical: if the only thing that counts initially

81. Ibid., p. 69.
82. Ibid., p. 92.
83. Ibid., p. 216.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., p. 210, emphasis in original.
86. Ibid.
87. Cf. ibid., p. 212.
88. Ibid., p. 214.
89. Ibid., p. 215.
90. Ibid. The sentence is a quotation from Walter Benjamin.
91. Ibid., p. 149, emphasis in original. The fact that the original book was published before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, does not exonerate the authors, because the murderous

for the way to the liberated society is the "will to be against it," and the positive goal of the willing does not matter in this phase, then Islamist terrorists can also be pioneers of liberation because they contribute to the struggle against the empire. The Marxist theory of the necessary "passage through purgatory,"[92] which the authors criticized earlier, is thus negated not because of purgatory but because of the assertion of a deterministic philosophy of history.

The rejection of Marxist historical determinism is an important feature of this new theory of revolution inspired by post-structuralism. Hardt and Negri do not assume that social development is determined by economic (or other) laws. For them, the will of the multitude to free itself from the sovereignty of the empire is decisive. Another difference from Marxism is that the revolutionary subject is not a particular class but is understood pluralistically as a multiplicity. From every form of (perceived) oppression, a group identity can emerge, with the help of which a revolutionary subject is constituted that contributes to the struggle against the empire. In this respect, this theory is suitable as an ideological foundation for identity-political contentions. However, the authors leave open the question of why the different groups in the multitude limit themselves to fighting the empire, because given their heterogeneity, massive conflicts within the multitude must be expected.

Yet in one decisive point, the approach of Hardt and Negri remains committed to the theory of Marx and Lenin: in the ideal of freedom of rule, which is now, however, understood in a radically particularistic way. The authors do not even begin to explain how this is to be realized. Even in a particularistic society, the question of the limits of freedom of the individual groups arises. Since one determination of these limits by laws or shared values would establish new structures of rule, the ideal society presupposes a natural agreement among individuals. In his actions, the individual must always understand himself as part of the group—and ultimately of mankind. But this would then bring us back to the collectivism that Marx and Lenin strove for[93] and that the post-structuralists of the 1970s so vehemently opposed. Moreover, a universal particularism understood in this way would again be a universalistic and thus ultimately anti-particularistic project.

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character of Islamic fundamentalism was sufficiently well known even before then.

92. Ibid., p. 47.

93. For more on Marx's collectivism, see Hendrik Hansen, "Karl Marx: Humanist oder Vordenker des GULag?," in *Politisches Denken—Jahrbuch 2002*, ed. Karl Graf Ballestrem et al. (Stuttgart/Weimar: Duncker und Humblot, 2002), pp. 152–74.

2.4. Identity Politics in Current Left-Wing Extremism: Two Examples

While the extent to which Hardt and Negri's theory of revolution has been received among left-wing extremism cannot be demonstrated due to a lack of sources, there are at least comparable approaches expressed in current left-wing extremism. A quick glance at the most important internet platforms in this domain shows the importance of the concept of radical particularity: the themes on indymedia.org[94] are influenced just as much by the theories of diverse revolutionary subjects as those on the blog platform noblogs.org.[95]

In the following section, the influence of the post-structuralist theory of revolution on left-wing extremism will be demonstrated by two examples. The first example is the "Interventionist Left" (IL), where the relevance of the post-structuralist turn for the post-autonomists' self-understanding will be made apparent. The second example is the manifesto *I Want to Kill Cops until I'm Dead*, from the violence-oriented autonomous or anarchist scene, which shows how radical the consequences drawn from post-structuralist philosophy can be.

The relevance of post-structuralism for the IL's programmatic work can be illustrated by their 2014 "Zwischenstandspapier," which remains the organization's authoritative programmatic text.[96] There, from the start, the Marxist distinction between primary and secondary contradictions is criticized for reducing the multiplicity of societal contradictions, like those between genders or races, to a primary contradiction between capitalists and proletarians, which is the foundation of all other contradictions.[97] Such a hierarchy of social antagonisms is refused by the IL: "The contradictions run along different axes of domination, along the sexist and racist organization, alongside class differences. These methods of domination are woven together…yet have their own dynamic and logic. They all have to do with social power and disposition of material and immaterial resources, while

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94. A selection found here: "Antifa, Antirassismus, Atom, Bildung, Biopolitik, Feminismus, Freiräume, Gender." See the list of themes at https://de.indymedia.org/.

95. See their slogan "Connecting radical people. Non commercial, antifascist, antisexist, privacy-oriented blog platform," at https://noblogs.org/.

96. Interventionistische Linke (IL), "IL im Aufbruch—ein Zwischenstandspapier," October 29, 2014, https://interventionistische-linke.org/positionen/il-im-aufbruch-ein-zwischenstandspapier.

97. Ibid., no. 1.

at the same time are deeply ingrained in subjectivities."[98] The concern is to expose the structures of domination in every part of society and to fight them with equal uprisings.

The purpose of avoiding Marxist-Leninist reasoning is openly addressed: "Thinking in terms of primary and secondary contradictions has never done justice to the lived experiences of domination, exploitation, and abuse, to the interrelation of obstinate relations of domination or exploitation, and to the equally diverse and polyphonic dynamics of social struggles, or the concrete changes in the self and world."[99] However, the IL also sees the necessity of understanding the multiplicity of struggles so far highlighted as a unified fight against domination as such (similarly to how Hardt and Negri see the one struggle against empire behind the multiplicity of liberation struggles of the multitude): "The specificity of each individual struggle and the irreducible multiplicity of the struggles themselves do not contradict the need to resist all relationships of domination and exploitation and to relate all to a unified struggle: tactically, strategically, and programmatically."[100]

The plurality of struggles is also discussed in the "Zwischenstandspapier" in the section entitled "What Unites Us." There it is defined as: "We lead and follow discussions of gender politics, global social rights, antisemitism, racism, and border regimes, or new class relationships. The knowledge of the complexity of societal power relations is just as important to us as the critical reflexivity of one's own position (for example, as white, as man, as academic…) and the resulting interests and options for action."[101]

It is interesting to note that in the section entitled "Multiple Backgrounds of Experience and Political Traditions—A Project," the IL also refers to the "politics of armed struggle," which belongs to "the diverse experience(s) of organizing, failure, and continuing in another form."[102] The German left-wing terrorist organization Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF, Red Army Faction, 1970–1998), who are among those meant here, in their statement of dissolution from 1998 declared the "politics of armed struggle" a failure and claimed that their fixation on "the search for the revolutionary subject" was one of their primary errors.[103] In distinguishing them-

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid., no. 8.

102. Ibid., no. 5.

103. Rote Armee Fraktion, "Die Auflösungserklärung der RAF vom März 1998," in *Zwischenberichte: Zur Diskussion über die Politik der bewaffneten und militanten Linken in der BR Italien und der Schweiz*, ed. IG Rote Fabrik (Berlin: ID Verlag, 1998), pp. 217–37, here p. 233.

selves from the revolutionary theorizations of the 1960s and 1970s, the RAF proposed a new theoretical basis for their project of radical liberation: "The liberation project of the future knows numerous subjects and a multiplicity of aspects and content, which has nothing to do with arbitrariness. We require a new concept in which the perhaps most diverse individuals or social groups can be subjects, and which nevertheless brings them together. Given this, the liberation project of the future cannot be found in the old concepts of the Federal Republic's leftists since '68—neither in the RAF nor others."[104] The new theoretical basis is not named, but the editor of the text notes that particularity must replace monism.[105]

These passages from the RAF's statement of dissolution bear an interesting similarity to the statements in the IL's "Zwischenstandspapier" cited above. It is likely that there were direct influences here: the Initiative Libertad! from Frankfurt am Main, which was founded in 1992 out of the RAF milieu and describes itself as "the only organized voice of the post-RAF spectrum," sees itself as "one of the historical sources of the Interventionist Left."[106] It dissolved itself in 2016 and became the Frankfurt IL group. In addition to organizational links, there are also personal links between the RAF, the Initiative Libertad!, and the IL. For example, Andreas Vogel, a member of the left-wing terrorist organization "2 June Movement," by his own account played an important role in the merger of the last remaining members of this movement with the RAF in 1980.[107] He was a founding member of the Initiative Libertad! and "was part of the Interventionist Left from the beginning."[108]

While the IL does play a significant role in left-wing extremism, due to their attempt to unify radical left organizations, the text *I Want to Kill Cops until I'm Dead: Killing Cops in the Street Is Not Enough—We Must Aim Our Bullets at the Cops inside Our Heads* is the manifesto of persons who presumably play an outsider role

104. Ibid.

105. Other former left-wing terrorists reached similar conclusions. The book *Drei zu eins: Klassenwiderspruch, Rassismus, und Sexismus* (1993) by Klaus Viehmann, the former terrorist of the "2 June Movement," is the most famous of these. In this volume, Viehmann takes up the "triple oppression theory," according to which any leftist theory must account for gender and racism in addition to class contradictions. This theory plays a significant role in the reformulation of Marxism-Leninism to an identity-political ideology; cf. van Hüllen, "'Vergesst die Aufklärung!,'" p. 69.

106. Initiative Libertad!, "Alles hat seine Zeit: Bemerkungen zum Ende der Initiative Libertad!," March 18, 2016, https://interventionistische-linke.org/sites/default/files/attachements/libertad20160318schluss_web.pdf.

107. Ibid.

108. "Diese Bereitschaft zu sagen: Man muss jetzt handeln!," interview with Andreas Vogel on the 50th anniversary of June 2, 1967, https://blog.interventionistische-linke.org/linke-geschichte/diese-bereitschaft-zu-sagen-man-muss-jetzt-handeln.

among autonomists.[109] However the manifesto is interesting in this context because it draws on the most radical elements of post-structuralism.

The text is divided into four parts: First the authors of the text state that the enemy is not only the police but anyone who participates in building structures of domination. Second, they explain that alongside the external struggle against these structures of domination, overcoming these structures in one's own head is necessary—this is what is meant by "until I'm dead." The third section offers practical methods for fighting against the police. In the appendix to the German edition, the authors clarify their position regarding clandestine actions.

The authors derive the term "police" from "policing," "to control something."[110] The enemy is only externally the police: ultimately it must be a matter of "undoing the murderous reign of terror inflicted upon us by the guardians of 'civilization.'"[111] The term "police" refers then to "the maintenance of order within society,"[112] and many people collaborate on this: "doctors, midwives, and psychologists who violently police gender and sexuality at the point of birth, those who 'name us,'"[113] "teachers, social workers, and parents; those who police our social roles,"[114] those "who punish our first forays into criminality."[115] The definition of the police ultimately includes "our friends, our comrades, and ourselves; those who tell us it is too dangerous."[116] The inner cop, "the tiny voice inside our head that tells us not to throw the Molotov cocktail in the riot"[117]—in other words, our conscience—is a part of the power structure that must be fought.

The influence of post-structuralist analysis of structures of domination is unmistakable here; it is demonstrated by the thesis that identities are constructed through repeated "naming." The authors quote from the manifesto "How to Destroy the World": "I call *naming* the process by which we are separated as illegitimate (not-normal, worthy of death) while marking others as legitimate (normal,

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109. Anonymous, *I Want to Kill Cops until I'm Dead: Killing Cops in the Street Is Not Enough—We Must Aim Our Bullets at the Cops inside Our Heads*, available at the Anarchist Library website, https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/narcissa-black-kcbg-and-annonymous-others-i-want-to-kill-cops-until-i-m-dead.pdf.

110. Ibid., p. 4.

111. Ibid., p. 3.

112. Ibid., p. 4.

113. Ibid.

114. Ibid.

115. Ibid., p. 5.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

good)."[118] The key to power analysis is here—as in post-structuralism—the critique of language.

The killing, which the authors highlight, is understood as material and also immaterial—this is the second of their theses. The authors agree that police must be materially killed without exception, although with regard to doctors, teachers, and parents, they disagree about whether physical destruction is necessary or if an immaterial overcoming of their power is possible.[119] Regardless, the fight against external and internal structures of domination must be carried out: a prerequisite to successfully killing police materially involves "first killing at least a part of the cop inside your head."[120] This requires a "practice of self-abolition," "ending of an existentialist nightmare which sees the framing of human life as individualistic, essentially and empirically true 'I think therefore I am.'"[121]

The Self that is fought here is the same as the one that post-structuralist philosophy deconstructs. The concept of "human nature" is replaced by the "observation" that "what we are is entirely constructed by the paradigm of reality in which we have been socialized, manufactured, created."[122] The Self is nothing other than "the sum total of our constructed identities, our experiences, and our interactions with others—the names we have been called and the roles we perform."[123] When we destroy these externally imposed rules, it will become possible to get rid of "that little voice which tells you that what you are doing is right or wrong."[124] "This 'conscience' is the cop inside your head."[125]

In the third part of the text, which is concerned with the practicalities of the struggle, it is stated that the killing of one's own conscience functions best in the collective: "When we act together, when we collectively struggle against each others' 'consciences' we are no longer atomized existential entities concerned as to whether burning a car is morally right or wrong."[126] To work as a "nebulous host"

118. Ibid., p. 4n4. The editors cite the text: Ignorant Research Institute, "How to Destroy the World," available at the Anarchist Library website, https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ignorant-research-institute-how-to-destroy-the-world.pdf.

119. Anonymous, *I Want to Kill Cops until I'm Dead*, p. 6.

120. Ibid., p. 6n12.

121. Ibid., p. 7.

122. Ibid.

123. Ibid. The editors refer to the similarity of this thought to that found in the work of philosopher Alyson Escalante, who teaches at the University of Oregon, in her work "Gender Nihilism: An Anti-Manifesto" (2015), available at the Anarchist Library website, https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alyson-escalante-gender-nihilism-an-anti-manifesto.

124. Ibid.

125. Ibid., p. 8.

126. Ibid.

enables "collective irresponsibility for that burning." This results in the superiority of the "riot" over clandestine actions, in which persons are much more likely to be caught up by the voice of conscience—a term used by the authors in quotation marks. With these fundamental reflections on the form of the struggle against the police come practical instructions for lighting cars on fire and causing accidents for police vehicles. They emphasize, too, that the fight requires "intensive personal and collective training,"[127] including the practice of martial arts, learning how to use a firearm, and readings from insurgents "about guerrilla warfare or bomb-making."[128]

In the afterword to the German edition, the German translators distance themselves from the thesis that the uprising ("riot") is superior to clandestine actions. From their perspective, the riot holds the danger of a new collectivism. Whoever understands the attack on the structures of domination as a "collective project" "opens the door for policing":[129] "In place of a moral is the ideal of this collective project, but this is also something which stands over me."[130] The collective imposes values on the individual, and thus the goal of liberation of the self is missed: "I do not want that because in the end it does not concern me."[131]

This final sentence is startlingly honest.[132] And still, the question remains open who the "I" in a post-structuralist theory is supposed to be. At most there can be a "respective I" that changes constantly with time. But if it is supposed to be a "unified I" (which it must be to consistently pursue a goal like self-liberation), this would not be compatible with the radical particularism stated here. For the reception in left-wing extremism, another problem is more serious: the text provides no perspective for a liberated society. At one point, the authors do notice the danger that their demand for abolition and destruction could lead to "an endless cycle in which none of us are left."[133] Their cynical conclusion is that it is better to destroy domination and humanity along with it than not to fight domination: "If an

127. Ibid., p. 11.

128. Ibid.

129. Translator's afterword, in Anonymous, *Ich will Bullen töten, bis ich selbst sterbe*, German translation, p. 46, available at https://archive.org/details/ich-will-bullen-toeten-bis-ich-selbst-sterbe/ich-will-bullen-toeten-bis-ich-selbst-sterbe/mode/2up.

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid. This refers to a quotation from Max Stirner that is not identified as such; see Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), p. 7: "Nothing is more to me than myself!"

132. The sentence reminds one of the concept of the "Politics of the First Person" of the Autonomists. See Anonymous, "Anarchy as Minimal Consensus," *Perspektiven autonomer Politik*, ed. AK Wantok (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2010), pp. 9–13, here p. 9.

133. Ibid., p. 9.

endless cycle of revenge is what it takes to undo the insidious and networked self and interpersonal policing of our milieus, then so be it—let's keep fighting until none of us are left."[134] Here the presentation of a positive goal of the struggle is given up—the struggle no longer serves the realization of the utopia of a liberated society. Thus, this position will presumably find few supporters even within violence-oriented left-wing extremism.

However, the text is interesting in one respect: it presents the radical consequences of the post-structuralist turn in left-wing extremism. First, it becomes clear that the economic structures are outward appearances of the true structures of domination that need to be fought. Domination is, according to the thesis, ultimately enacted through speech and norms.[135] Second, the authors argue that the turn to identity politics in left-wing extremism does not solve the fundamental problem: the struggle of a minority for recognition is once again based on designations, distinctions, and evaluations. Therefore, a consistent post-structuralist praxis must not aim to increase the number of gender but must focus on its destruction. Insofar as identity politics attempts to achieve new rights for minorities, it persists in the thinking that post-structuralism (according to its primary thinkers) has shown to be wrong. Third, the authors demonstrate which perspectives post-structuralist thought opens: "It is a program of total destructive negation, with nothing offered afterward—we must accept that there are no solutions."[136] Indeed, the post-structuralist critique of language and norms leads to their complete dissolution. There remains only a program of radical destruction without a given goal for the struggle. Such a particularism leads to the dissolution of all ends so that only struggle itself remains. This corresponds exactly to the consequence that Armin Mohler, one of the most important thinkers of the New Right, draws from nominalism.

3. Identity Politics of the New Right

While the identity politics of the left and in left-wing extremism in the form discussed here represent a new development shaped by postmodernism and post-structuralism, and are explicit departures from earlier, universalist left and left-wing extremist theories like Marxism-Leninism, the identity politics of the New Right can look further back to a longer history of ideas. Ethnopluralism, which is the

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134. Ibid., p. 7n17.
135. See above and ibid., p. 4n4.
136. Ibid., p. 9.

decisive identity-political concept of the New Right,[137] goes back to the idea that the homogeneity of the nation is a prerequisite for democracy, as developed in particular by the constitutional lawyer Carl Schmitt. This section first discusses the theory of ethnopluralism and the homogeneity of the nation as the essential identity-political concepts of the New Right (sect. 3.1), before analyzing nominalism as the foundation of this identity politics (sect. 3.2). And finally, the relevance of identity politics in contemporary right-wing extremism will be assessed.

3.1. Ethnopluralism as an Identity-Political Concept of the New Right

The ideological reference point for the New Right is the Conservative Revolution, a neoconservative movement of German intellectuals in the 1920s. This is evident in the concept of ethnopluralism, which is itself based on Carl Schmitt's theory of identitarian democracy. Schmitt criticizes liberalism in his work *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (first published in 1923) with the argument that liberalism and democracy are incompatible with each other. Liberalism rests on the idea of "human equality," while democracy rests "first [on] homogeneity and second—if the need arises—elimination or eradication of heterogeneity."[138] According to Schmitt, equality can only exist within democracy: "A democracy demonstrates its political power by knowing how to eliminate or keep at bay something foreign and unequal that threatens its homogeneity."[139] So that no confusion arises about what is meant, Schmitt provides as an example the "reckless Turkish nationalization" of Turkey after the First World War.[140] In contrast to the concept of ethnopluralism, which demands the ethnic homogeneity of the people, according to Schmitt the "substance of equality" can also lie "in certain physical and moral qualities" (e.g., in the Greek "areté" or the Roman "virtus") or also in the "consensus of religious convictions," in addition to the nation and thus descent.[141]

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137. For the definition of the New Right, see Armin Pfahl-Traughber, "Was die 'Neue Rechte' ist—und was nicht: Definitionen und Erscheinungsformen einer rechtsextremistischen Intellektuellengruppe," *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, January 21, 2019, https://www.bpb.de/themen/rechtsextremismus/dossier-rechtsextremismus/284268/was-die-neue-rechte-ist-und-was-nicht/. For a presentation of the New Right in English, see Roger Woods, *Germany's New Right as Culture and Politics* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

138. Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), p. 11.

139. Ibid., p. 9.

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid.

Homogeneity is, according to Schmitt, a necessary requirement for democracy. Because "the essence of the democratic principle" is "the assertion of an identity between law and the people's will,"[142] "identity of governed and governing."[143] Thereby the will of the people can be built in different ways: through elections, through acclamation, or through "a single individual who has the will of the people even without a ballot."[144] Thus "dictatorship is not antithetical to democracy":[145] the "rule of the Bolshevist government in Soviet Russia" remains at least in its "theoretical argument…within the democratic current."[146]

Schmitt distinguishes identitarian democracy, which is based upon homogeneity, from liberal democracy, which is based on the idea of "universal human equality."[147] With the idea of the universal equality of all people, "equality is robbed of its value and substance."[148] The full scope of this is found for the first time in the text *The Concept of the Political*.[149] There, Schmitt explains that all areas of civil life, especially politics, morality, and the economy, are defined by ultimate distinctions.[150] The difference between friend and enemy is foundational for politics. What is meant is not enmity in the sense that the other is morally bad or to be personally rejected in some way, but rather that he is simply the other:[151] "But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible."[152]

Because he is different, the enemy poses an existential threat. The otherness of the stranger means, in case of a conflict, the "negation of one's own kind of existence," against which a nation must preserve its own way of life."[153] Thus, enmity always implies the "ever-present possibility of combat."[154] As "existential negation of the other," the concept of the enemy contains "the real possibility of physical

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142. Ibid., p. 26.
143. Ibid., p. 14; Schmitt references Rousseau here.
144. Ibid., p. 27; see also ibid., p. 22.
145. Ibid., p. 28.
146. Ibid., p. 29; see also ibid., p. 22.
147. Ibid., p. 11.
148. Ibid.
149. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007).
150. Compare ibid., pp. 26f.
151. Compare ibid., p. 27.
152. Ibid., p. 27.
153. Ibid.
154. Ibid., p. 32.

killing."[155] In consequence, states do not live always in an actual fight with other states, but they must instead constantly reckon with the possibility of war.[156] At the same time, demarcation from the outside, from the enemy, is the basis for determining what is one's own identity. National homogeneity is, for Schmitt, the "substance of equality."[157]

The concept of identitarian democracy is most closely tied to the friend-enemy distinction in *The Concept of the Political* because the demarcation from the enemy forms the basis for determining what is to be regarded as homogeneous or heterogeneous. Heterogeneity in the international sphere is perceived as an ever-present threat from other states; within the state, it represents the "internal enemy."[158] As a political reflection on the threat to states, these considerations would be harmless—but Schmitt does not limit himself to reminding the reader that the concern of politics is to protect from internal and external enemies of the political community (which should be a self-evident thought). Rather, his understanding of homogeneity aims, first, in its absoluteness—that is, in the negation of a politically and legally unifying factor between people beyond homogeneous nation-states—at the radical rejection of the idea of human rights. Second, by assuming that democracy is based on the equality of the will of the governing and the governed, the concept of identitarian democracy is directed against a liberal, pluralistic understanding of democracy, according to which democracy is based on the rule of the majority, which has "a Right to act and conclude the rest."[159] Third, Schmitt ties his presentation of identitarian democracy not only to the rejection of parliamentary democracy (which he sees as liberal but not democratic[160]) but also to the thesis that dictators like Mussolini or Lenin are identifiable with the idea of democracy.[161]

Schmitt's theory of homogeneity and identitarian democracy proved to be directly compatible with the New Right's concept of ethnopluralism. According to the Martin Lichtmesz, who regularly writes books for Antaios, a German publishing house of the New Right, and articles for *Sezession*, the theoretical magazine of

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155. Ibid., p. 33.
156. Compare ibid., pp. 46f.
157. Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, p. 9.
158. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 46.
159. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), § 95, p. 331. Regarding the differences between the identitarian and pluralist understanding of democracy, see Ernst Fraenkel, "Der Pluralismus als Strukturelement der freiheitlich-rechtsstaatlichen Demokratie [1964]," in *Deutschland und die Westlichen Demokratie*, 9th ed. (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag 2011), pp. 256–80.
160. See Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, pp. 27–30.
161. Ibid., p. 30.

the New Right, Henning Eichberg is the "inventor of the term 'ethnopluralism'"[162] and coined the term "as a counter-concept to European ethnocentrism."[163] Ethnocentrism assumes the superiority of European culture and wants to civilize the world according to European standards.[164] But according to Eichberg, this approach is wrong: "the cultural gap between cultures cannot be bridged."[165] His concept of ethnopluralism is the foundation of a radical anti-imperialism and an ideological support for Négritude and Black Power movements (whose adherents are more likely to be found in the spectrum of left-wing identity politics; cf. sect. 2.1 above). Eichberg's perspective is that of a "radical anti-universalism and cultural relativism,"[166] according to which "all cultures and peoples are different but of equal value."[167]

Martin Sellner, former leader of the Identitarian Movement Austria, which is not an intellectual but an action-oriented organization of the New Right, understands ethnopluralism, like Eichberg and Lichtmesz, as the counterpart to ethnocentrism. In an article for *Sezession*, Sellner distances himself from nationalism because it is defined by an "ideology of progress" and the persuasion to represent the "chosen culture" ["*Auserwähltheitsdenken*"] so that it ultimately becomes a form of "universalism."[168] Sellner calls the universalist view "totalitarian" because it "claims supratemporal and international validity"; "identitarians contrast this with…pluralist…perspective thinking" that emphasizes the "uniqueness" of each people. It results "necessarily from the demarcation from others."[169]

On the one hand this position shows a striking similarity to that of Schmitt, insofar as, first, the requirement of ethnic homogeneity (which was more openly defined by Schmitt) is emphasized here and, second, that homogeneity can only be secured through demarcation. On the other hand, the radical critique of universalism possesses parallels with post-structuralism, which leads Eichberg and Lichtmesz to express sympathies with the identity-political movements of ethnic minorities. In this way, the New Right distinguishes itself from the liberalism it

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162. Martin Lichtmesz, "Volklichkeit, Ethnopluralismus, Eichberg," *Sezession* 85 (2018): 5–9, here p. 6.

163. Ibid., p. 7.

164. Cf. ibid.

165. Henning Eichberg, cited in ibid.

166. Lichtmesz, "Volklichkeit, Ethnopluralismus, Eichberg," p. 7.

167. Ibid., p. 8.

168. Martin Sellner, "Ethnozentrismus, Ethnopluralismus, Universalismus," *Sezession*, April 19, 2017, https://sezession.de/57017/ethnozentrismus-ethnopluralismus-universalismus.

169. Ibid.

opposes[170] *and* from National Socialism. On the surface, both the New Right and the Identitarians reject the racism and antisemitism of National Socialism because they are concerned primarily with the demarcation of ethnocultural communities and not with determining that some of them are superior and others inferior. The deeper reason for the rejection is that racism and antisemitism are derived from essentialist concepts like "the race" and "the Jews." In practice, National Socialism aimed at elevating the Aryan race; but this practice was based on a universalist understanding of racial conflict. Hitler claimed to reveal, especially in the chapter "People and Race" in *Mein Kampf*, the principles that determine world history.[171] Such arguments are rejected by the New Right for reasons similar to the poststructuralist rejection of Marxism-Leninism. The philosophical basis here, however, is not postmodernism but rather nominalism.

3.2. Nominalism as the Philosophical Basis of Ethnopluralism

The fact that nominalism is the philosophical basis of the New Right was succinctly elaborated by its mastermind, Armin Mohler. In 1978, he published the essay "The Nominalist Turn," in which he contrasted nominalism and universalism.[172] The essay first addresses the nominalist critique of universalism and in the second part addresses the question of what distinguishes nominalism itself. At the beginning of the article, universalism and nominalism are abstractly defined: "The *universalist* believes that reality is based on a spiritual order. For him, there is a generality ('universals') that precedes the individual and encloses it—the generality from which the individual can be defined. For the *nominalist*, on the other hand, there is only the individual, the particular. He sees the general concepts are names (Lat. *nomina*) that man has assigned to the individual, to reality after the fact."[173] In his explanations of the differences between the two concepts, Mohler states that his problem with universalism is not the assumption of a spiritual reality that grounds reality. The nominalist can live with such an assumption so long as he knows that "the human spirit cannot be brought into congruence with reality."[174] But this is

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170. See below in section 3.2.

171. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Mariner, 1999), ch. 11.

172. Armin Mohler, "Die nominalistische Wende," *Criticón* 47 (1978): 139–45, available at https://scholien.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/streitgesprc3a4ch-der-denkschulen.pdf.

173. Ibid., p. 140, emphasis in original.

174. Ibid.

the exact mistake made by the universalist: he presumes, first, that he understands the order and, second, that he can act on its behalf. Consequently, he acts "neither in his own name nor that of his family, his people, or his nation" but rather "in the name of the 'whole,' of the universal order."[175] Thus, the universalist always appears with a mission. From his point of view, "the Other…is not simply one who shapes something else, namely, *his* particular, which is different from *my* particular—rather, he is the one who does the wrong thing."[176]

This claim has, according to Mohler, caused the world much suffering and is the foundation of all totalitarianisms—from Christianity to Marxism all the way to National Socialism: "The long road of history is lined with strange ruins. They are bizarre buildings of powerful claims to power, with single successful parts—but none of these buildings has been finished. They are the ruins of those systems of thought that appear again and again in history, which claim to have the only correct and comprehensive answer to every question. Marxism is only one of the last ruins in the series, but its fall can stand for all the others."[177] Like Lyotard, Mohler sees in universalism the foundation of totalitarianism. The cause of all totalitarian political claims lies in its attempt to come to binding statements about the world in the spiritual. Even if Mohler does not attribute this—from his perspective, wrong—attitude to linguistic analysis, as post-structuralism does, he sees the reason for it in a wrong approach to knowledge of the world.

After the negative differentiation, Mohler turns in the second part of his article to the question of how to positively characterize the nominalist. He characterizes it on three levels: the epistemological understanding of nominalism, the understanding the deed, and the self-relation of man.

On the epistemological level, the "nominalist turn"[178] refers to the abandonment of generally binding statements: "No one will dare to transfer unseen morality valid for small groups (like the family) to the state and thus render it incapable of acting. Just as no state can make itself laughable by presenting a catalog of pious wishes as a constitution."[179] He repeats this formulation in his later writing *Gegen die Liberalen*, aimed at the understanding of the basic rights in the German constitution, where he claims that every "citizen of the Federal Republic" knows that these are only "pious wishes": it is enough to profess them, "*even if one does the*

175. Ibid.
176. Ibid., emphasis in original.
177. Ibid., p. 141.
178. Ibid., p. 143.
179. Ibid.

opposite."[180] Presumption and hypocrisy are replaced by the insight "that everything should mean something else—with which all substance is transformed into a spider's web of relations that, at best, captures ghosts of thoughts but certainly no longer living beings."[181] This will put an end to "the liberalism that makes us sick."[182] Here Mohler states what he explains in more detail in the volume *Gegen die Liberalen*: that liberalism is the "enemy,"[183] a "mental illness" that consists in "identifying what one has in one's head with the world as a whole."[184]

On the second level it becomes apparent that nominalism is concerned not with theory but rather with acting. While the universalist lives with the illusion of shaping the world according to a system, the nominalist is himself becoming creative. He unfolds his "creative powers" because he knows "he cannot do *everything*."[185] Those "who know they can do *something* do so with restrained joyful affirmation."[186] The goal of the nominalist is not to accomplish things that mean something but rather to create according to his own measure: "The fact that he experiences reality as chaos stimulates him to contrast this chaos with something shaped. The answer to the infinite chaos is the clear, self-contained form. It is the only thing that justifies man."[187]

On the third level, Mohler explains what the nominalist is concerned with in his actions. The goal is the recovery of dignity: the human "who knows his finiteness and mortality" wants *nevertheless* to play his role."[188] "Under the domination of the universalist systems," this is not granted to human beings. He "withers away…as a herald of the consciousness of mission" because he can never do justice to the "excessiveness" of the "universalistic claim to have solved the world's riddles," so they "can only turn into whining and crying."[189] The nominalist plays "his role" by asserting himself in the world of infinite chaos and accepting the associated struggle as a challenge: "The nominalist subject knows that the struggle cannot always be avoided and does not shy away from the struggle. He even loves the

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180. Armin Mohler, *Gegen die Liberalen* (Schnellroda: Antaios, 2010), p. 17, emphasis in original.
181. Mohler, "Die nominalistische Wende," p. 143.
182. Ibid.
183. Mohler, *Gegen die Liberalen*, p. 8.
184. Ibid., p. 13.
185. Mohler, "Die nominalistische Wende," p. 143, emphasis in original.
186. Ibid., emphasis in original.
187. Ibid., p. 144.
188. Ibid.
189. Ibid.

struggle. He even appreciates the good struggle in his opponent."[190] To put it more pointedly, one can formulate it like this: If everything general, thus also the general concepts, have been unmasked as illusions, the only way to the Self is the demarcation from the Other. The struggle is only the radical form of demarcation, which can go as far as annihilation. Mohler writes: "In order to completely disturb contemporaries afflicted by abstract humanitarianism, it should be added that this 'agonally' inclined person does not shrink from destroying his opponents if necessary—especially if the question of 'you or I' arises."[191]

As in leftist identity politics, the identity politics of the New Right can be traced back to a radical particularism. This particularism directs itself at universalism as the common enemy, and thus—and this is more clearly stated in Mohler than in Lyotard or Foucault—against liberalism. Human rights and human dignity are concepts developed within power structures (Foucault) or are an expression of wanting to shape the world according to one's own measure instead of recognizing the "unending chaos" and in this chaos to fight to achieve one's ownmost. So it is not surprising when, within the New Right, postmodernism is partly seen as positive. Martin Sellner characterizes the leftist reception of postmodernism, in an essay for *Sezession*, as hypocritical because it had created a "universal narrative of guilt"; the true representatives of anti-universalism are "the Right."[192]

Before concluding with a comparison of the basics of left-wing and right-wing identity politics, the relevance of this position in contemporary right-wing extremism will be discussed in parallel to the approach taken in the second section of this paper.

3.3. Identity Politics in Current Right-Wing Extremism

While post-structuralism's reception within left-wing extremism has hardly been discussed in extremism research so far, ethnopluralism as the fundamental identity-political concept of the New Right has been frequently analyzed. Therefore we will only point out the connection of this concept with the conspiracy theory of the "Great Replacement," which is evident in contemporary right-wing extremism.

190. Ibid.
191. Ibid. The reference to the agonal human is also found in Mohler, *Gegen die Liberalen*, pp. 42–45, with direct reference to Nietzsche.
192. Martin Sellner, "Die Schuldkult ist nicht postmodern," March 7, 2019, *Sezession*, https://sezession.de/60552/der-schuldkult-ist-nicht-postmodern. A leftist analysis of the relationship of the New Right to postmodernism is given by Carolin Amlinger, "Rechts dekonstruieren: Die Neue Rechte und ihr widersprüchliches Verhältnis zur Postmoderne," *Leviathan* 48, no. 2 (2020): 318–37.

For example, the German Identitarian Movement (IB) understands ethnopluralism as "the diversity of peoples as they have developed over millennia. We use the term consciously as a counter to today's one-world doctrine to make clear that a ruthless globalist dissolution of borders threatens this diversity."[193] Currently, however, according to the IB, a replacement of people is occurring due to "mass migration, globalization, and one-world propaganda."[194] This alludes to the "Great Replacement theory," which goes back to the writer Renaud Camus.[195] In his book, Camus criticizes the intentional cultural extinction of the French people through migration, beginning from the ethnopluralist belief that all peoples and cultures should flourish in their ancestral territories, without domination by other peoples or cultures. His theory consists of two premises: first, that in France and other Western European nations a mass migration is underway that threatens to destroy these cultures; and second, that this replacement is being intentionally brought about by the elites of European nations. The first premise is bound together with the concept of "counter colonization":[196] there is "a population transfer from formerly colonized countries" taking place in France and Great Britain, which is "colonization in the original meaning of the concept."[197] The second claim, that this "replacement" was the result of a willfully controlled process, is regularly formulated in the reception of Camus as a conspiracy theory in which Western European elites are held responsible for this process.[198] Camus is reticent about naming specific culprits, emphasizing that he is "cordially uninterested in precisely naming those responsible for our fatal situation."[199] He does name individuals and institutions who share responsibility—including the European Union[200] and the "Jewish community,"[201] whose "intellectuals and journalists" have tended for some time "in

193. Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland (IBD), "Was ist unter dem Begriff 'Ethnopluralismus' zu verstehen?," https://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/faq/was-ist-unter-dem-begriff-ethnopluralismus-zu-verstehen/.

194. IBD, "Erhalt der ethnokulturellen Identität," https://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/forderungen/erhalt-der-ethnokulturellen-identitaet/.

195. Renaud Camus, *Revolte gegen den Großen Austausch*, trans. Martin Lichtmesz (Schnellroda: Antaios, 2019). Originally published in French under the title *Le grand remplacement* (Paris: Reinharc, 2011). English edition: *You Will Not Replace Us!* (Plieux: Chez l'auteur, 2018).

196. Camus, *Revolte gegen den Großen Austausch*, p. 79.

197. Ibid.

198. See IBD, "Was meint der Begriff 'Großer Austausch' und wer ist schuld daran?," https://www.identitaere-bewegung.de/faq/was-meint-der-begriff-grosser-austausch-und-wer-ist-schuld-daran/.

199. Camus, *Revolte gegen den Großen Austausch*, p. 64.

200. Ibid., pp. 66–68.

201. Ibid., p. 65.

the overwhelming majority, to fervently endorse the ideology of immigration."[202] Lastly it is not a group of people but rather an ideology that promotes the replacement: "The Great Replacement of our people is only one…consequence of the ideology of the universal exchangeability of all things…the interchangeable human, the uprooted pawn, who has had all the rough edges of his national, ethnic, cultural affiliation ground off, dislocated from birth, therefore transferrable at will, such a human is, in the eyes of the overpaid management class, an indispensable building block in the planetary flow of money and goods."[203] If Camus had written his text not as a political pamphlet but as a scientific text, he could have referred back to Foucault's theory of thought, language, and power structure. Thus, however, he vacillates between assigning responsibility to the "political-media complex"[204] and analyzing discourses that he describes as the "dominant language of lies."[205]

However, in the choice of a strategy in the fight against "mass immigration,"[206] a determination of whether, from the point of view of right-wing extremists, the primary concern must be to change thought structures or to fight against responsible individuals (groups) would be of central importance. In the first case, the consequence of the concept of ethnopluralism and the theory of the "Great Replacement" would be the metapolitics pursued by the New Right as "a struggle for 'air sovereignty over heads'";[207] in the second case, violence-oriented strategies up to and including terrorism are possible.[208] At this point, it is sufficient to note that ethnopluralism as an identity-political concept of the New Right has a significant influence on intellectual as well as action-oriented right-wing extremism, including right-wing terrorism.

4. Conclusion and Summary

A comparison of the foundations of left- and right-wing identity politics reveals a number of remarkable similarities. First, both are directed against a common op-

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202. Ibid.
203. Ibid., pp. 63f.
204. For example, ibid., p. 111.
205. Ibid., p. 108.
206. Ibid.
207. Institut für Staatspolitik, "'Metapolitik und Parteipolitik'—Festvortrag Thor von Waldsteins," July 28, 2015, https://staatspolitik.de/metapolitik-und-parteipolitik-festvortrag-thor-v-waldsteins/.
208. For example, lone-actor terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who carried out the attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, on March 15, 2019, referred to the Great Replacement theory in the title of his manifesto .

ponent or enemy, universalism. In terms of the history of ideas, post-structuralism emerged in the 1970s from the rejection of Marxism and its philosophy of history, as well as its theory of the proletariat as the decisive revolutionary subject; the identity politics of the New Right distinguishes itself from National Socialism as the "orthodoxy" in right-wing extremism. Both, however, share the opposition to political and economic liberalism and see in the discourse of human rights, human dignity, and the value of liberal democracy based on the rule of law discourses aimed only at the preservation of power or, as Renaud Camus refers to them, "the ruling language of lies."[209]

Second, the turning away from the universalist claims of orthodox Marxism and National Socialism is connected in both cases with the turn to a radical particularism; this is justified in the field of left-wing identity politics with post-structuralism (Foucault, among others), in the New Right with nominalism (Mohler). Both are united by the conviction that the universal (and therefore also universal terms) are only fictions and names whose function is to cut a path into the "infinite chaos" (Mohler) or establish power structures. What distinguishes post-structuralism from the New Right, however, is that left-wing identity politics clings to a critique of domination. The post-structuralist theory of revolution remains Marxist insofar as it continues to share this critique with Marxism. While left-wing identity politics thus wants to establish inequality in the particular and strive for equality, Mohler's nominalism merely aims at the recognition of the particular and uncovering all ideologies that, like liberalism, claim the existence of something universal. He does not reject the idea of the superiority of individual people, but the action of people "in the name of the universal order."[210]

Third, both sides state that the practical consequences of their thought are that the particular must be held on to and creative powers set free. According to Lyotard postmodern philosophy helps to bear the incommensurable;[211] according to Hardt and Negri the revolution aims at the release of creative forces inherent in the multitude,[212] which goes so far that liberated desire creates "a new body" for itself;[213] Mohler characterizes "the nominalist" as the human being who "experiences reality as chaos" and "confronts the chaos with something shaped."[214]

209. Camus, *Revolte gegen den Großen Austausch*, p. 108.
210. Mohler, "Die nominalistische Wende," p. 140.
211. Cf. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. xxv.
212. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 78.
213. Ibid., p. 204.
214. Mohler, "Die nominalistische Wende," p. 144.

However there is an important difference. Hardt and Negri are concerned with the liberation of desire;[215] this corresponds to Foucault, according to whom the liberation of man should serve to "increase the amount of pleasure."[216] In contrast, Mohler is not concerned with desire or lust but with the self-realization of the nominalist as an agonal man—that is, self-realization in struggle.

These fundamental differences point to another one. When Foucault or Hardt and Negri advance a utopia of liberated desire, they assume the possibility of a far-reaching harmony of people in a particularistic world. The struggle of the oppressed for recognition of collective identity is an intermediate stage on the way to the overcoming of identity conflicts.[217] In the end, the struggle will be overcome—here the essays stand in the tradition of Marx and Marxism-Leninism. The notable exception is the manifesto *I Want to Kill Cops until I'm Dead* because here a more radical consequence of post-structuralist philosophy is drawn than in Foucault: if all concepts and norms are expressions of the striving for power, the logical consequence can really only be to fight power wherever it is encountered—and to do so without any prospect of realizing a utopia. The difference between the authors of the manifesto and Mohler is the attitude toward struggle: the former fight hatefully, while Mohler's agonal man does not hate the enemy but wants to overcome him for the sake of self-awareness. Here, then, the struggle becomes an end in itself.

Thus, at the end of the analysis of recent developments in the ideology of left- and right-wing extremism, the old opposition remains. On the one hand, there is the theory of radical equality and the utopia of total peace; on the other hand—and in deliberate opposition to left-wing identity politics—there is the emphasis on the irreconcilable differences between people or ethnic groups and the affirmation of struggle as the basis for experiencing one's own identity. Even if at first glance left-wing and right-wing identity politics seem as if the common rejection of, for example, so-called cultural appropriation could give rise to new alliances between them, on closer inspection the well-known incompatibility between the striving for freedom from domination and radical equality, on the one hand, and the ideology of inequality and struggle, on the other, remains.

215. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 69.
216. Michel Foucault, "Talk Show" [Radioscopie de Michel Foucault], trans. Phillis Aronov and Dan McGrawth, in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), p. 144. Hahn emphasizes that pleasure is for Foucault the actual "positive[] content of freedom" (Hahn, "Freiheit, Relativismus und politische Praxis," pp. 214f).
217. Cf. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 413; and Kastner and Susemichel, "Zur Geschichte linker Identitätspolitik," p. 53.

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