

A Deconstruction of Postmodern Socialism and its Motives

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*For my courageous mother who has given me the freedom to choose my own path and
the tool of responsibility to find the right direction.*

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1. Introduction

According to the Annual Report on US Attitudes towards Socialism, conducted by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in October 2017, more than four in ten millennials in the US would prefer to live in a socialist country (Miller, 2017).

Although socialism has failed many times, contributing to the death of millions of people, it continues to be treated by many, especially those of younger age who did not personally experience the Cold War, as a fundamentally altruistic ideology that has simply always been implemented incorrectly under the wrong people. In light of the historical evidence which an alarming amount of students have been shown not even to be aware of (cf. research conducted by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, ca. 2013), this is a dangerous notion that calls for the exploration of the core problems with socialism both at a moral and at a practical level. Moreover, the aforementioned study raises a question that must be confronted if we wish to understand the respondents' intention behind their positive attitude towards socialism: What is it about the socialist ideology that makes it so attractive to the young population?

This paper aims to deconstruct the postmodern socialist ideology which is running through the current popular culture like a common thread as an extension of a steady revival of socialist ideas in the late 20th century. Its underlying agenda is to be exposed in an effort to make its most momentous flaws stand out so that they can be judged objectively and treated with the necessary caution. The following deconstruction is composed of a six-part analysis and critique of both socialist and postmodernist ideas and the attempt that has been made at reconciling those two into a new "social justice" ideology.

At first, socialism shall be dealt with separately, with reference to such influential 20th century economists and social philosophers as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and Ludwig von Mises who themselves were dedicated to the comprehension and refutation of the socialist ideology. Though its re-interpretations over time report slight variations in rhetoric and implementation strategy, there does appear to be a remarkable constancy in the socialist attitude to morality which allows the consultation of these pre-postmodern thinkers.

The second part will focus on socialist motivations and their damaging effect on both the individual and society as a consequence. Socialism does, at surface level, propagate the altruistic pursuit of a rather romantic ideal of utopian justice. Further investigation into

the socialist arguments, however, reveals the prevalence of a sub-motivation of envy – which is perfectly comprehensible and would not be morally objectionable, was it not a malevolent form of destructive envy which contributes to the development of a self-confining victim mindset and firm denial of personal responsibility.

Thirdly, the manifestation of these ideological presuppositions in the postmodern period shall be discussed in the context of the uprising “social justice culture” as a dangerously impactful carrier of authoritarian socialism with particular regard to the philosophical contributions of postmodernist influencers of the late 20th century such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Jean-Francois Lyotard. Postmodernist proponents of “social justice” have further developed the Marxist theory about an economic class power struggle into a more general criticism of cultural power structures that manifest themselves in the entirety of our interpretation of the world, referred to by Lyotard as the “Grand Narrative” (Lyotard, 1979). More precisely, the postmodernists reject the idea that there is such a thing as an objective reality and that societal commonalities in our interpretation of the world are no more than the socially constructed result of “high power group” interpretations undermining all other interpretations. As a consequence, social justice postmodernists advocate for the governmental implementation of equity policies (“affirmative action” (cf. definition provided by the Encyclopaedia Britannica, ca. 1998), to relieve “low power groups” of their societal disadvantage.

In the subsequent chapter, a closer look will be taken at the active steps that the social justice movement is taking to bring forth its ideology by manipulating the use of language in the public square. As critics of linguistic discourse on the basis of logical reasoning within the framework of the Grand Narrative, postmodern social justice proponents aim to reform the implicit goal of rational debate which is to come to a truthful conclusion. Instead, they endorse the prioritisation of emotionally charged anecdotal evidence and the restriction of so-called “hate speech” (cf. definition provided by German Federal Agency for Civic Education, 2017) altogether, if this works in favour of a “low power group” in service of “social justice”.

But although the social justice ideology is reliant on its relativistic substructure and the denial of objective truth, the very concept of “social justice” is diametrically opposed to that notion. The fifth section will therefore be dedicated to the dismantlement of the philosophical inconsistencies that the postmodernist socialist ideology is based upon and the dangers of its fundamentally relativistic approach to morality.

The last chapter will constitute a thorough refutation of the postmodernist socialist Power Narrative doctrine (Grand Narrative) as propagated today that suggests the prevalence of discriminatory sub-conscious biases (“implicit biases”) that Western civilisation is built upon and can thus only be counter-acted by force.

Finally, the paper will be closed off with a conclusion entailing a brief recapitulation regarding the primary purpose of the deconstruction, as well as a prognostic assessment of postmodernist socialist ideology’s potential future impact and potential solutions to the implicated problems.

2. Exploration of Fundamental Socialist Ideas

2.1 The Immorality of Socialism

The conflict between socialism and capitalism is fundamentally predicated on different conceptions of justice and the role of freedom: Socialists advocate for “distributive justice”; its liberal capitalist counter-concept is referred to as “commutative justice” (Habermann, 2017, p. 3): Whereas the capitalist acts in concordance with first principles and equality before the law, the socialist is in constant pursuit of a goal, namely equality of outcome. The latter is thus inclined to continuously adapt his moral maxims which are momentarily significant to the ultimate aim. On the other hand, embedded in the classical liberal free market philosophy is the presupposition of Private Property rights and freedom from forceful imposition of another one’s differing views as paramount values. The enforcement of socialism, however, necessitates the eradication of alternative opinions. Capitalism does not need to be *enforced*; its very philosophical axiom is the supremacy of free choice.

Friedrich Hayek, who received the Nobel Prize in economics in 1974 for his exceptional influence on the economic landscape with his, at the time, highly controversial and scrutinised endorsement of free market principles, had realised very early in his career as a classical liberal economist that the free development of moral rules in a society was inextricably linked to the heated ongoing conflict between opposing economic views. His was a remarkably holistic approach to economics; intertwining social and economic philosophy, as well as evolutionary development, so as to explore the motives behind differing opinions and evaluate their applicability with regard to intrinsic human desires, aspirations and abilities. As part of his research into the origin and function of values, he studied how moral rules were established within the immediate social microcosmos of the individual, independently of an enforcing authority complex: He observed that people treat each other equally before an, in a sense, “intuitive” law system, and thus grant each other more or less personal appreciation (lower or higher value), depending on how in line their actions are with this “intuitive morality”. Hayek inferred that moral rules on a larger, societal scale had to be extracted from the rules which guided private interactions between individuals. Inequality of social success in the microcosmic sphere was therefore to be viewed as a positive guarantor for moral behaviour amongst all people (Hayek, 1979, pp. 39 ff.). Conversely, socialism, Hayek posited, was a threat to private moral behaviour, because it disregarded social value hierarchies:

“The realisation of socialism would shrink the scope of private moral behaviour and the political necessity to satisfy the demands of all larger groups would necessarily lead to the degeneration and destruction of all morality.”¹ (Hayek, 1978, p. 39)

The inherent immorality of the socialist ideology becomes apparent when applied to a small-scale scenario: If five people gathered in a room and four out of them voted to steal the money of the fifth person to distribute it equally amongst the group members, their actions would generally be considered immoral, even if the fifth person was disproportionately wealthier than the other four. The underlying moral principle that the four people would have violated is “Thou shalt not steal” which is the essence of Private Property rights. In contrast, the basic premise of socialism is that a person does not have to contribute anything to be “deserving” of certain commodities and services which imposes an enforceable obligation on “society” to ensure their survival. Ludwig von Mises, another one of the most eminent classical liberal thinkers of his century and Hayek’s teacher, drew attention to the misconception that *enforcing* the provision of necessities could get rid of humans’ dependence on their production. The belief that socialism can provide “freedom” from the struggle of labour as a means of survival is false:

“The socialist societal order could only reduce the dependence of the individual on the natural conditions of survival by increasing the productivity of work. If it is incapable of doing that, if, in fact, it lessens the productivity, then it makes humans even less free in the face of nature.”² (Mises, 1922, p. 173)

The free market economy, Mises elucidated in a lecture on socialism, guaranteed freedom within the context of society; a metaphysical freedom, on the other hand, was impossible to attain in any system. Precisely what he meant by “freedom within society” was an interdependence between the citizens that ensured the constant exchange of skills and possessions: In the free market economy, the individual has to serve his fellow men as much as they have to serve him (Mises, 1983, p. 43). Mises further concluded that by acting in his own self-interest, which is to undertake the responsibility of sustaining his

¹ Self-translation; original German quote: „Die Verwirklichung des Sozialismus würde den Rahmen privaten moralischen Verhaltens schrumpfen lassen und die politische Notwendigkeit, alle Forderungen größerer Gruppen zu erfüllen, müßte zur Degeneration und Zerstörung aller Moral führen.“

² Self-translation; original German quote: „Die sozialistische Gesellschaftsordnung könnte die Abhängigkeit des Einzelnen von den natürlichen Lebensbedingungen nur dadurch mildern, daß sie die Produktivität der Arbeit weiter steigert. Kann sie das nicht, führt sie im Gegenteil zur Verminderung der Produktivität, dann macht sie den Menschen der Natur gegenüber unfreier.“

existence, the individual was compelled by his metaphysical constraints to contribute to society in a productive manner (Mises, 1983, p. 47). This is often misconstrued as a problematic underlying “selfishness” of capitalism, when, in fact, the self-serving individual in the free market society is both end and means to himself as well as to others (Mises, 1940, p. 250). The alternative collectivist approach which is proposed by socialists as the more *compassionate* alternative does not come without highly questionable implications. It can be argued even that the moral and conceptual problem at the heart of socialism lies in the dismissal of individual ethics: The vague collectivist term “society” describes an unspecified number of individual people that have to work hard for goods and services to be available in the first place and help people survive in spite of nature’s constraints. Collectivist ideologies are inherently misleading, because there is no such thing as “the collective” or “the society”; there are only “the individuals”. This use of metaphorical language, to speak of “society” as an autonomous identity that is separate from the individual, bears momentous dangers (Mises, 1940, p. 115). The abstraction of the individual diminishes the capacity for genuine compassion. Solidarity exists at different levels of intimacy and declines with increasing remoteness from the group (Habermann, 2017, pp. 2 ff.). Just like Hayek warned, the depreciation of morality in the private environment is a signifier for the degeneracy of morality in every domain of society.

In *The Road to Serfdom*, certainly one of Hayek’s most impactful works, he makes the downright unsettling case that the tyrannical elements of socialism are deeply rooted in its ideology and come to the forefront even if it is only implemented in part and not intentionally taken to its conclusion of ultimate totalitarianism. The abstract goal of equality of outcome above all intuitive morality is bound to precipitate catastrophe:

“Acts which revolt all our feelings [...] become an instrument of policy approved by almost everybody except the victims.” (Hayek, 1944, p. 154)

This is why it is crucial to recognise and point them out before they accumulate and intensify to tyrannical extent under a despotic government. Restrictions on our freedoms ought to be taken seriously and questioned thoroughly; especially if they are advocated for with utopian promises that might just be too good to be true.

Although the postmodern socialist ideology has undergone an intricate merge into a new, remanufactured form of socialism which is this paper’s primary matter of concern, the socialist doctrine of equality of outcome has always remained stable throughout the ideology’s course of internal transformations. The socialist moral framework continues

to pervade the extended postmodern socialist ideology and transcends relevance for the economic sphere which is why the outline and examination thereof marks the beginning of this deconstruction.

2.2 The Impracticality of Socialism – The Knowledge Problem

Due to their particular topicality in the 20th century, the ethical ramifications of socialism as a potentially morally superior alternative to capitalism were of substantial interest to the field of economic philosophy in Hayek's time. But one of Hayek's greatest contributions to the economic sphere was that he stepped out of the moral territory and investigated the impracticality of socialism. A primary point of contention which he concerned himself with was the function of assigning prices to goods and services which Marx had denoted as an unsubstantiated way of ascribing true value to labour (Hayek, 1978, p. 38). Refuting this inadequate conception of prices in a seminal essay of his, *The Use of Knowledge in Society*, Hayek identified the elementary problem which faces the organisers of a centrally planned economy in the absence of individually "assigned" prices. In fact, what he managed to extrapolate from his analysis of societal knowledge was that, in a free market economy, prices were not arbitrarily "assigned" in the first place:

The function of prices is to mediate the communication between producer and consumer who can convert the gathered information about each other's willingness to cooperate within the scope of financial feasibility into action. The consumer decides whether he is willing to accept a given price and the producer can in turn choose to lower it if he notices that the demand is insufficient to justify the production by current standards in the first place. Thus, to state that prices impose value is misleading; rather, they are signals for value (Hayek, 1945, cf. chapter VI). Another economist to be mentioned in this context who was heavily influenced by Hayek and Mises is Milton Friedman: Summarising the functions of prices which he considers to be the most central, he further explains that, as a result of transmitting information, they ensure that products are placed at the disposal of the consumer under the least costly and most resourceful production circumstances (Friedman, 1980, p. 14).

In his essay *The Use of Knowledge in Society*, Hayek stresses that this communication network permeating the entire market is far too complex a system to be condensed and centrally organised in an efficient manner. Operators in a certain domain are often

required to possess highly specific, but nonetheless indispensable knowledge about a fraction of the production sector. Statistical knowledge even is insufficient to account for the many minor changes in subsections of the market and could therefore not stabilise a centrally planned economy. (Hayek, 1945, IV, H. 16). Only by paying close attention to the dynamics of the market and deploying human flexibility in the face of sudden change can the producer act efficiently, the incentive for which he is provided by the competitive nature of the market. The problem of necessary knowledge about market processes being so incalculably extensive is taken care of in the free market by the fact that knowledge is dispersed throughout the market and with each participant contributing his knowledge about his particular niche to the market processes, all knowledge gaps can be covered by the constant interplay of the people (Hayek, 1945, V, H. 21). The conclusion to be drawn from Hayek's findings is that the great efficiency which a centrally planned economy would have to sacrifice for the sake of equality of outcome would not justify the destruction of the free market in the first place. Instead, it would fail to satisfy consumer desires and constantly struggle with scarcity and excess (cf. Friedman, 1980, p. 219).

2.3 The Missing Link between Inequality and Oppression

A strong indicator for the validity of the hypothesis that socialism is at least to a great extent motivated by envy is the socialists' fixation on wealth inequality. Rather than exclusively concerning themselves with ways to alleviate absolute poverty, proponents of socialism suggest that the mere existence of rich people creates an "unfair" power disparity that inherently oppresses poor people and allows them no escape out of poverty. It is easy to imagine that such a deterministic mindset further contributes to an increased lack of motivation among the less successful: Why should anyone bother to invest maximum effort in their career if they believe to be the victim of an inherently oppressive system?

But what the socialist fails to see is that there is no coercion involved in trade interactions in the free market economy. The producer's reliance on positive consumer feedback with regard to quality of the product in relation to its price binds him to certain conditions which have been predetermined by the customer. This distinguishes him from the state authority who can less easily be held accountable for his mistakes. On the other hand, if the producer fails to fulfil the standards of consumer demand, he will lose his competitive advantage. Mises attributes the socialists' resentment against the more successful and the

urge to restrain them with the weapons of state coercion to wilful ignorance of their own inability and reluctance to contribute to society in the free market (Mises, 1944, p. 98).

In addition to that, Hayek argued in *The Constitution of Liberty* that inequality in the free market, although it was likely to be impossible to get rid of, so long as people were given the opportunity to exercise their free choice, served a positive purpose for society in the long term: The wealthy are the first ones to be able to afford luxuries and new inventions on the market, but their initial investment enables further progress in that domain and paves the way for higher production efficiency which will allow the producer to lower prices and make products more accessible to the wider population. Hayek described the decisions of the rich to spend their money on exclusive, luxurious commodities, which the socialist may criticise as wasteful and selfish, as “payment for the experimentation with a style of living that will eventually be available to many” (Hayek, 1960, p.98). Consequently, investment of the disproportionately rich in a free market economy is a precursor to the reduction of absolute poverty.

Nobel Prize winning economist Angus Deaton reaffirmed these findings in 2017, analysing the current state of income inequality in the United States. More specifically, he explored how one ought to distinguish between unfair and fair causes of inequality; only the latter of which he could identify as directly attributable to free market processes. Unfair inequality, Deaton noted, were often indicative of corrupt forces interfering with the free market, such as government capture by special interest groups and cronyism, or a reflection of past or present injustices of discrimination and resulting social issues (e.g. insufficient education, unstable families) leaving their marks on the economy. Deaton’s conclusion is that the reduction of inequality alone is not a noble goal. It can easily shift the focus on the incorrect target and inhibit progress as a result, whilst prevailing injustices remain untouched (Bourne, 2018).

3. An Investigation into Socialist Motivations

3.1 The Trap of the Victim Mindset

Even if the vast economic inequality in a free market society is not caused by vicious selfish intent, it can still be argued that the outcome is equally dissatisfying. We are quick to jump to the conclusion that unequal outcome is entirely the result of unfair preconditions. Studies show that crime rates are disproportionately higher in areas where wealth inequality is high as well (Metz; Burdina, 2016). Being outcompeted especially by people in our immediate social sphere generates feelings of discomfort and envy, because it forces us to confront ourselves with the limits of our own abilities. The observation of socio-economic inequality from the perspective of the less wealthy raises unnerving questions: *What makes the more successful person “better” than me? Am I less “valuable” as a human being than the richer person?*

Those are profoundly terrifying questions to ask. The mere possibility of the answer to the latter one being “yes” is too dark and painful to bear. Rightfully so, of course, since the economic status of a person is by no means a reflection of their “worth” as a human being. But when the overwhelming economic superiority of one’s own neighbour seems so incomprehensible and daunting, self-doubts are an almost inevitable consequence. Therefore, the easiest way to counteract them is to blame the perceived inequality on anything but one’s own comparatively economically inferior decisions and attribute personal “failure” to a supposedly flawed system that is “rigged” against the less fortunate. The apportionment of blame works as a defence mechanism against self-criticism and ultimately self-loathing. There is comfort in the idea that the world needs to change before the self. The socialist ideology is thus deeply rooted in a deterministic *victim mindset* that is overshadowed by its propagandist claims to fight unfairness and oppression. That is not to say that the socialist agenda is deliberately deceitful, but its attractive superficially noble message of “helping the poor by taking from the rich” certainly appeals not just to a potentially existing compassionate human nature, but also to a propensity to resort to simple solutions that do not call for personal effort. On top of that, as pointed out by Mises, the shared anger strengthens the desired feeling of belonging to a significant group:

“Resentment provides them with the power of rage that is sure to be echoed by all like-minded people.”³ (Mises, 1922, p. 409)

This prevents its proponents from identifying the underlying problems and romanticises the rejection of personal responsibility. That is a major problem: By avoiding personal responsibility, people narrow the confinements around their own potential and thereby further reinforce their helplessness - trapping them in a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is no denying that a lack of competence or diligence do not necessarily have to be the *only* cause of one’s currently low economic status. But pointing to unequal circumstances as the only contributor to unequal outcome and labelling “the rich” as malevolent oppressors completely fails to entangle the complexity of poverty and establish a basis for sustainable solutions.

So where ought we to look out for solutions instead? First and foremost, it is crucial to realise that critically evaluating one’s potentially destructive past and present choices has nothing to do with questioning personal value and is not supposed to incite self-hatred. Going back to the uncomfortable questions that inequality provokes, the solution is not to look for the answer in *either* oppressive external factors *or* a lack of personal value, but to consider a *third* answer: Unfulfilled personal potential. We can both take responsibility for our mistakes and recognise our capacity to move on from them in a more effective manner. Self-reflection bridges the gap between stagnation and the process of fully actualising one’s individual potential. Progress towards a more economically prosperous future can only be made by facing the fear of acknowledging that current ineffective personal choices and an ideologically skewed perception of the world might be the primary inhibitors of desired growth.

3.2 Constructive versus Destructive Envy

Circumstantial disadvantages, although they do not put a cap on what an individual can achieve over the course of his life, do to some extent play a role in how easily conquerable the path to success will be. The socialist argument is that therein lies an inherent unfairness and that we ought to “level the playing field”, so to speak. What it disregards, however, is the psychological purpose of inequality: As pointed out before, the dissatisfaction that we experience when we encounter inequality is the product of envy. It might appear offensively accusatory at first glance to assign an egoistic motive to

³ Self-Translation; original German quote: „Das Ressentiment verleiht ihnen die Kraft der Entrüstung, die überall des Widerhalls bei Gleichgesinnten gewiss ist.“

everybody who advocates for equality of outcome, presumably to fight injustice. In public conversation, the term “envy” is generally tainted with a negative connotation because it indicates a socially unacceptable narcissistic attitude. However, envy is the driving force in every system, whether it be socialism or capitalism, as an inevitable part of human nature, and it should only be judged based on the individual effect that it has on subsequent behaviour. An alternative term for “envy” in the right context that tends to be more positively connotated is “competitiveness”. It suggests effort and a strong work ethic. This form of envy we might classify as *constructive envy*. In a free market society, ambitious individuals view their economic superiors as their inspirational ideal and let envy be their motivation to strive towards it on their own account. They remove themselves from the personal disappointment that can come with the emergence of envy and thus overcome the progress-inhibiting emotional barrier. Hayek commented on the perceived unfairness of the competitive structure that allows for inequality in the free market economy as follows:

“[...] a progressive society, while it relies on this process of learning and imitation, recognizes the desires it creates only as a spur to further effort. [...] It disregards the pain of unfulfilled desire aroused by the example of others. It appears cruel because it increases the desire of all in proportion as it increases its gifts to some. Yet so long as it remains a progressive society, some must lead, and the rest must follow.” (Hayek, 1960, p. 98)

Up to a certain point that is difficult to determine, inequality can be a positive generative force in society that empowers people to go beyond the perceived limits of their own abilities. And, as a side effect, successful competitors enrich society with the production of useful goods and services and the provision of jobs. *Destructive envy*, on the other hand, contributes nothing to the individual or society. The downright obsessive emotional engagement with the success of others is a waste of personal time and energy that could be spent on self-improvement to become more economically valuable. In a free market, the self-destructive envy of some will not affect the productivity of others and their provision of products that ensure the sustenance of society.

It becomes a societal problem when the destructive envy is acted upon on a governmental level: By taking from the productive, the authoritarian force disincentivises high productivity and prevents intelligent investment in the improvement of products. On top of that, it prevents people from learning to take responsibility for their actions. Without the fundamental basis of success, envious people who are prone to wallowing in their victim complex will never have a chance at outcompeting others. The redistribution of

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money is a short-term solution that changes the wrong parameters for a sustainable enhancement of the societal quality of living. More money only increases the competitive abilities of those who have learned from acquiring it through hard work how to use it effectively.

4. Postmodern Socialism

4.1 Postmodernism

Over the course of the following chapters, I will explain how a currently resurging socialist movement has manifested itself in the cultural shift towards a postmodern era. Postmodernism arose as a counter-philosophy, or rather an “anti-philosophy”, to modernism (late 19th/early 20th century) and really started to emerge in the 1960s/1970s under the likes of particularly influential postmodernists Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida (Duignan, 2009).

Postmodernism is the antagonistic critic of the modernist confidence in scientific truth as a means of overcoming the dependence on subjective, irrational and religious convictions. The contrast between the two philosophical movements is largely an epistemological and metaphysical one. The transformative, progressive spirit of modernism and the scientific method gave people the sovereignty to reason with logic and pursue an individualist path of self-actualisation, independently from authority. Postmodernists, on the other hand, object to the notion that the ground-breaking achievements of the Truth approximation project in the modern era were of a higher value to our understanding of the world. Rather, they dismiss the elevation of rationalism as part of no more than a societal “Grand Narrative” (Lyotard, 1979) with equal universal invalidity as all other ways of telling the story of being.

However, one ought to be careful when attempting to define the ideological framework of “postmodernism” as one philosophical entity. It is grounded in the very rejection of definitions and boundaries, as can be observed in many postmodern works of art that often play with “random” elements and counterintuitive associations (Palmer, 2014). Postmodernists consider the subjectivity and arbitrariness of aesthetics and claim to challenge preconceived notions by abandoning principles as a way of confronting people with the incomprehensibility of what it really means to be “beautiful” and “good”. Postmodernist art *allows* the artist to produce works that would by more conservative standards of aesthetics be considered “ugly” or “improper”.

This core principle of postmodernism is reflected in each of its cultural branches (art, music, literature, etc.) and united under the fundamental postmodern philosophy: Postmodernists are opposed to the validity of value hierarchies and them informing our interactions with our surroundings and people. To propose a counter-notion and “expose” our reliance on certain philosophical axioms (the universal validity of “truth” and

“morality”) which he regards as flawed, Jacques Derrida developed an alternative school of philosophy under the term “Deconstruction”: The goal of Deconstruction is to take apart reality keeping in mind that we have no reason to take its truthfulness for granted.

“One of the gestures of Deconstruction is to not naturalise what isn’t natural. To not assume that what is conditioned by history, institutions, or society is natural.”
(Derrida, 2002)

Derrida bases this idea on the observation that there are no limitations to the interpretation of a written text and that the intrinsic, fundamental meaning of any literary work is therefore “forever imperceptible” (Derrida, 1981, p. 63) to the reader.

“[The] laws and rules [of a text] can never be booked, in the present, into anything that could rigorously be called a perception.” (Derrida, 1981, p. 63)

The deconstructionist approach to epistemology contains a downright juvenile understanding of philosophy, because it has no noble aim; no intention to improve the Now. As philosopher, critic of postmodernism and author of the book *Explaining Postmodernism* Stephen Hicks explains:

“There is no endgame for the most consistent and ruthless applications of Postmodernism: [...] *Everything flows, nothing abides, there is no ultimate standard of goodness or ultimate goal toward which we can have progressive aspirations.* Instead, the postmodern project just is to point out the futility of all previous attempts in Western and other traditions.” (Hicks, 2017)

Deconstructing the configurations on a chess board and declaring the rules invalid is no way of setting up a better game. The naïve postmodernist belief in the rebirth of a liberated creative spirit as a result of discarding principles rips apart the pillars of objectivism and traditional aesthetics that sustain an incredibly successful and dynamic liberal culture that has made major progress in terms of alleviating poverty and bringing forth revolutionary inventions to improve the lives of so many people (Miller; Kim; Roberts, 2018, cf. pp. xiii ff.). Postmodernism causes chaos without instilling new order and calls it art or philosophy; when, in reality, all it does is ridicule and reject the very concepts of art and philosophy and cannot be regarded as such itself. Postmodern self-proclaimed philosophers openly display the worthlessness of their own mental ballet to make a point about their utter lack of respect for rational philosophy.

Postmodernism glorifies chaos as a provocative dismissal of patterns and hierarchies. Pretentiously, it claims to propose an intellectual challenge, a fascinating revolution of

the mind. But the nihilistic ideology lacks all substance and defies every standard of philosophy. It propagates a spiteful indifference towards values and thereby contributes to the destruction of meaning. That makes it profoundly narcissistic. Attention, caution and empathy are no virtues in the minds of those who express no appreciation. Postmodernism strips every person of the value in their genuine efforts to contribute something productive and good, something *better*, to the world.

Although we may be able to give the postmodernists some credit for offering the inspiration to question cultural notions which we instinctively assume to be absolutes and thus potentially making us more receptive to new ideas, the fact that “radical” postmodernism must end in nihilism paves the way to a disoriented, self-destructive society. This has become evident in the path that it has taken, as will be shown in the subsequent chapters.

4.2 Postmodern Socialism – Fighting the Grand Narrative

Out of the postmodernist presuppositions, a Marxist take on social constructionism under a Grand Narrative grew in an ideological sub-branch of postmodernism. The socialist postmodernists extended the reductively materialistic Marxist criticism of economic oppression, so as to include and specifically focus on a cultural power struggle that is said to be innate to the Grand Narrative.

By pushing empiricism and rationalism out of the way, postmodern absolute relativism then makes space for an egalitarian approach to organising society under an alternative “narrative”: One that elevates identity politics over objectivism to alleviate the power struggle that the Grand Narrative implicates. It is an immature, irrational chain of thought, something along the lines of “If nothing is capital T True anyway, we might as well play a game that is more convenient to me than the one that works under the prerequisite of Truth”. Reasoning with a rigorous postmodernist or a postmodern socialist – thus using the scorned tools that the oppressive Grand Narrative has provided – becomes impossible. As postmodernist Stanley Fish has said

“[Deconstruction] relieves me of the obligation to be right ... and demands only that I be interesting.” (Fish, 1989, cited by Hicks, 2004)

Postmodernists reject all value and competence hierarchies just like Marx questioned the value of different kinds of labour and the supposedly unjustifiable economic privileging of certain forms of work over others. His Labour Theory of Value states that work should

be honoured based on the hours of work that were required to produce the commodity which fails to take into account virtually all of the consumers' subjective motivations to desire a product (cf. chapter *The Impracticality of Socialism – The Knowledge Problem*). But the postmodern socialist attributes all decision making that leads to inequality of outcome in any domain to oppressive forces at a sub-conscious level driving a systemic Grand Narrative that ought to be destroyed. In the 1971 debate on “Human Nature: Between Justice and Power” between Noam Chomsky and postmodernist Michel Foucault whose ideas became central to the development of the postmodernist movement, Foucault argued that

“the idea of justice in itself is an idea which in effect has been invented and put to work in different types of societies as an instrument of a certain political and economic power or as a weapon against that power. But it seems to me that, in any case, the notion of justice itself functions within a society of classes as a claim made by the oppressed class and as justification for it.” (Foucault, 1971)

Hierarchical structures even in societal morality, he claims, are an utterly unjustified social construct. Of course, people are not creatures of all-encompassing wisdom who have a perfect understanding of their own and the world's needs. But our capacity for bad decision making, coupled with our ability to learn from our mistakes, is part of what makes us *human* and what contributes to progress over time. And who if not “us” as individuals acting freely gets to define and ascribe value instead? That is the exact fundamental problem of socialist ideas that emerge as a consequence of the realisation that we are not impeccable moral agents. If the problem is human inability to recognise *actual* worth, only an omniscient God-like authority could fulfil the function of steering society towards a *better* way of organising itself. As Mises put it, the task of instilling perfect order that the socialist system is faced with poses an unconquerable challenge to the human spirit that “even angels could, if they were only equipped with the human mind” not overcome (Mises, 1978, pp. 420 ff.). And certainly not a government comprised of the same incapable apes that produced the whole chaos in the first place – or even worse: a self-centred, power-obsessed self-proclaimed morally pristine Elite with no good intentions (cf. chapter *Postmodernist Denial of the Proclivity to Abuse Power*).

4.3 The Postmodern Victim

The aforementioned *victim mentality* has surfaced again in recent years. Among other reasons, this is probably the symptomatic effect of feelings of inadequacy that millennials in particular experience from having been spoiled with a privileged upbringing in a sheltered environment: With virtually no external problems to fix in the comfort of a liberal Western society, internal disorder is magnified significantly, thus heightening the sensitivity to self-doubts. In circumstances where interference with the external (i.e. political engagement) is more necessary, a sense of purpose can be extracted from instant public gratification (i.e. verbal praise, awards and other symbols of honour). Self-improvement, in contrast, rarely makes a public impression in the short term, but it enables people to implement their potential in the world with more caution and wisdom over time. The prioritisation of self-improvement thus requires the humility to identify personal flaws and gaps in knowledge and the discipline to accept the delay of gratification from diligent learning.

4.4 Postmodern Social Justice Culture

The socialist character of the postmodern ideology has primarily manifested itself in a radical push for “social justice”, first in the cultural, but with increasing collectively realisable force also in the political realm. Social justice issues which postmodernists have brought to the forefront of public discourse typically concern the oppression of identity groups by the prejudiced rest of the popularity. The roots of postmodern social justice culture lie within the third-wave feminist movement (Brunell; Burkett, 2018). But with all major hurdles in women’s way (e.g. the lack of a right to vote) having been overcome by the 21st century, feminism steadily lost its relevance and branched out into other social justice territories, including racial inequality, homophobia and transphobia (Horn, 2013). The contemporary social justice movement takes on the question that had been circulating in the public discussion of the socialist equality of outcome ideology for decades, but that its targeted proponents used to seem to shy away from: Why should equality of outcome end with economic equality? What about unequal representation in influential domains of high competence or authority? What about unequal public speaking opportunities? What about unequal results of students in educational facilities? The social justice movement confronts those exact questions, distinguishing groups of people only on the basis of superficial characteristics such as gender, race and sexuality.

Free market determinants of success, i.e. intelligence and conscientiousness (Higgins; Peterson; Pihl; Lee, 2007), are deliberately taken out of the equation. Beyond that, bringing them up is regarded as a sign of *apologism* for systemic discrimination. Often, social justice proponents resort to statistical evidence to support their claims, without specifying, however, why group identity discrimination must be the decisive factor accounting for the observable outcome⁴. Examples of potential indicators of oppression from the social justice proponents' perspective include:

- Female under-representation and lack of racial diversity in scientific fields
- The gender “pay gap”
- Under-representation of LGBT+ characters or lack of racial diversity in the popular culture
- Higher arrest rates of black compared to white citizens
- Exclusion of transsexual women with biologically male physical predispositions in competitive sports
- Public criticism against legal transitioning of “transgender” children

Ideologists then managed to unite the many fragmented social justice groups that concerned themselves with the discrimination against different identity groups and revive feminism itself by advocating for the necessity of targeting all social justice issues simultaneously under the umbrella of “intersectionality” (Rand, 2017). The popularity of one social justice issue was from then on secured by being interwoven with all other social justice issues. Whoever acknowledges the validity of some, but not all issues is subjected to harsh criticism of their “immoral” stance and immediately alienated. The community is held intact by making full commitment an implicit entry requirement, in trade for the acknowledgment of everyone's own self-proclaimed victim status.

The arbitrary acceptance of *all* “victim grievances” into the “collection” of social justice issues is another way that the nihilistic underpinnings of postmodernism are expressed in social justice culture. Everybody can find a part of their identity that makes them statistically, but not necessarily as an individual, less likely to achieve certain goals. Even identity traits that are the consequence of personal choices (e.g. obesity) are now being embraced by the movement as factors that make a person worthy of their victim status

⁴ To examine actual non-discriminatory factors that contribute to these disparities in detail would not only be difficult, if done thoroughly, in the face of the necessary investigation into *individual* motives; it would also distract from this paper's purpose of deconstructing the underlying ideology, rather than its symptomatic expressions in the topical public conversation. Sources to elaborate analyses of the individual matters will therefore be provided in the appendix.

(Hatch, 2016)⁵. This means that potential policies to achieve equity can be specifically designed in a way that weakens opponents to the responsible enforcing authority complex and benefits only those who are absolutely obedient. Whether out of naivety or resentment, the postmodern social justice movement is establishing a framework for tyranny.

Millennials of young age are especially susceptible to being drawn into the social justice movement: Their search for a direction in life and the desire for attention being devoted to the struggle of their being appeals to those who have yet to establish their role in the world. Choice paralysis in the face of countless possible career paths combined with the intense pressure to make the perfect decision at first try further contribute to insecurities and the *victim mindset*.

The postmodernist notion is radically destructive, revolutionary even: It dismisses valuable contributions from past accomplishments to the present and demands the abolishment of traditions with the aim of pushing for an intrinsically contradictory nihilistic idea of freedom:

All interpretations of identity and the world are equally valid.

With the dangerously illiberal implication:

All objections to subjective interpretations must be prohibited.

4.5 The Relationship Between Socialism and the Postmodern Social Justice Agenda

Despite its steady revival among millennials, socialism in its “old” form is certainly met with more scepticism especially in the US than it would have been if its tyrannical implementation under the likes of Stalin and Mao had never been attempted. To recapitulate: Socialism focuses exclusively on economic “oppressors” at the top of the economic success hierarchy whereas social justice ideologues have identified mostly unchangeable identity traits (i.e. race, sexuality, gender) as markers for “oppressiveness”. The fact that high paying positions are predominantly occupied by white males - which is largely attributable to them simply making up the majority of the working population - thus conveniently plays into the somewhat concealed socialist agenda within the new social justice ethos which basically calls for the “weakening” of that very identity group.

⁵ Also cf. NAAFA: the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance

The postmodernists' agenda intertwines cultural and economic socialism under the more positively connotated blanket of "social justice" - the implementation strategy makes it just distinguishable enough from socialism as it was put into practice in the 20th century to make it socially acceptable, but it pursues the same goal of governmentally enforced equity.

Though with the rise of social justice culture, politicians and social justice activists are indeed becoming increasingly willing to embrace the explicit socialist label as part of their agenda (Stockman, 2018). A prime example of socialist ideas resurging in the political sphere was Bernie Sanders' highly successful 2016 election campaign and open encouragement of "Democratic Socialism" as a political system worthy of active endorsement in today's Western society (Sanders, 2015). Hayek was vehemently opposed to the deceptive amalgamation of these terms which he elucidated in *The Road to Serfdom* with a quote by the French 19th century thinker Alexis de Tocqueville who draws a clear distinction between the liberating aim of individual equality in a democracy and the repressive restraint in the pursuit of collectivist equality that is put on the individual in socialism (Hayek, 1944, p. 47). Sanders was particularly popular amongst millennials (Gambino, 2016) and ended up losing only to Hillary Clinton who became the President nominee for the Democratic Party (Healy; Martin, 2016).

5. The Postmodernists' Obsession with Power

5.1 Strategic Authoritarian Powerplay

In an effort to take advantage of the popular feminist/social justice culture, Clinton also heavily relied on her being a woman and potentially the first female president in the history of the US as part of her campaign. The “gender argument” is completely devoid of politically relevant content and has no actual persuasive power. In fact, it is no argument at all, but ironically, that makes it irrefutable: Its rather impressive appeal to the voting population (Friedman, 2016; Kantor, 2016), considering Clinton’s stark unpopularity amongst Americans (Camacho, 2017), was only generated by the exorbitant glorification of its symbolic value for the reinforcement of the cultural shift towards the postmodern social justice culture.

Virtue-signalling (cf. definition provided by the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary & Thesaurus), as the public recognition of social justice issues is referred to (usually with the specific goal of appealing to the social justice community for personal benefit), is a conveniently simple way for politicians to attract voters. It requires virtually no risk-taking to adopt the mainstream agenda and it works to distract from potentially more controversial policy suggestions.

This is where power comes into play as one of the fundamental driving motivations behind the postmodernist socialist agenda. It appears almost as though members of the more privileged “oppressive” social milieu can rectify the sinfulness of their identity by openly subscribing to the social justice ideology themselves. In fact, they are explicitly advised to use their “privilege” - a term which in the postmodernists’ understanding is synonymous to “power” - to raise awareness for social injustices (Love, 2016; Sheffield, 2017). This way, the individual possession of power can be justified as a tool for the collective movement towards a totalitarian society of absolute equity. Explicit economic socialists had and still have the equivalent propensity to justify the concentration of power in the hands of a governmental authority complex. But Hayek recognised the danger of that notion far outweighing that of the perceived inequality in a liberal society:

“The power which a multiple millionaire, who may be my neighbour and perhaps my employer, has over me is very much less than that which the smallest functionaire possesses who wields the coercive power of the state, and on whose

discretion it depends whether and how I am to be allowed to live or to work.”
(Hayek, 1944, p. 108)

By replacing the multiple millionaire with a person whose identity allegedly provides them with unfair privileges, the same argument can be made against the enforcement of identity-related policies. Mises characterises the wish to organise humanity as a downright delusional obsession⁶, because it would inevitably first require the destruction of the “living societal organism” (Mises, 1922, pp. 265 ff.). The potential for governmental corruption leading in that direction by capitalising on social justice issues is fairly self-evident: Considering the insignificance of social justice issues when put in perspective, social justice propaganda is dangerously populist. Actual public discussions to be had about more challenging topics (e.g. international relations, war interference or the national debt) that should be brought to the forefront so that responsible political authorities can be held accountable for their actions are kept to a comparative minimum. The field of social justice is – because the categorisation of identities and the determination of the “severity of victim status” is so arbitrary – virtually indefinitely exploitable and can therefore always be resorted to as a means of directing attention away from other issues.

5.2 Postmodern Socialists’ Denial of the Proclivity to Abuse Power

Though the *victim mentality* which lays at the bottom of the social justice ideology is pathetic in that it poses a personal obstacle, it is not dangerous in and of itself. However, the unsophisticated absolutist division of society into oppressor and oppressed implicates the promulgation of a false sense of victim innocence: All faults of the oppressed are excused by their pitiful socio-economic status, the attainment of which must not be considered a fault of their own. The consequential assumption is that if only the oppressed were given the power, their former victim experience would equip them with the moral wisdom to apply it justly and with the necessary moral restraint. If only the oppressed were to rise to the top, they would bring about the aspired goal of equality of outcome amongst the people. Accordingly, socialism’s past failures must have been the result of the *wrong* people having been empowered. An unforgivable slide of hand; but one which we would know how to avoid in today’s intellectually superior Western society.

⁶ Original German expression: “Wahn”

But is it truly as simple as that? Have we reached the point of being able to identify the *right* victims whose voices and actions we ought to elevate above all others? Does victimhood imply innocence?

Perhaps the most shocking, but all the more important and insightful counter-example has been provided by the Russian novelist, historian, mathematician and Nobel Prize (1970) recipient Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. In 1945, on the grounds of having made disrespectful remarks about Stalin in private correspondence with a friend which was discovered by the censorship in the Soviet Union, he was sentenced to eight years in a detention camp (Solzhenitsyn, 1970) where he would suffer the miserable conditions of starvation and exhaustion from strenuous work without purpose. But in spite of the terrors which he lived through, giving him every conceivable reason to wallow in bitter resentment and trauma for the rest of his life, he emerged from the circumstances a more self-reflective and morally strengthened person. Solzhenitsyn's legacy in his "main" work (according to Solzhenitsyn himself (Cohen, 1974)) *The Gulag Archipelago* is not merely that he exposed the true horrors of the prison camps in the Soviet Union. It was his refusal to construe himself as a victim of fate whilst being at the pinnacle of his suffering, and his willingness to look for *responsibility* within himself. Solzhenitsyn was prepared to take on all the undeniable evil around him as a consequence, in part, of his own minor and major decisions in life. He had the incredible moral courage to reflect on his own faults and recognise the responsibility not just of the obvious adversaries Stalin and Lenin, but that of the "average" adherent to the socialist ideology: Each of their seemingly insignificant moral mistakes which they had committed, fully aware of their reprehensibility, or inaction in the presence of evil, all of which had contributed to the grand catastrophe that was the tyranny in the Soviet Union.

"If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?" (Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, 1973, cited by Susanka, 2015)

Solzhenitsyn had taken the idea of the Jungian "shadow" to its ultimate conclusion and practiced that which the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung believed to be a necessary prerequisite for establishing a firm understanding of oneself and one's intrinsic views on morality. The "shadow", according to Jung, are all the morally dubious aspects of a person's character which often lie somewhat concealed beneath one's conscious

comprehension of morality. But because the “shadow” does inform the person’s conscious actions, its presence ought to be acknowledged and the implications of that handled accordingly. Additionally, Jung even went as far as to suggest that the more the individual tried to suppress and isolate the “shadow” from the conscious, the more abhorrent and “denser” it was (Jung, 1958, p. 76). In contrast, only if the individual was willing to confront their internal “shadow”, they would have the potential to make positive contributions to the world:

“[...] if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day.” (Jung, 1958, p. 83)

Decades prior to Jung’s time, the early French free market economist and classical liberal Frédéric Bastiat had already criticised the socialist’s denial of that which accurately fits Jung’s description of the “shadow” amidst the socialist’s ideas about justice. In his work *The Law*, Bastiat pointed to the hypocrisy of the socialist who vehemently criticises value hierarchies which evolve in a society where people are free to act as they wish, thereby insinuating that man is inherently immoral, and yet fails to consider his own moral flaws.

“Since the natural tendencies of mankind are so bad that it is not safe to allow them liberty, how comes it to pass that the tendencies of organizers are always good? Do not the legislators and their agents form a part of the human race? Do they consider that they are composed of different materials from the rest of mankind?” (Bastiat, 1850, p. 46)

Scrutiny of the “other” with disregard to one’s own imperfection can only end in collective denial, even of the greatest evils committed by mankind. Time and time again we are reminded to “never forget” the Holocaust, and rightfully so. But perhaps the exact plea is not made quite clear. Precisely what is it that we ought to remember? The people who died, though their number by far exceeds our capacity to even begin to understand their extent? The man behind the mass murder, Hitler himself? Certainly, those are important parts of the story. But what is the central message to be extracted from the terrifyingly pathological events of the past; be it World War I or II, the holocaust, the torturous camps and mass starvation in the Soviet Union or the despicable treatment of disobedient citizens in Maoist China?

To put it in professor for psychology and clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson’s terms who asked himself this very question and closed one of his recent public lectures with these words:

“What’s to remember is “That’s what people can do. And *you* are one of them!
And if you don’t understand that *you* would do that – then you don’t know
yourself.” (Peterson, 2017)

6. Power in Language

6.1 Logocentrism

Jacques Derrida observed the problem that everything, our entire interpretation of reality, is manifested in our subjective language and referred to this phenomenon as “Western logocentrism”. He thus inferred that we simply do not have access to such a thing as “objectivity”.

“What is called "objectivity," scientific for instance [...], imposes itself only within a context which is extremely vast, old, firmly established, or rooted in a network of conventions ... and yet which still remains a context.” (Derrida, 1977, p. 136)

According to the postmodern theory, we are progressively knitting the fabric of that which we falsely assume to be an objective account of reality by exchanging interpretive viewpoints in a constantly ongoing power dialogue. “High power groups” are hence automatically privileged in a society’s “narrative”. As an outspoken critic of the allegedly existing power advantage that is granted to men only in society, Derrida coined the neologism “phallogocentrism” – an extension to his concept of “logocentrism” in combination with “phallogocentrism” (male dominance) – which describes the subordination of the female in our language. Particularly influential French feminists such as Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous applied the concept to their own philosophical approaches to feminism and encouraged what they referred to as “écriture féminine” (feminine writing): The attempt to transgress the phallogocentric constraints in writing and accurately convey a purely female experience (Mambrol, 2016). Female elevation in language and culture can thus be regarded as the original aim at the centre of the postmodernist social justice ideology. The idea of “phallogocentrism” is the direct precursor of the presently more commonly used “patriarchy”. In her book “Theorizing Patriarchy” modern day feminist Sylvia Walby, professor of sociology and UNESCO Chair in Gender Research, explores its roots and manifestations in society under her definition

“[The Patriarchy is] a system of interrelated social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.” (Walby, 1990, p. 20)

Notable is the particular emphasis which she explicitly intends to put on “social structures”, demonstrating her postmodern social constructionist view of power disparities.

The concept of men expressing power in language specifically is now being revisited under the term “mansplaining”: It was initially inspired by Rebecca Solnit’s essay “Men Explain Things to Me: Facts Didn’t Get in Their Way” in 2008 in which she shared her experience with being talked down to in what she perceived to be a *typically male* condescending manner (Solnit, 2008). The inherent generalisation of all men makes the term “mansplaining” a convenient tool for suffocating opposing male viewpoints. Because every word coming from a man’s mouth must inevitably serve the phallogocentric Grand Narrative.

But in opposition to the social constructionist theory about the development of language and a linguistically mediated Grand Narrative, more recent research findings actually indicate that humans possess an innate predisposition to learn or independently develop certain specific structural attributes of language across cultures. Noam Chomsky who is said to be the most influential linguist alive today refers to this phenomenon as a Universal Grammar which explains why we can identify grammatical correctness even in non-sensical phrases (Dovey, 2015). In the new study, which indicates the validity of Chomsky’s theory, test subjects were presented with audio samples of grammatically correct sentences (e.g. “New York never sleeps”, “Pink toys hurt girls”) and word lists (e.g. “eggs, jelly, pink, awake”) both spoken in English and Mandarin Chinese. The study showed significant differences in the subjects’ brain activity when having to process full sentences as opposed to word lists, even though all indications of grammar (e.g. voice intonation cues) were removed. Researcher David Poeppel evaluated the findings in the official press release:

“Because we went to great lengths to design experimental conditions that control for statistical or sound cue contributions to processing, our findings show that we must use the grammar in our head. [...] Our brains lock onto every word before working to comprehend phrases and sentences. The dynamics reveal that we undergo a grammar-based construction in the processing of language” (Poeppel, 2015, cited by Dovey, 2015)

Thus, it is probably reasonable to assume that the central skeleton of language is not implicitly polluted with a phallogocentric substructure which would essentially make us victims of inevitable “phallogocentric” mind-control from within.

6.2 Social Justice Terminology

Nonetheless, explicit language utterances and terminology can have a strong impact on perception and behaviour. Aware of the remarkable uniting effect of labels which appeal to the desire to become part of a social community, the social justice movement has enriched the public discourse with many neologisms, social media “hashtags” and phrases, some of which have already been mentioned. Examples include, but are not limited to: “patriarchy”, “white/male supremacy”, “heteronormativity”, “feminism”, “Black Pride”, “#Black Lives Matter”, “#MeToo”, “#HeForShe”. Beyond the introduction of new “buzzwords”, however, the movement has also steadily transformed the intrinsic meaning of pre-existing terminology to match the prerequisites of the new “narrative” which it aims to enforce. The continued usage of socially acceptable and positively connotated terminology makes the ideology *appear* more reasonable, because old associations with the term remain, as they take more time to catch up with the alteration.

One of the most tragically misconstrued concepts is “identity”. A person’s identity encapsulates the unfathomably complex entirety of their multi-dimensional being, essentially making it the most individualistic idea conceivable. To reduce identity to such trivially simplistic and irrelevant features as race or gender and to then draw conclusions about the person’s potential of achievement in the world is appallingly discriminatory by definition.

Another example is the word “truth”: Its meaning has been altered in certain contexts such as biological truth with regards to gender to describe a “personal” or anecdotal truth based on subjective feelings, thus distracting from the fact that the original concept of objective truth has already been rejected (cf. Finch, 2014). Similarly, “political correctness” suggests that some utterances are of higher validity than others, presupposing that “correctness” is synonymous with “truthfulness”. But in the colloquial sense in which the social justice movement has interpreted the term, correctness is inextricably tied to “non-offensiveness”. Truthful speech is thus required to adhere to the dogmatic rules of “social justice” – which in itself serves as another euphemistic embellishment of the ideology whilst being an absolutely ill-defined concept: Its goal of “justice by equality” deliberately conceals the harmful underlying radical authoritarianism that is supposed to bring about equality of outcome which Hayek points out in his work *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*:

“Thus, use of the term “social” becomes virtually equivalent to the call for “distributive justice.” This is, however, irreconcilable with a competitive market order, and with growth or even maintenance of population and of wealth.” (Hayek, 1988, p. 118)

In a discussion on the TV show *Firing Line*, Hayek argues against the notion that a societal phenomenon like inequality of economic outcome is inherently unjust, as justice is a matter of individual action.

“I can be just or unjust towards my fellow man but the conception of a "social justice", to expect from an impersonal pressure which nobody can control [i.e. the government] to bring about a just result, is not only a meaningless conception, it is completely impossible.” (Hayek, 1977)

Although unaware that the “social justice” agenda’s most influential time was yet to come in the form of an identity politics movement with an essentially socialist sub-narrative in the 21st century, Hayek was right to be wary of the popular term and its arbitrary application. His conclusion on the issue accurately foreshadows current societal and political developments:

“What we have to deal with in the case of “social justice” is simply a quasireligious superstition of the kind which we should respectfully leave in peace so long as it merely makes those happy who hold it, but which we must fight when it becomes the pretext of coercing other men. And the prevailing belief in “social justice” is at present probably the gravest threat to most other values of a free civilization.” (Hayek, 1976, p. 230)

Hayek also concerned himself with the corruption of the terms “liberalism” and “freedom” by the increasingly socialism-inclined political left wing, noting that it had turned out to be “one of the most effective weapons of socialist propaganda” (Hayek, 1944, p. 47). The “new freedom” as embraced by the socialists, he explained, served as just another tool for the authoritarian movement to be relatable to the liberals, “and they exploited it to the full” (Hayek, 1944, p. 47). The postmodern social justice argument that true freedom in a liberal society is only granted to those who are not restricted by the burden of their oppressed identity can be directly traced back to the original Marxist argument which is that only those unrestricted by the necessity to work for their survival, the bourgeois, can be regarded as truly free. As pointed out before (cf. chapter *The Immorality of Socialism*), however, Mises correctly noted that the fact that survival

requires work is a condition set in place by nature itself, making it impossible to be overcome by a socialist society (Mises, 1922, p. 173). The postmodern identity politics alternation of that argument is more difficult to disprove, because it is perfectly comprehensible, given that systemic identity oppression is indeed taking place. In a racist society that undeniably limits opportunities of the oppressed identity group, said group is less free than the rest of society. It is thus necessary to first disprove the prevalence of an oppressive Grand Narrative that is said to enable systemic discrimination – but by dismissing arguments against that idea as direct reinforcers of the Grand Narrative, social justice postmodernists have shielded themselves from that threat to their ideology.

6.3 The Moral Superiority Game - Postmodernist Debate Technique

In order to appear morally superior despite a lack of factual evidence to back their claims, postmodern socialists make a strategic effort to claim the moral high-ground in the debate. To maximise the emotional appeal of their ideological standpoint, they antagonise their opponents and brand them with a label so socially unacceptable that their critics' arguments seem to lose all validity just by being associated to the shamed individual. Instead of providing substantial counter-arguments, postmodern socialists typically misconstrue the arguments of their opponents and reduce them to their allegedly immoral impact. Meanwhile, they hold them to a completely subjective standard of what meets the requirements for the sustenance of “social justice”.

Over the past few years, postmodern socialists have been vigorously pushing a vast expansion of the definition of the term “offensive” to include even formerly non-controversial factual realities (such as the existence of two distinct genders, cf. chapter *Exemplification: The Cathy Newman Debate*). By infusing common language with more and more restrictive rules, the postmodern socialists establish their dominance on the linguistic playground and sabotage their adversary's debate weapons. The postmodern socialist's opponent is forced into a linguistic maze filled with “forbidden words” whose touch instantly lowers the likableness of the debater. However, by adhering to the postmodern socialist's rules, critics of the social justice ideology only further empower the movement to continue the restriction of free expression. This puts the critic in a dilemma: He can either choose to operate within the rules that have been established by

the postmodernist ideologues and thus enable their continued manipulation of societal structures or he can embrace the risk of public denunciation due to the use of “problematic terminology”.

6.4 Exemplification: *The Cathy Newman Debate*

A paramount example of the social justice movement’s debate technique in practice was the discussion between BBC Channel Four journalist Cathy Newman and the aforementioned professor for psychology and clinical psychologist Jordan B. Peterson that attracted the public attention in January 2018 (Channel 4 News, 2017).

Jordan Peterson had his first “viral moment” back in 2017 when he openly condemned the new postmodern notion that different genders exist on a spectrum rather than a binary and that society should thus be obligated by Canadian law (cf. Canadian Bill C-16) to refer to individuals who identify as neither male nor female with non-binary pronouns (e.g. ze/zer, they/them) (Murphy, 2016). This sparked an immense outrage amongst advocates for the implementation of social justice policies in public law who accused Peterson of denying people who wish to be preferred by non-binary pronouns their “existence” (Yun, 2016). It is important to note, however, that he carefully emphasised that it was the entrenchment of compelled speech in the law which he rejected; not the voluntary consideration of pronoun preferences in private conversation on an individual basis (Peterson, 2017). Another topic of controversy that Peterson has concerned himself with in public discourse is the non-discriminatory manifestation of gender differences in the socio-economic square. This was the particular discussion topic of the Channel Four interview. The journalist confronted Peterson with income disparities between the sexes, pointing out the unfairness in light of the fact that men and women are known to possess roughly equal intelligence and competence on average and should thus be deserving of equal pay. Peterson refuted her argument by correctly identifying her mistake of drawing a causal connection between a hypothetical discriminatory societal attitude towards women in the workplace and women’s relatively lower income: He then went on to explaining that certain characteristic features of women in comparison to men, especially a naturally higher level of agreeableness (thus making them less competitive), and different career choices were more likely to account for the difference in economic outcome. It was Cathy Newman’s downright clumsy way of repeatedly rephrasing Peterson’s answers to assign a discriminatory motive to his claims wherein the deceitful

postmodernist debate tactic became so prevalent that the journalist found herself subjected to harsh criticism from the wider public after the debate: She initiated most of her responses with the phrase “So you’re saying that...”, followed by an inaccurate and incomplete portrayal of Peterson’s utterances.

Example:

Newman: “I’m hearing you basically saying “women need to just accept they’re never gonna make it on equal terms” – equal outcomes is how you defined it-”

Peterson: “No I didn’t say that, I said that equal-”

Newman: “If I was a young woman watching that, I would go “Well, I might as well just go and play with my Cindy dolls...”

Peterson: “I didn’t say that.”

Newman: “... and give up trying at school, because I’m not gonna get the top job I want, because there’s someone sitting there saying it’s not possible and it’s not desirable and it’s gonna make me miserable.”

Peterson: “I said equal outcome is undesirable. That’s what I said. It’s a bad social goal. I didn’t say that women shouldn’t be striving for the top or anything like that, ‘cause I don’t believe that for a second.”

Newman: “”Striving for the top” – but you’re gonna put all those hurdles in their way, as has been in their way for centuries, that’s fine, (*Peterson is shaking his head, laughing and repeatedly saying “no, no...”*) you’re saying that’s fine! The patriarchal system is just fine.”

Peterson then pointed out that Newman herself was a striking example for women having the ability and the necessary circumstantial support to achieve their career goals to which she replied that she had to work “quite hard” to get to that point. That, however, strengthens the argument that individual women are by no means limited by the statistically lower agreeableness of their identity group. Peterson pointing out that one of the characteristics that appear to have a positive impact on successfulness in the workplace (low agreeableness) happens to be typically more prevalent in men does not prevent women from adopting or even being born with that same trait.

Jordan Peterson did not put up with Cathy Newman’s efforts to reframe his hardly subjective interpretation of scientific data about gender differences in a way to make him appear sexist and continued to argue entirely outside of the emotional realm that she was trying to draw him into: When asked if he would welcome the eradication of the pay gap

between the sexes, instead of reassuring her that he was certainly not opposed to men and women receiving equal pay and thereby validating the question which was entirely irrelevant in context, he kept insisting that fairness was completely dependent upon the way in which this income equality between the sexes was supposed to be achieved. Fairness in the free market has nothing to do with gender and everything to do with individual effort and skill. Peterson's personal attitude towards income distributions as a product of differences between individual people simply did and does not matter.

Channel Four had not anticipated the negative feedback that they received from the audience as they seemed to have been entirely indifferent to Cathy's subtly accusatory interview style prior to releasing the footage, unaware that the audience would disapprove of such unprofessional behaviour which shows just how normalised this form of debating on an emotional rather than a factual level has already become in the mainstream media (Doward, 2018).

Towards the end of the conversation, Peterson and Newman touched on the issue of whether or not "offensive" speech ought to be legal and inadvertently instigated an interesting turn of the conversation:

Newman: "Why should your right to freedom of speech trump a trans person's right not to be offended?"

Peterson: "Because in order to be able to think you have to risk being offensive. I mean, look at the conversation we're having right now. You know, you're certainly willing to risk offending me in the pursuit of truth. Why should you have the right to do that? It's being rather uncomfortable."

Newman proceeded to make an awkward attempt at forming a cohesive response, but she herself recognised and openly acknowledged her moment of ultimate defeat and expressed genuine confusion about her initial ideologically influenced standpoint now that Peterson had unravelled and laid it out in front of her.

Peterson: "Ha! Gotcha!"

Newman: "You have got me, you have got me, I'm trying to... work that through my head."

Peterson: "It's about time."

Newman: "Yeah, yeah, it took a while, it took a while."

It should be noted though that Cathy Newman was a relatively "easy target" for the professor who had been studying the development of tyrannical structures through the

subtle infiltration of language for decades. And despite Peterson's strong efforts to extricate Newman from her steadfast subconscious identity politics mindset that was inhibiting her receptiveness to his arguments, she soon went back to propagating the politically correct agenda and making undifferentiated claims about men when she was hit with public criticism after the interview (Iqbal, 2018).

6.5 The Threat to Free Speech

A common notion amongst the social justice types is that they do not disavow the importance of "free speech", but that it is only "hate speech" which ought to be banned. The inherent misinterpretation of the pivotal adjective "free", implying the entailment of *all* speech, is once again overpowered by the pretentious emphasis on good will. By limiting exposure to controversial and "offensive" ideas, providing "safe spaces" (Weale, 2018) and "trigger warnings" (Lukianoff; Haidt, 2015) social justice proponents claim to protect marginalised groups from the reinforcement of the oppressive Grand Narrative; basically as a form of compensatory justice or "affirmative action" in societal discourse: "Oppressive" viewpoints must be censored to heighten the relative impact of others. In 1965, the philosopher, sociologist, political theorist and member of the Frankfurt School Herbert Marcuse wrote an essay on "Repressive Tolerance" in which he argues that the classical liberal conception of tolerance and free speech is, in fact, an untenably flawed approach to establishing true justice, because it is inherently biased towards the status quo. Free speech, he asserts, can only have a positive effect on the progression of society if it is truly rational and independent of external manipulative influences (e.g. the media and partisan authorities), whereas repressive tolerance assumes all freely expressed opinions to be equally worthy of consideration.

"[...] the stupid opinion is treated with the same respect as the intelligent one, the misinformed may talk as long as the informed, and propaganda rides along with education, truth with falsehood. This pure toleration of sense and nonsense is justified by the democratic argument that nobody [...] is in possession of the truth and capable of defining what is right and wrong." (Marcuse, 1965)

But resorting to prohibition or restriction of certain viewpoints prevents us from gaining a differentiated account of such controversial or what Marcuse labels as "stupid" idea aggregates, distinguishing between their individual good and bad aspects, and identifying the reasons why certain ideas are indeed morally or factually reprehensible. Restriction and prohibition, on the other hand, serve no educational purpose whatsoever and promote

naivety. The entire point of the right to free speech is to treat controversial ideas with the intellectual humility to consider their validity, because they might just have objectively higher value than we can detect with our subjective perception at this point in time. Many ideas that would have been denounced as “hate speech” in the past are now considered perfectly reasonable. The objection to slavery, for instance, could once have been classified as hateful to slave owners who were financially reliant on the preservation of legal slave ownership. Far too often, social justice proponents misidentify the fact that many past injustices and misconceptions have been overcome as sufficient proof that we – or the social justice types, that is – are now wise enough to tell right from wrong. This is an irresponsibly historically ignorant notion. In addition, by simply prohibiting certain ideas from being open to discussion and marking those who entertain them in public discourse as uneducated outliers, the social justice movement completely denies everyone outside its exclusive “bubble” their ability to reason. By downright de-humanising critics, the social justice movement creates a large category of people that, in the social justice proponents’ minds, is so fundamentally wrong on every level of analysis that only shutting them down by force can ensure progress towards a fair society, whilst no real intellectual progress has been made. Meanwhile, the key question, *who* ought to be in control of the stream of information which society ought and ought not to be subjected to instead remains an unanswered conundrum. In “Repressive Tolerance”, Herbert Marcuse makes an attempt at making a case for ascribing authority to the competent, but even his definition of this supposedly intellectually superior group of people is too abstract to be applied in practice.

“The question, who is qualified to make all these distinctions, definitions, identifications for the society as a whole, has now one logical answer, namely, everyone 'in the maturity of his faculties' as a human being, everyone who has learned to think rationally and autonomously.” (Marcuse, 1965)

The statement inevitably implies that the prerequisite for ascertaining the competent is the adherence to a personal standard of “ability to think rationally and autonomously” which Marcuse himself has prescribed in the first place. This is exactly the kind of narcissistic over-confidence in personal morality and knowledge that lays the foundation for excessive authoritarianism: The inevitable conclusion to the increasing public outcry against “hate speech” is the instantiation of restrictions on free speech in the law (cf, the enforcement of German NetzDG (online hate speech censorship) (Wolf, 2018; Rohleder, 2018), Canadian Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46) and recent discussion about section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act being revived (Platt, 2018)). In that regard,

in a conversation with Australian former Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson, Jordan Peterson expressed serious concern about enabling authority to apply restrictive policies on “hate speech”. He warned that they would thus inevitably be equipped with the power to define “hate” as they pleased; a power which ought not to be in the wrong hands:

“Here’s the answer to “*Who defines “hate”?*” Those people that you would least want to have define it. That would be the inevitable consequence of the legislation, because sensible people won’t have anything to do with that. People who are power *mad* will gravitate to that domain to make an ethical case to exercise their controlling power over language of other people.” (Peterson, 2018)

Furthermore, in his Nobel lecture *The Pretence of Knowledge*, Hayek made the important case that having the epistemological humility to extend tolerance to all ideas was in itself the best and essentially the only way to prevent the development of tyrannical narcissism:

“The recognition of the insuperable limits to his knowledge ought indeed to teach the student of society a lesson of humility which should guard him against becoming an accomplice in men's fatal striving to control society - a striving which makes him not only a tyrant over his fellows, but which may well make him the destroyer of a civilization which no brain has designed but which has grown from the free efforts of millions of individuals.” (Hayek, 1974)

And, as a study conducted by researchers at Duke University indicates, intellectual humility indeed appears to be a marker of the ability to evaluate arguments well and make sensible decisions (Jones, 2017).

On top of that, arrogantly dismissing counter-arguments by carelessly throwing around deeply pernicious accusations and insults such as “racist”, “misogynist”, “homophobe” or “Nazi” even, as though they carry no distinct meaning, makes it virtually impossible to distinguish between actual discriminatory ideologues with malicious intentions and moderate critics of the postmodern ideology. Polarisation on both ends of the political spectrum thus becomes invisible in the ocean of connotative chaos and meaninglessness. Even the mainstream media has adopted this tactic which is polemic at best and scaremongering at worst: Commenting on the excessive disparagement of President Donald Trump as “racist” by well-known public media outlets, the renowned conservative political activist, writer of seven books and editor in chief of *The Daily Wire* Ben Shapiro stated:

“It’s laziness and opportunism masquerading as bravery. And it only alienates Americans who would prefer to analyze events and statements with clear eyes.”
(Shapiro, 2018)

Being a controversial public figure himself, Shapiro has been banned from multiple universities which he was intending to speak at (e.g. cf. Bauman, 2018). In one case, the university (DePaul University) expressed concern about “security issues”, because left-wing opponents had threatened to respond with violent riots and was thus unwilling to invite Shapiro (Chasmar, 2016). Moreover, to have him host an event at the University of Berkeley, the university had to spend 600,000 USD on security alone (McPhate, 2017). Those are not isolated cases and it is certainly not the extremity and contemptibility of Shapiro’s views that would necessitate such an outrage. Even he – an orthodox Jew – is being referred to as a “Nazi” on a regular basis which shows just how little many protesters actually engage in proper research or conversation with their opponents to inform their views (Prestigiaco, 2017). Shapiro, on the other hand, always makes sure to start out his Question and Answer sessions after his speeches by allowing those who disagree with him to be the first ones to express their opinion and ask questions (Shapiro, 2017). To underline the frequency of incidences in which the social justice movement has interfered with free speech, without having to go into too much detail, the appendix will include an extensive list of similar exemplary occurrences as the ones delineated above.

Why is a position of dominance over language so attractive to the ideologue? Speech is not merely *expressed* thought. It also aids in the *construction* and *modification* of thought itself (cf. Peterson, 2017). This is especially true for discourse, when thoughts are exchanged to build upon each other and transform into something that is less chaotic and more refined as a result. To arrogate the power to impose an absolute interpretation means to *shape* collective thought. To exclude ideas from the realm of the “appropriate” means to *extinguish* thought. Freedom of speech is the principal right by which we defend all other rights, making the infringement of it the ultimate tool for manipulation. Weapons alone do not enforce ideologies; people who are genuinely convinced of an ideology’s supremacy enforce ideologies. The winner of the ideological war is the person who holds the prerogative of interpretation and fabricates the prevailing narrative. Because if the societal consensus has not been established in freedom, then it is not truth. It is ideology.

7. Postmodernist Reconciliation of Nihilism and Social Justice

7.1 The Postmodernist Paradox

Specked with contradictions, the postmodernist ideology inevitably forces its proponents into a state of cognitive dissonance. The nihilistic underpinnings of the postmodernist ideology can easily be dismantled by exposing the (inevitable) selective, inconsistent application in practice. The notion “everything is a social construct” suggests that reality and morality are entirely fabricated by people and that people can therefore adjust everything to serve their preferences. But even postmodernists who reject the existence of reality and universal morality live their lives as if they dismiss these very beliefs: The nihilistic claim “There is no such thing as truth” in itself implies the truth of that statement. In addition, in his book “Universally Preferable Behaviour – A Rational Proof for Secular Ethics” contemporary philosopher Stefan Molyneux argues that a similar case can be made about denying the existence of universal moral rules, even in absence of religious beliefs:

“If I argue against the proposition that universally preferable behaviour is valid, I have already shown my preference for truth over falsehood – as well as a preference for correcting those who speak falsely. [...] If there is no such thing as universally preferable behaviour, then one should oppose anyone who claims that there is such a thing as universally preferable behaviour. However, if one “should” do something, then one has just created universally preferable behaviour.”
(Molyneux, 2007)

According to Leon Festinger’s Cognitive Dissonance Theory, people who hold beliefs that do not match their actions experience feelings of discomfort and will therefore make an effort to reduce them (McLeod, 2018). Within the ideological community, mutual reassurance, as well as perpetual reinforcement from renowned authorities (e.g. media personalities, politicians) can sustain the illusory validity of grotesque hypocrisies.

What exactly is it that makes the adherence to the nihilistic philosophy of postmodernism attractive enough to be worth defending? As mentioned above, the absence of truth (as suggested by the postmodern nihilistic theory) validates the idea that we are mistaking reality for subjective social constructionism. Reality and morality impose certain potentially uncomfortable restrictions on people. However, if everything is a social

construct, anything can be justified under the notion that nothing is of actual universal value: For example, the idea of gender not being biologically set at birth simplifies the emotional experience of a transsexual person struggling with severe body dysphoria. If gender is a social construct, a man can choose to *be* a woman (not just *live as* a woman) and vice versa. Ironically, that same idea about the non-existence of gender and “right or wrong” simultaneously invalidates the transsexual experience of being born with the “wrong” biological sex.

The nihilistic foundation of postmodernism can also be used to solve the problem of socialism violating basic moral principles, because, in the nihilistic worldview, none of those principles can have paramount moral value. From the nihilistic perspective, the competition-based hierarchical structures in a capitalist society as a consequence of respecting moral maxims are unjustifiable. In the free market, diligence is a virtue that will almost certainly lead to more economic prosperity. If, however, in accordance with the postmodernist worldview, the value of diligence is a social construct, the postmodern socialist can argue that the fact that more diligent people are living a more comfortable life (due to financial stability) is unjustifiable. This lays the foundation for a postmodern approach to justifying the pursuit of equity:

Hard work is not universally superior to less work. Different professional fields do not have different value. Therefore, there is no universal justification for the different economic outcomes in a capitalist society in relation to personal choices with regard to effort and profession. Since no form of input (work) can be “better” or “worse”, the outcome ought to be equal as well.

Paradoxically, this postmodern nihilistic critique of capitalism in itself implies the existence of a “better” way to organise society, as well as a “better” way to live which necessitates *some* form of morality. This solidifies the idea that postmodernist socialism is fundamentally an ideology of rejection and resentment towards the existing system. It does not have the intrinsic coherence to be constructive.

But to then be able to advocate for socialism being the ideal *pragmatic* alternative to capitalism, postmodernist socialists resort to a form of utilitarianism as proposed by Bentham as their basis for argumentation on a moral level: The goal is to achieve “the greatest good for the greatest number of people”. The underlying assumption is that the redistribution of wealth and/or power in the hands of a few unjustifiably advantaged people will benefit the oppressed which, in the sum of their parts from the many different sections of the social justice community, constitute the majority.

Bentham's utilitarianism is not nested in fundamental universal moral rules. Its implementation requirements are in constant transition according to the desires of the majority and what the members thereof define as "good". In *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek correctly points out that the consistent collectivist can therefore justify any act of evil under that premise.

"The principle that the end justifies the means is in individualist ethics regarded as the denial of all morals. In collectivist ethics it becomes necessarily the supreme rule." (Hayek, 1944, p. 151)

Absurdly, it thereby directly proposes a potential justification for identity group discrimination.

The complete postmodernist line of argumentation for socialism could be summarised as:

*The absence of a universal truth and morality justifies the idea of pursuing the greatest good (as defined by the social justice movement) for the greatest number of people (presupposing that socialism is capable of achieving that goal) by **any** means because no universal moral principles can be harmed.*

One might even assume that the postmodern notion that our idea of what constitutes truth is an indefinitely modifiable social construct should evoke a sense of intellectual humility in its supporters. But postmodernists deliberately do not capitalise on the fact that, in absence of reality, no interpretation of the world can be "better" than anybody else's. Instead, the social justice movement has conjured an utterly unreasonable arrogance surrounding the question of how to *ideally* structure society considering that, without facts, feelings can prevail. The entire social justice *oppressor versus oppressed* agenda at surface level is designed to have its proponents revel in their self-righteous self-defined moral superiority. Postmodernism in each of its facets and branches is a poorly constructed system of unrefined ideas, patched with cherry-picked moral rules that can be twisted and dismissed so as to convey a personal image of moral purity with minimal effort.

7.2 The Dangers of Philosophical Inconsistency

The problem with the theory of reality being arbitrarily interpretable is its complete lack of value in terms of actual application. Criticising our current way of organising and integrating ourselves in the world without being able to provide a subjectively superior alternative makes the theory of postmodernism irrelevant for the "practical realm".

Postmodern relativism in itself is not enough to overthrow the current system, because it does not provide a viable alternative. Rather, it has the potential to tempt people into abandoning all values and preconceived ideas about the world and drive society into utter hedonistic chaos.

Nietzsche had the same concern about the declining popularity of Christianity. He followed up his famous utterance “God is dead” by predicting that the abandonment of a stable value system as provided by religion was doomed to result in nihilism:

“One believes it to be possible to get by with a morality with no religious background: But that necessitates the way to nihilism.”⁷ (Nietzsche, cited by Homille, 1932, p. 62)

“Naivety, as though it is morality that remains in absence of the sanctioning God. The “Hereafter” absolutely necessary if the belief in morality ought to be preserved.”⁸ (Nietzsche, cited by Röttges, 1972, p. 267)

But he further concluded that men would crave a set of values to function as a cohesive society – which indeed turned out to result in the dangerous uprising of the abhorrently pernicious ideologies of the 20th century that had their validity in state power: National Socialism and Socialism.

“What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism... For some time now our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe.” (Nietzsche, 1887/1888, cf. chapter *Preface*)

And precisely because the social justice postmodernists do not actually live in accordance with their nihilistic theory, because they do recognise the constraints around our interpretations of the world and acknowledge the validity of pain and suffering and the absence thereof being the preferable alternative, they, too, take it upon themselves to enforce their own ideology in pursuit of Utopia. They play “Pretend”. The social justice postmodernists do not seek morality in transcendental territory or personal responsibility, but in an institutional authority. Therefore, we ought to be wary of their ideological claims.

⁷ Self-translation; original German quote: „Man glaubt mit einem Moralismus ohne religiösen Hintergrund auszukommen: Aber damit ist der Weg zum Nihilismus notwendig.“

⁸ Self-translation; original German quote: „Naivität, als ob Moral übrig bliebe, wenn der sanktionierende Gott fehlt. Das „Jenseits“ absolut notwendig, wenn der Glaube an Moral aufrechterhalten werden soll.“

8. Dismantling the Postmodernist Power Narrative Doctrine – Implicit Bias

8.1 Implicit bias

The concept of “implicit bias” is an absolutely vital component of the identity politics doctrine which makes it deserving of its own chapter. Few people, even among social justice activists, would argue that explicit discrimination against historically marginalised groups has not declined significantly over the past decades. People of all ethnicities, genders, sexualities and religions are legally granted equal opportunities to succeed in Western countries (using the political definition of the “Western World” from the corresponding Wikipedia article), each according to his own aspirations. Individual cases of discrimination, of course, remain almost inevitable if freedom of speech ought to be preserved. But when pointed out, they are almost certain to receive the public attention that they deserve and consequences like social ostracism of the perpetrator will ensue. The fact that the social justice movement has taken over the mainstream media and Hollywood in itself is proof that the discrimination of minority groups is no longer an actively societally encouraged behaviour. The societal consensus is that unreasonable discriminatory behaviour is reprehensible.

Nevertheless, the social justice community still speaks of “systemic oppression”, indicating a societal problem that requires a collectivist approach to be solved (cf. Laxer, 2014). This notion of discrimination apparently being ineradicable in an environment of *freedom* brings us in immediate proximity of the idea that it can only be solved by governmental force – that is, the violation of the very prerequisites for a liberal society by modern standards (e.g. restriction of free speech).

“Implicit bias” describes the idea that members of the “oppressive” majority are unconsciously prejudiced against members of the minority (BBC News, 2017): They themselves are said to be incapable of identifying their oppressive power, because they are *living* and exuding it at all times, inevitably furthering the unjust power narrative. It brands entire identity groups with a postmodern version of the “original sin” and deceitfully disguises the profound malevolence in the stigmatisation of the “oppressors”. Accusations of racism, misogyny, etc. are downplayed as not being an assault against the “oppressors” individual conscious choices, but against an unconsciously biased mindset that they have yet to accept so that they can *unlearn* their deeply engrained biases. These accusations are rooted in spiteful envy of the more competent, but the compelling

idea of them being justified, even if the targeted person has never actually demonstrated explicitly discriminatory behaviour, satiates both the desire for an outlet for accumulated resentment and the thirst for external validation of personal moral purity.

“Implicit bias” and the idea of unearned innate privilege are not identifiers of societal problems. They are silencers. A decent case can be made that a severely unconsciously prejudiced person whose negative biases clutch onto their sanity like a mental illness would not have the basic mental clarity to express valid debatable opinions. The prerogative of interpretation is therefore handed over to “low-power identity groups”: Only their subjective experience may count as valid, because logic and objectivity are merely *tools* of the oppressors anyway. “Implicit bias” is a diagnosis that establishes the ground for manipulative interference with people’s minds in a supposedly altruistic attempt to “better” their view of the world.

Social justice defenders indeed seem to believe it to be possible that either they or a representative of their ideology could possess the absolute knowledge to uncover even unconscious biases among people and determine the necessary steps to alleviate the consequential systemic oppression. If errors were to be kept to a minimum when identifying the existence and severity of unconscious biases in individuals in the “ideally socially just” society, the implementation of surveillance policies of tyrannical extent would be required. What “implicit bias” suggests is that people are incapable of acting virtuously because their innate sense of morality is fundamentally flawed. Therefore, they ought to be controlled on the most integral level of human existence by an authority of morally superior status: Manipulation of the mind.

8.2 The Implicit Association Test

But ways in which policies to tackle the problem of implicit bias in society could be formulated are already no longer unrealisable hypothetical ideas: In 1998, the “Implicit Association Test” was developed by Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji to supposedly empirically measure levels of different kinds of biases in test subjects. As the official IAT website states:

“The IAT measures the strength of associations between concepts (e.g., black people, gay people) and evaluations (e.g., good, bad) or stereotypes (e.g., athletic, clumsy). The main idea is that making a response is easier when closely related

items share the same response key.” (IAT website, FAQ section: *How does the IAT measure implicit attitudes and stereotypes?*)

In the case of the specific version of the IAT which is supposed to expose racial biases, test subjects are presented with a series of images of people with different skin colours, interspersed with either negatively or positively connotated words. The test subject is then asked to press a certain key when shown a black person or a negatively connotated word and a different key when shown a white person or a positively connotated word. After a while, the rules are reversed, requiring the person to make a connection between negative words and white people or positive words and black people. The test measures the time that the subject takes to make the test-appropriate associations and infers that a faster response indicates a pre-established tight link between two concepts in the brain.

Results have indeed shown the prevalence of statistically highly significant differences in “biases” towards black and white people in the US, in accordance with the initial hypothesis that Americans still tend to be “unconsciously biased” against black people. Hence Greenwald and Banaji concluded that

“given the relatively small proportion of people who are overtly prejudiced and how clearly it is established that automatic race preference [as measured by the IAT] predicts discrimination, it is reasonable to conclude not only that implicit bias is a cause of Black disadvantage but also that it plausibly plays a greater role than does explicit bias in explaining the discrimination that contributes to Black disadvantage.” (Greenwald; Banaji, 2013, cited by Goldhill, 2016)

And yet, as convenient and practicable a gateway to possible solutions to end all racist behaviour the IAT appears to be: Its psychometric reliability and significance are, bluntly put, pathetic. Its retest-reliability, which should for sufficient accuracy exceed 0.8, has been shown in different studies to lie somewhere around 0.4 (Singal, 2017).

But the most relevant question to be asked, considering that the test has been introduced into the business world as a virtually indispensable resource for the assessment of racist inclinations, is: “What do the measured implicit biases actually say about a person’s conception of morality and their practical application of it?” Arguably very little. The implicit insinuation of endorsers of the IAT is that the manifestation of racist behaviour is an unavoidable consequence of unconscious biases. Researchers who were critical of these claims conducted an extensive meta-analysis of the IAT’s predictive validity, but reported that IATs were “poor predictors of every criterion category other than brain activity” (Oswald; Mitchell; Blanton; Jaccard; Tetlock, 2013). Eventually, Greenwald

and Banaji admitted, though somewhat euphemistically, to the test's inadequacy in terms of predictive strength of racist behaviour on their own website and now openly discourage the use of the IAT in settings where certain test results could have more serious repercussions.

“We cannot be certain that any given IAT can diagnose an individual. At this stage in its development, it is preferable to use the IAT mainly as an educational tool to develop awareness of implicit preferences and stereotypes. For example, using the IAT to choose jurors is not ethical. [...] Using the IAT to make significant decisions about oneself or others could lead to undesired and unjustified consequences.” (IAT website, *Ethical Considerations*)

The IAT has been given tremendous credit in the media for its relevance and the wide range of possible application fields, including the instantiation of jury guidelines (Gayla, 2017) and police training⁹ to eliminate biases. On the basis of IAT test results, Google and Facebook decided to incorporate Unconscious Bias Trainings into their hiring programmes back in 2013 (Feloni, 2016; Reisinger, 2015). Just recently, the supposed relevance of such training camps and workshops for the business world was highlighted again when Starbucks announced that it was going to close its Canadian shops for one afternoon to provide Unconscious Bias Training to its employees (The Canadian Press, 2018). Reviewing extensive data on these training camps, Harvard sociology professor Frank Dobbin and associate professor of sociology Alexandra Kalev who studies corporate diversity efforts found that the positive effects of diversity camps were highly questionable and unstable, often lasting no more than two days (Dobbin, Kalev, 2016). Even Anthony Greenwald, developer of the IAT, came out with a remarkably pessimistic statement on Starbucks's decision to ascribe this much importance to the test:

“This training has not been shown to be effective, and it can even be counterproductive. It will appear that Starbucks is doing the right thing, but the training is not likely to change anything [...] Taking the IAT to discover one's own implicit biases does nothing to remove or reduce those implicit biases.” (Greenwald, 2018)

⁹ cf. website of the FIP – *Fair Impartial Policing*

8.3 Implicit Bias and Explicit Discrimination

Nevertheless, the question where the test went wrong is appropriate: Why does “implicit bias” not necessarily predict discriminatory behaviour?

First of all, the mere *awareness* of the existence of stereotypes might already be enough to explain a certain test result (Duguid; Thomas-Hunt, 2015). Most test subjects were probably aware of or even shared the hypothesis that Americans are generally more biased towards black people which might very well reinforce cognitive associations between negative concepts and black people and vice versa – without exposing the test subjects’ *actual* personal perception of black people.

Moreover, we form all sorts of biases as a result of habitual preference – “discriminatory” intuitive associations as detected by the test might simply be an immediate novelty response. Familiarity, comprehensibly, exudes security. The closer our social bond with a person is, the more likely we are to associate them with positive attributes. That, however, does not imply that we will exhibit unfair discriminatory behaviour when encountering people outside of our immediate social circle. Because we understand the magnitude of racism, explicitly racist behaviour is far more likely to be exercised as the product of an openly racist stance against the oppressed group. Actively disadvantaging a person *purely* on the base of their race (for example when hiring an employee) requires the action to be well thought-through. This alone should be enough to overcome a potentially existing intuitive bias. Flashes of images on a digital screen are incomparable to profound human interactions.

8.4 Postmodernists and Social Constructionism

Postmodernists, however, interpret implicit biases as the driving force behind the constant evolvement of the *power narrative*. The social constructionists even go as far as to say that scientific consensuses are the product of societal biases. Indeed, biases are formed on the basis of the inevitably evolving individual “map” of ideas about the world in our minds – that which is criticised as the oppressive Grand Narrative. Thus, the fundamental postmodernist critique of the current system derives immense persuasive power from the fact that it does rest on truthful columns:

1. Our culture is heavily linguistically mediated (logocentrism). In a liberal society in particular, free speech, rather than force, is the primary weapon for the

realisation of ideas. This explains the postmodernists' eager endeavours to strategically undermine it.

2. We do categorise the world in a manner that utilises averages and empirically verifiable predominance of certain phenomena.

Example: *There are two genders. Sex and gender are biologically associated with one another. Intersexuality and transsexuality are valid exceptions, but we should not make greater truth claims about sexuality and gender based on the existence of exceptions.*

Because of the second prerequisite, postmodernists deny the idea that free interpretation and free speech are valid means of approaching a greater truth. Instead, they sense an innate discriminatory attitude against exceptions that transcend normative categories. On the basis of that assumption, they make the case that our philosophical understanding of and approach to science is basically no more than unfair "stereotyping". But therein lies a false conflation of what constitutes as the norm with that which we regard as good.

This becomes more obvious when taking a look at a less emotionally charged example:

Humans have five fingers.

Is this a biologically valid statement? There are exceptions that are born with six fingers. Shall we therefore retract the earlier truth claim about humans as a biological category having five fingers? If so, can we therefore make no functional truth claims about categories based on averages at all?

No, and it is not necessary to come to that conclusion, because the acknowledgement of exceptions does not imply malevolent discrimination. Our societal account of reality may not be *perfectly accurate* (depending on what can even be defined as *perfectly accurate*), but it gives us a good depiction of the world at a high *enough* resolution to be functional and sensible for everyday interactions.

8.5 Conclusive Criticism against the Fear of Implicit Bias

The way in which we interpret the world is influenced by the implicit societal consensus about a matter, as well as personal experience and knowledge about statistical evidence. The point is, constant categorising, as well as stereotyping, is not a reprehensible, overly erroneous way of conceptualising the world. It is the *only* way. Obviously, stereotypes about group behaviours are not universally applicable and can be abused as justifiers for

a discriminatory attitude which is why openness to continual re-modification and refinement of our interpretive skillset is important as well. But with no presumptions about the world we are incapable of perceiving at all, because perception is always inextricably tied to interpretation: We ascribe pragmatic value to that which we see, and it is only because of that that we can process objective images of the world in the first place to then interact with it in a sensible manner.

In a way, “implicit bias” is inevitable. It is hardly changeable unless it is either attacked forcefully by dangerously authoritarian manipulative means or its validity and relevance in the real world changes: Assuming that it might be one contributing factor, reducing the crime rate of black people in the US which has been shown to be statistically higher than that of non-black citizens (cf. Worrall, 2014), for example, might very well shift societal intuitive implicit biases against black people in the opposite direction. But to narrow a potentially existing societal bias down to a supposedly systemically racist societal perception of black people because they are a “low-power group” is ridiculous. The comparatively higher crime rate of black people in America is not a racial, but a cultural phenomenon and implicit biases tend to be formed based on the entirety of the context. There is a vast perceptual difference between encountering a black-skinned businessman in a suit in an office during the day versus a black-skinned muscular young man wearing an old dark sweatshirt and trousers in the middle of the night in a statistically more dangerous part of the town. Yes, a cautionary attitude towards the latter might be utterly unnecessary. But it could also be the safer decision – not based on an “unconscious” prejudicial idea that there is a causal relationship between skin colour and dangerousness. In the same way that nobody would assume a causal link between dark hoodies and criminal behaviour. Evidence for correlations between identifiable characteristics and certain behaviours shape our unconscious worldview in the same way as evidence for causal relationships. But we can consciously be aware of the difference and act accordingly.

To conclude, “implicit bias” does not necessarily matter. Certainly not at an extent that is significant enough to justify the legal enforcement of thought policing. What ought to be judged on a moral level is how we act out our biases and preconceived ideas in the real world on an individual basis.

9. Conclusion

The takeaway message of this paper is not that oppression is not taking place. Of course people are oppressed. Of course people are victims of hardly imaginable pain and vicious bullying and discrimination on the basis of whatever part of their multi-faceted identity their narrow-minded predator believes to be deserving of attack. But the reasons or motivations that enable such tragedies to play out are by no means as easily identifiable as the postmodern socialist Power Narrative theory claims that they are. They are not limited to superficial identity traits and cannot be detected in economic outcome or arrest statistics and they must certainly not be attributed to the systemic failure of a society that is allegedly imprisoned by its own profoundly biased mind. To simplify the human spirit in a such a pernicious manner is a way of projecting one's own pathologies onto the world.

The decision to apply the deconstructionist method to the postmodern socialist ideology arose from my observation that it is remarkably fragmented across multiple dimensions: Its internal inconsistencies, which it seems to embrace as a tenable consequence of rejecting logic, complicate the recognition of a common theme that could possibly link relativist postmodernism to the moralising social justice movement. On top of that, the movement itself is divided not only into many different identity groups claiming the label of the oppressed, but it also has its representatives in the more influential media and political realm of social justice "allyship" who extract their benefits from acts of virtue-signalling. And yet, there is a unifying thread to be detected within the ideological complex which I set out to explore by disassembling it into its fundamental ideological and symptomatic components.

Postmodern philosophy had laid out an ideological substructure which a socio-economically socialist identity politics movement was keen to latch onto as a means of justifying resentment in the face of inequality. Furthermore, the validation of social constructionism as a consequence of the Power Narrative doctrine provides instant gratification for simple self-appeasing beliefs and mitigates the fear of ever being objectively wrong. Postmodern socialism is therefore not the consequential materialisation of a philosophically consistent line of reason, but rather one of convenience. This also accounts for the fact that individual ideologues themselves are rarely able to trace social justice back to postmodernism with comprehensive knowledge about the postmodern philosophers' propositions, since the movement, just like virtually any other ideological movement, is mostly not comprised of holistically aware intellectuals. Postmodern socialism triumphs as the sum of its parts and benefits from

internal social cohesion with common motivations: A desire for external approval of personal moral purity to mask resentful destructive envy.

Having completed the deconstruction, the question that remains is: What is to be done about the postmodern socialist ideology?

The postmodern social justice movement is so reluctant to have its romantic perception of the equality of outcome ideology challenged that it is unwilling to draw a causal connection between its ideological principles and the atrocities that have been committed under socialist regimes. Considering a conjunction between the apparently noble pursuit of a utopian ideal and the inevitability of the implementation ending in brutal tyranny seems almost paradoxical to the indoctrinated mind. This is the conclusion to which Mises came, though not with a pessimistic outlook on the future. Even historical facts, he said, because they were subject to interpretation, could not convince the confident socialist, and so long as his ideological theory appealed to him, the socialist would defend it obstinately. Nevertheless, Mises firmly believed in the strength of counter-ideas being able to outcompete indoctrination in the public debate:

“Only ideas can overcome ideas and it is only the ideas of capitalism and of liberalism that can overcome socialism. Only by a battle of ideas can a decision be reached.” (Mises, 1951)

However, the sensible alternative to postmodern socialist identity politics is not to engage in tribalism on the other side of the spectrum. Nationalistic pride that nests on group identity (e.g. “White Pride”) as opposed to values does not reinstate a fair balance within society as an antidote to contemporary left-wing tribalism – it only amplifies the identity politics ideology and contaminates the conflict. Agreeing to the rules of the ideologues and winning their game removes the ability to achieve true victory for society.

Instead, what classical liberalism promotes is the revivification of “identity” as an individualistic concept and the validation of the individual’s dignity and sovereignty. The price to pay for this autonomy, of course, is the burden of personal responsibility. But to set a utopian goal as the postmodern socialists do is to believe that people are incapable of self-improvement and that their imperfections ought to be muted by force. It may be a tempting fantasy that the postmodern socialist dismissal of value hierarchies relieves ideologues of the obligation to confront their unfulfilled potential and content themselves with “self-acceptance”, which is a particularly compelling idea to the unrefined and uncertain younger generation. In the long term, however, it does not spend redemption from insufficiency and nurses resentment.

Liberalism allows for the inevitable human propensity to fail, whereby it also grants the opportunity to emerge stronger and wiser on one's own account. Socio-economic socialism promulgates the preponderance of overtly paternalistic regulation and both economic and mental unfreedom. Though even if humans were willing to surrender to a utopian Hero and to be manipulated and restructured into morally impeccable utopian creatures, human authority would lack the omniscience to do so. The exploration of *right* and *wrong* is thus a matter of progressive discourse.

The protection of liberal values starts in the immediate social circle. Spreading supposedly utopian propaganda and criticising society is in no way more productive or empathetic than committing subtle acts of kindness; extending genuine compassion to individual people who themselves honour and exercise virtuous behaviour. To approach even opponents with an open mind and to speak the truth is to partake in the societal conversation without sacrificing one's integrity for the sake of public approval. To take responsibility for one's mistakes proves intellectual humility and allows the debate to go on, in the incremental pursuit of Truth.

And that is how, step by step, the individual improves the world.

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Patrick Worral, *Do black Americans commit more crime?*, published in Channel 4 News in 2014, accessed in April 2018, via <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-black-americans-commit-crime>

Tom Yun, *U of T community responds to Jordan Peterson on gender identities*, published in *The Varsity* in 2016, accessed in March 2018, via <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/10/03/u-of-t-community-responds-to-jordan-peterson-on-gender-identities/>

11. Appendix

11.1 Additional Examples of Free Speech Censorship

Social justice protesters interrupt a speaking event hosted by clinical psychologist and professor for psychology Jordan Peterson and assault students at Queens University:

James Barrett, *SJW Protesters Besiege Jordan Peterson Talk, Pound On Windows, Harass Girl*, published in The Daily Wire in 2018, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.dailywire.com/news/27891/watch-sjw-protesters-besiege-jordan-peterson-talk-james-barrett>

Violent “Antifa” riots at a speaking event at King’s College, hosted by politically outspoken social media personality Carl Benjamin who himself identifies as a classical liberal:

Eleanor Busby, *Fights break out at King’s College London as masked anti-fascist protesters storm talk*, published in The Independent in 2018, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/anti-fascist-protesters-kings-college-london-university-antifa-carl-benjamin-alt-right-talk-a8242181.html>

An enraged group of students interrupts a university lecture of openly liberal Bret Weinstein because he refused to cancel his classes on the university’s official “day of absence” which asks white students to stay away from the campus to reflect on their racist biases:

Bari Weiss, *When the Left Turns on Its Own*, published in The New York Times in 2017, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/opinion/when-the-left-turns-on-its-own.html>

Professor Nicholas Christakis and Erika Christakis at Yale University resign after being pressured to do so by students for defending the freedom to make potentially offensive (“culturally unaware or insensitive”) Halloween costume choices:

Conor Friedersdorf, *The Perils of Writing a Provocative Email at Yale*, published in The Atlantic in 2016, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/05/the-peril-of-writing-a-provocative-email-at-yale/484418/>

Google employee James Damore fired from Google for publishing a Google Memo on diversity, making the biological case that sex differences contribute to different outcomes in the workspace (source includes a thorough assessment of Damore's findings):

Jon Haidt, *The Google Memo: What Does the Research Say About Gender Differences?*, published in Heterodox Academy in 2017, accessed in May 2018, via <https://heterodoxacademy.org/the-google-memo-what-does-the-research-say-about-gender-differences/>

Conservative speaker Milo Yiannopoulos banned from speaking at UC Berkeley as thousands protest:

Julia Carrie Wong, *UC Berkeley cancels 'alt-right' speaker Milo Yiannopoulos as thousands protest*, published in The Guardian in 2017, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/01/milo-yiannopoulos-uc-berkeley-event-cancelled>

Mayor of London wants Silicon Valley to censor "hate speech":

Paul Bois, *London Mayor Sadiq Khan Tells Silicon Valley To Censor 'Hate Speech'*, published in The Daily Wire in 2018, accessed in 2018, via <https://www.dailywire.com/news/28143/london-mayor-sadiq-khan-tells-silicon-valley-paul-bois>

Journalist Eric Levitz acknowledges and defends the legitimacy of strong left-wing bias in the media:

Eric Levitz, *The Liberal Media Can Have Ideological Diversity Without Conservatives*, published in New York Magazine in 2018, accessed in May 2018, via <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2018/05/the-media-can-be-ideologically-diverse-without-conservatives.html>

11.2 Analyses of Alleged Markers of Identity-Related Oppression

Female under-representation and lack of racial diversity in scientific fields

- Thorough analysis of the harmful effects of forced gender and racial proportionality in the sciences:
Heather Mac Donald, *How Identity Politics Is Harming The Sciences*, published in City Journal in 2018, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.city-journal.org/html/how-identity-politics-harming-sciences-15826.html>
- Contrary to the gender oppression theory, in *more* egalitarian societies, less women tend to choose to work in scientific fields:
Olga Khazan, *The More Gender Equality, the Fewer Women in STEM*, published in The Atlantic in 2018, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/02/the-more-gender-equality-the-fewer-women-in-stem/553592/>

The gender “pay gap”

- Age, marriage status and hours worked account for majority of the pay gap:
Mark J. Perry, *New BLS report on women’s earnings: Most of the 17.9% gender pay gap in 2013 is explained by age, marriage, hours worked*, published in A Ideas in 2014, accessed in May 2018, via <http://www.aei.org/publication/new-bls-report-womens-earnings-17-9-gender-pay-gap-2013-explained-age-marriage-hours-worked/>
- On average, men work longer hours than women:
Sarah Ketterer, published in <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-wage-gap-myth-that-wont-die-1443654408>

Under-representation of LGBT+ characters or lack of racial diversity in the popular culture

- Glorification of films for their diversity alone defeats the purpose of merit-based film reviews:
Romesh Ranganathan, *Can we all just stop banging on about diversity in films?*, published in The Guardian in 2018, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/mar/24/diversity-in-films-a-wrinkle-in-time>

Higher arrest rates of black compared to white citizens

- “[A]cademics have noted that the proportion of black suspects arrested by the police tends to match closely the proportion of offenders identified as black by victims in the National Crime Victimization Survey.”
Patrick Worrall, *Do Black Americans Commit More Crime?*, published in Channel 4 FactCheck, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-black-americans-commit-crime>
- Disproportionately high single-motherhood rates amongst black people may account for higher crime and poverty rates:
Stephanie Garry, *Statistics don't lie in this case*, published in Politifact, accessed in May 2018, via <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2008/jun/23/barack-obama/statistics-dont-lie-in-this-case/>

Exclusion of transsexual women with biologically male physical predispositions in competitive sports

- Transsexual women are physiologically advantaged in sports which leads to unfair competition:
Olivia Caldwell, Professor of physiology says transgender athletes have advantage in speed, power, published in Stuff in 2018, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/other-sports/99434993/professor-of-physiology-says-trans-athlete-has-advantage-in-speed-and-power>

Public criticism against legal transitioning of “transgender” children

- Risks of letting “transgender” children transition at a young age:
Margaret Wentz, *Transgender kids: Have we gone too far?*, published in The Globe and Mail in 2018, accessed in May 2018, via <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/transgender-kids-have-we-gone-too-far/article16897043/>