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Of chaos and the reason we need it

23. Bundes- und Landeswettbewerb
Philosophischer Essay

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„Giving to each his own: That would be wanting justice and achieving chaos.“

- Friedrich Nietzsche:
Unschuld des Werdens 2, 613

Shivers! As I read Nietzsche's quote, I cannot stop myself from thinking of the German past, of everything the Shoa has shown us, and of everything it has proven wrong. I remember reading the beginning of this famous quote written inside the concentration camp Buchenwald and thinking of the anger I felt, reading this cruel justification of the systemic annihilation of more than 6.000.000 people. People, who were divided into classes and separated from one another. Making oneself seem superior while letting millions of Jews die in "inferiority." That is how this chaos that Nietzsche thought of must look, must feel like.

Again: "Shivers!" when only recently I watched a documentary concerning the current pandemic state in Germany and came across a report of a few protesters proudly wearing the yellow star and proclaiming themselves to be like the Jews who got murdered during the Shoa. Suddenly, I felt like the terrible, destructive *chaos* in our society is not as far away as we might think, and the past times might slowly be forgotten.

As a human being, I believe that it is the most fundamental thing to think of others as equal human beings. We are born equal – at least morally. Although our birth determines the genetic material we are built with, it neither defines who we will become in our future nor how "worthy" we are.

When generally using the expression of "giving" something to another person, we tend to think of someone as the giver and someone as the receiver. Especially in this case it is extremely difficult to ascertain this dependency, hence there are multiple ways of interpreting Nietzsche's claim. There might be a) the state assuring a general distributive justice and equality, or b) the exact opposite: justice of performance and individuality.

This quote – as Nietzsche understood it – refers to the human's free will and their ability to decide autonomously. Everyone can evaluate what is best for them and therefore act likewise. The human aspires to become the best version one can be and should try to accomplish it. The idea of wanting the most justice (as he negatively describes it in this quote) on the other hand offers the people the greatest possible form of justice as they become the judges themselves. Their behavior is managed and rated through them and their collective conscience. According to Nietzsche this thought of creating the most justice is wrong and leads to *chaos* which is why he prefers to focus on improvement instead of justice. At the same time, this also provokes the risk of prejudice and egoism, as your own decisions are likely to be the most beneficial to yourself. For the German philosopher, however, this is nothing particularly negative, because egoism is a pure form of doing something morally good to him.

When applying this morally good ambition of self-regulation and -management of the people to a societal structure, we slowly start to witness this idea getting more and more unethical and dystopian. As different interests clash and as we have to arrange ourselves with one another, there are two possible ways that we as humans can choose. On the one hand, we can try to step together, overlook our differences and combine all of our power to create something bigger than what every

single individual could create. This form is the cooperation. On the other hand, we can insist on what we have found so pleasingly easy and comfortable, but what disables a functional society: selfishness.

We easily forget that – apart from everything we accomplish and everything we achieve – the things that everyone should be given as the basis of life are human dignity and human rights. Therefore, as a global society, we dive into chaos when thinking of wealth or benefits instead of those rights as *everyone's own*. How dangerous these highly egocentric thoughts can be is often ignored in our everyday life. Nevertheless, it is our responsibility as human beings who have grown up in a privileged position to constantly remember that it is an injustice that we call justice in our minds. Although most of us internally realize, that it has to be wrong to put profit above human rights, we still cannot manage to act according to these beliefs. This misconception of *giving to each his own* leads us towards chaos and insecurity.

I vividly remember the pictures of young families and children starving in the migration camps of Moria or Samos and even more vividly the chaos in Europe as hundreds of thousands of migrants wanted to escape their hopeless future in 2015. In these situations, we encounter the limits of *giving each his own* and realize that by doing so, we take from others. Yes, it is right and necessary to ask the different European states about how many migrants they are willing to accept in their own country, but yet these must still wholeheartedly accept as many help-seeking people as they possibly can. That is how and only how we can talk about human rights as something *each* person is *given*. Because even though we will not be able to change the way how different people have different privileges, we must at least try our very best to achieve those things that should not depend on privilege: general humanitarian rights.

In the face of our biggest challenges – such as the migration crisis – we emerge to become a better form of ourselves. It offers us great opportunities to enrich humankind as one, cooperating kind by generally overcoming the limits of social disparities and classism. It is hence simply irresponsible to insist on a certain limitation of migrants to allow to step foot into your country when it is not even slightly reaching the peak capacities of this country. If we try to do everyone justice by giving them their own scope – their migrant limits for example –, we play and pay with the lives of many others trying to survive while we are trying to maintain our status of privilege. I am convinced that this better version of ourselves is a more altruistic, more fair humankind. Nietzsche instead argues that the individual has to stretch out their limits to step aside from being *just* human and instead become *overhuman* [dt.: Übermensch].

When speaking of *justice*, I believe that in the society we live in right now, we have to evaluate between different types of justice and ultimately have to ask us whether one kind is more important to us than another. I call the current state “justice of the fittest.” It allows the strongest individual or the most powerful country to have the most fundamental freedom and human rights. At the same time, less powerful countries and their people own very little freedom and human rights, as they do not have the economic power to prevail. The second state of justice, however, is what I call “justice of the neediest.” This conception measures the amount of existing justice through the accomplishment of human rights and human dignity. Only if an action contributes to increasing the number of people with human rights, it does them justice and our actions should be focused on those, whose *state of emergency* is the most urgent one. Acting morally should, consequently, try to minimize the existing inequality and save those in need from being exploited.

Considering the ongoing migration crisis, we get to understand how fundamentally different these two conceptions of justice are and what terrific impact this difference can have on our foreign policy. While some states are willing to welcome many thousands of migrants, others only do the bare minimum. Still, with the *justice of the fittest*, it is the refugees, who are the victims of those actions and have to suffer from it. In this case, Nietzsche's term *chaos* seems too lush to describe what the lack of solidarity can cause: the death of those help-seeking people, who are being left alone.

Friedrich Nietzsche thought of the single human as the center of his philosophy. If – on the way of improving this human – others die, it is irrelevant to him. He argued that Christian charity is anti-beneficial for us as humans since it only promotes mediocrity. According to the German philosopher, this altruism (as I demand it considering the migration crisis) keeps the able-bodied humans from reaching their highest potential as their power has to focus on making the worst ones average instead of making the good ones best. But what price is worth paying in the name of self-improvement?

Nietzsche is indeed right about the central claim he postulates. When wanting to create a state of justice, we get confronted with terrifying chaos. When looking at those situations we feel fear of everything getting out of hand and our well-established systems crashing. Many people came face to face with this fear as the wave of migrants hit Germany in 2015 and unsurprisingly this fear led to right-wing extremists predicting the country's downfall. While these forces emerged, we also had the opportunity to feel an incredible amount of solidarity as the refugees arrived. Seeing them being helpless made us intuitively feel like looking away was not the right thing to do and made us realize that we have to cooperate to secure human rights.

According to Nietzsche, chaos is in this case something highly negative. He believed that by having a clear hierarchy and creating strict rules of togetherness, we would be able to emerge as a species. Therefore, it hurts this development to worry about a thing of such little importance for one's own life (as long as one is privileged). Nonetheless, we also get to notice that there is more to the chaos than what we can see at first glance. I consider chaos something that supports the evolution of human rights. As something that does justice to many of those in need, the destruction of an existing order can also lead to a process of reconstruction from the ground. It offers the opportunity to heal what is broken and bring back order in a new, inclusive way.

The development concerning the migration crisis has demonstrated that this chaos can develop in a positive direction. It offers us a variety of new and groundbreaking opportunities, such as facing demographic change or improving our economy. While thinking of our growth and of maximizing our potential, we can still make use of altruistic principles, which benefit us and them. This is what true cooperation is about: accepting new circumstances that change the currently existing order with the ambition to maximize the stimulation of everyone's needs. Selfishness is something that does not have to clash with cooperation, as long as we are willing to accept the fact that through "damaging" ourselves at first, we can achieve sustainable growth.

Although the decisions concerning the migrant wave of 2015 were made in the past, we are not allowed to be misled and think of these actions as irrelevant nowadays. When looking at the recent developments in Afghanistan, we can do nothing but recall that we are born equal and that nothing changes that. No war, no nationality changes who we are: human. And since we are the ones who can manage to secure the dignity and human rights of so many people, we get to decide whether we

want to give *each* what was given to us. Particularly speaking of the auxiliary staff which helped us Germans in Afghanistan, it is our responsibility to return them a favor (a secure livelihood) as an act of solidarity. We might thus provoke chaos here in Germany, but we also keep our pledge of loyalty and give them a chance of restoring their life, which knows nothing but chaos.

The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche is as current as it could be. In the upcoming years and decades, we are going to have to make decisions concerning our well-being and the well-being of others. These might regard the climate crisis which affects every nation on our planet, but it could also be the expected migration waves which especially Europe will have to cope with. In times of a crisis – whatever the crisis we are talking about might be – we will always have to be aware of how our actions can lead to destruction and think of the possible ways they may change our everyday lives. In these situations, it is upon us to decide whether it is our wish to offer them a helping hand and earn a structural benefit (like the fight against the demographic change or a growing number of workers in Germany) or whether we deny our help and instead focus on ourselves.

I believe that to keep the long-term chaos, which might actually divide our society, away from us and to calm the fear of our system crashing, we will have to provoke or at least accept this positive chaos. “Growth happens when you leave your comfort zone” is a sentence my mom used to tell me when I was younger, every time I felt a task was too big or too difficult for me to do. With the ambition to help those neediest, we can also benefit from leaving our well-ordered comfort zone and prosperously welcome the people and the chaos they bring. We need to become aware that by standing together, we will all benefit from each other. With that in mind, both the *fittest* and the *neediest* will be able to experience justice.

We just have to be brave enough!

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(Datum)

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(Unterschrift des Verfassenden)