The Yin and Yang of European Angst

One of the more interesting things about the *angst* that infuses Europe (and not just Europe) today, is that it looks very different depending on where you stand. At the end of last year I attended a very interesting conference at the Bozar in Brussels, called *European Angst*, and found myself reflecting on this ambivalence, which was classically expressed by Franz Boas in his useful conceit of *kulturbrille*, the cultural spectacles through which we each look differently – often very differently indeed - at the world. The point of view that shapes many of the more audible conversations today about the state of European politics, society and culture (and which was not absent from the Bozar conference) tends to the specific: it is of the liberal left, and the *angst* here is awakened by a disquieting sense of political shift, of the rise of authoritarian populism and the decline of freedom. The *angst* is the *angst* of the liberal cultural establishment watching the pendulum swing away from itself. From Us.

This is an entirely legitimate position from which to start, and an entirely understandable pair of *kulturbrille* to wear on the end of one's nose: there is no doubt that some very unattractive developments are shaping European – and indeed global – politics; and that many of these come from, and endorse, growing intolerance, chauvinism, racism and the recrudescence of some of the darker tributaries of the mid-twentieth century crisis. But it is not the only intelligent way of looking at the European crisis of the 2010s, and conversations today can often be unbalanced by taking so particular a stance. In Brussels there were few representatives of the new European Right: the only real such tribune was a noisily splenetic East European journalist who fumed at the lefty love-fest, as he saw it, that the conference was. But although I have no doubt that he misread the conference and its intentions, he was not altogether wrong. Much as I disagreed with the overwhelming majority of what he said; and much as I warmed to the liberal commitment of most other speakers, I was worried by the occasional booing that the hall produced. There were a few moments when it had almost the feeling of a collective war-dance, an expression of a tribalism that should perhaps have embarrassed us a little more than it did.

Because *angst* is really a two-way street. It describes not a specific political apprehension, but an existential fear: as the Oxford Dictionary puts it, "a feeling of deep anxiety or dread, typically an unfocused one about the human condition or the state of the world in general." It is, in other words, a much bigger and more fundamental thing than simply disquiet at the rise of the populist right and the threats to liberty: *angst* is a symptom, and perhaps a driver, of the fast-changing world in which we live. What is crucially important to understand is that *angst*, this gnawing, destabilising apprehension, is shared across the political spectrum: that like an earth tremor, or an anticyclone, or a hole in the ozone layer, the underlying causes of *angst* are universal. What differs is how we are each affected, and how we react.

It is particularly important that the liberal left think outside the box – cross the central reservation onto the other side of the street - because tribalism, or identity politics, is one of the main accusations levelled against the new populist Right, and it would be disastrous for the left to succumb to it. As Slavoj Zizek put it, addressing the conference, "Yes, we must react against our cocooned existence. But the multicultural elite, while universal, *is* one big cocoon." And of course, in the internationalist, cultured and cultural, educated, arts-orientated bubble that we inhabit, it is 'us' who level the accusation. But the very 'cultural relations' which the conference's organizers, EUNIC and the Goethe-Institut, practice, demand that we put ourselves firmly in the shoes of 'them,' and

imagine with sympathy 'their' anxieties, insecurity and anger. We are getting less good at this, though the Bozar conference was a valiant attempt to explore the ramifications of the General Crisis of the early 21st century. And the clever initiative of bringing together a panel of young men and women to sit in on, and interrogate, the speaker panels, and eventually to produce a Manifesto of their own, was a way of seeking out a new and fresh questioning of assumptions, of new angles of understanding.

The firestorm of populism that has whipped across Europe and the USA is not an isolated phenomenon, and it does not come from nowhere. If we are surprised by it, that is because we inhabit Zizek's cocoon, and we have not been watching attentively (and of this we are all, to greater and lesser extents, guilty). It is rooted in history, and like the cracks in old brickwork, it is simply bursting out through the wallpaper that has temporarily covered it. Zadie Smith, in the *New York Review of Books*, wrote recently that one useful consequence of Brexit (a specific and toxic expression of this wider, European *angst*) has been "to finally and openly reveal a deep fracture in British society that has been thirty years in the making. The gaps between north and south, between the social classes, between Londoners and everyone else, between rich Londoners and poor Londoners and between white and brown and black, are real and need to be confronted by all of us, not just those who voted Leave." This could have been written, with minor variations, of France or Spain, the Netherlands or the US, or of many other countries. What we are seeing today is the latest, visible, effect of conflicts that have been suppressed or ignored for decades but are now re-emerging – conflicts that are about the distribution of power and wealth in our societies. *Angst* is, if you like, the outcome of fear of losing what we have and hold; or assertion of the right to more than we have now; and the displacement of blame onto other people. A sense, in other words, that the world order that we have known since the middle of the last century, is being undermined and that chaos looms. We do not know how this continental, this global, crisis will resolve, but we fear it may be very uncomfortable, or worse; and the gnawing apprehension of disaster is what shapes the *angst* of today's Europe. It is combined inextricably with the dawning understanding that no one has the answers – that the Crash of 2008 has left a great many clothes-less emperors. ("Economists are astrologers," quipped Zizek, a statement that might once have seemed absurd, but no longer quite does.)

From the left – through one pair of, let us say pink, *kulturbrille* - we are familiar with the outline of the situation: growing nationalism, resistance to migration, a devaluing of accepted social norms, the shrinking of liberty and the growth of 'undemocratic' government. We are aware of, but until very recently have been less preoccupied by, the huge growth of income inequality, and the divergence of life-chances, educational achievement, earning power and life expectancy. We snort disdainfully at the backsliding in Hungary, Turkey, Poland and elsewhere as less open, more directed and illiberal forms of democracy displace what we see as progressive and normal. Our *angst* is underwritten by a sense that the gains of the last seventy years are slipping away: that Europe is returning to the dark spectre of its 1930s, and the great project of Europeanism, however flawed, is collapsing. Disorder seems to reign; war in Syria, Iraq and the Ukraine seem to presage a new and dangerous chaos; the collapse of American civility with the election of a non-reading, wildly inconsistent, shoot-from-the-lip reality TV star as president, perhaps unprepared to act as a world leader, seems to epitomize this; the readiness to resort to violence, at least rhetorically, is growing. The nuclear clock, the graphic measure of the world's closeness to Armageddon, has been moved forward half a minute, to stand at two-and-a-half minutes to midnight: 'later' than it has been for many years.

From the other side, whatever it is to be called, the corner of the ring where we might describe the *kulturbrille* as wraparound black - the collapse of the civilizational order we have known is equally clear, but can be described very differently. The Christian West is imploding under the pressure of the migration of strangers, the West has lost the will to assert its true values, and the (allegedly) autochthonous peoples of Europe and America are drowning under a wave of cosmopolitanism, secularism and violent Islam. The elites have, in the last 40 years, absorbed more and more of the West's – indeed the world's – wealth, and a great swathe of once proud working people, unable to adjust to the post-manufacturing world, have been both marginalised, and blamed for their own marginalisation. The nation-state, that very modern phenomenon, is seen as sinking beneath a tide of finance-driven internationalism (and even the anti-Semitic discourse of the pre-war decades slouches toward Bethlehem to be re-born). Local, traditional and comfortable allegiances are scorned and ploughed under: identities dear to their owners are under threat.

Zadie Smith's list of tensions is very relevant. The provinces against the metropolis, the rich against the poor, the black against the white. What has disappeared across large tracts of our continent is any real sense of social solidarity, any sense that we all look out for each other in a society that, for better or worse, encompasses us all. It should not surprise us that the *angst* of the underdogs has driven a great overturning of the political order in the USA and Britain, and threatens to do so in France, the Netherlands and elsewhere, seizing control in a rush of energy that traditional elites are finding it hard to ride. There is a sense of tectonic plates rearranging themselves deep in the earth, causing quakes in some places, tremors in others. And the tremors presage more seismic activity still to come. We are watching one of the seminal rearrangements of modern history, the creation of a new world architecture that will shape the lives of our children and grandchildren. Richard Evans, reviewing Pankaj Mishra's recent book, aptly titled *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*, summarizes,

> *"After a long, uneasy equipoise since 1945," Mishra says, "the old West-dominated world order is giving way to an apparent global disorder." We have entered an "age of anger," in which established forms of authority and legitimacy, already seriously weakened by the forces of globalisation, have been challenged by history's losers. We are experiencing "endemic and uncontrollable" violence, fuelled by a range of hatreds – of immigrants, minorities and various designated 'others' – that have now become part of the mainstream. In response, there is a "global turn to authoritarianism and toxic forms of chauvinism." Societies organised for the interplay of individual self-interest mediated by the state have plunged into tribalism and nihilistic violence.*

So, what's not to be *angst*-y about?

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However, while suggesting symmetry, I do not want to imply equivalence. Much of the Bozar conference was effectively and at times eloquently devoted to the failure of the European Left to address the central problems. The Left, as Didier Erebon put it, has lost interest in the lives of working people – and the working class has itself largely migrated from left to right of the political spectrum. It was the ramifications of this drift, this new allegiance of the working class to the nationalist right, that preoccupied the conference. The tone was sometimes bitter – "the turds floated to the surface," as one speaker put it – and the critical perspective not always entirely coherent, but the story-line was very clear.

The tenor of the conference was clearly established by the opening keynote. Herta Mueller, Nobel laureate, talked superbly of growing up in Romania under Ceaucescu, and of the all-pervasive intimidation that the state called down upon the individual. Her implication was clear: that much of Eastern Europe (and some parts of the West) are sliding back into an atavistic state of passivity, and accept, almost welcome, fear, while political discourse and in some cases governments, become more authoritarian again. She spoke of the "dressage of fear" that society performs, and the division of society into two tribes, those who make fear, the 'scare-mongers;' and those who 'have' it, the 'fear-biters.' The smooth elision she implied of pre-1989 Romania and our present plight in Europe was shocking, but only partially convincing. It does have something important to say, though, about the fear, carefully cultivated that was the bedrock of those old communist authoritarianisms – and which is becoming much more obvious in the political discourse of the populist Right, across our continent. It is a warning, at this point, rather than a description – but a very uncomfortable warning.

Events in Mueller's Romania, though, as I write, suggest that the counter-currents today are still strong. Mass demonstrations in central Bucharest have forced the government, which had initially refused to do so with brusque dismissal, to withdraw at least for the time being a proposed law that would have amnestied corrupt politicians. This mass action, and the capitulation of the government, albeit late in the day, suggests that Romanian left liberalism remains alive and kicking, even if under pressure: and if this is true of Romania, so too of the rest of Europe. Massive demonstrations in Warsaw against anti-abortion legislation and the rolling back of women's rights; a narrow defeat (though as much born of apathy as of opposition) for the Hungarian government in its recent referendum on immigration; a very narrow election win, after a re-run of the polls, for the liberal Austrian presidential candidate over his rival of the far right OFP.

But there are worrying signs. The rise of the Front National, the UK Independence Party, the AfD, the Austrian Freedom Party and the Dutch Party for Freedom are all developments of great concern. All represent fear of Others, exclusiveness, nationalism and introversion. Many of their supporters are what Mueller referred to as fear-biters, swept up in a frightened and aggressive nationalism. I am reminded of something the Iraqi writer Kanan Makiya described in his book about the Ba'th régime aptly titled *Republic of Fear*. That society, he wrote, was so impregnated with fear "that the whole population, including those in opposition, lack the barest rudiments of a conceptual apparatus with which to comprehend their reality (to say nothing of forming a happier alternative to it)." The symbolism of deliberately inculcated fear was well summed up in the story of a stuffed fox in Mueller's home, which was, over time when she was out of the house, dismembered, limb by limb, by the scare-mongers of state security. Johannes Ebert talked too of "the indefinable fear spreading like mildew across our communities," and this indefinable fear, sublimated, is the chief ingredient of *angst*.

Mueller went on to examine this slide back into fear-fraught dependency that seems in her understanding almost desirable to much of eastern Europe today. She spoke of the loss of individual agency, the willingness to subside back into subservience rather than take personal responsibility. She described how authoritarian government relieves people of the burden of that responsibility, allows them to merge into a noisy, irresponsible collective. And she related this to the same trend in western Europe, the apparent ease with which Britons and Frenchmen, Dutchmen and Germans sink into easy and loud nationalist identities with uneasy echoes of the past: she notes, for example, the self-conscious revival of the word *Volkisch*, much used on the German Right in the 1930s, by Germany's AfB.

It is clear, even at the most superficial level, that there is a strong relationship between immigration and this fear-biting slide into illiberalism. Once again, it is important to take this seriously: "Migration makes societies more unequal," said Paul Scheffer, noting, though, that 97% of the world's population are not migrants, and that the majority of people in Europe and elsewhere spend their lives where they were born. He warned the conference that tensions over the scale and nature of migration are not just about fear – they are also about real conflict, about the illiberalism that migrants often bring with them. "The big problem we have with migration," he went on, "is that it is seen as out of control, not willed. The reality and appearance of control must be re-established: the alternative now is the resurgence of illiberalism." This is not only a predictable and fairly mechanical consequence of apparently uncontrolled migration: it is also grist to the mill of those who make it their business to promote and spread resentment, and introversion and to promote small, easily graspable identities. This need to recreate and inhabit micro-identities is both a natural reaction to pressure and hard times; it is also a cultivable crop, a wave-pattern that can be and is created by the demagogues of the right, who know they are pushing at an open door. They may not yet have quite the dark stature of the Securitate, but these are Europe's fear-mongers; and "extremists," in Zizek's words, "hate multiplicity."

Opposition to immigration is close to the heart of our continental *angst*. Close to, but not at. It is very clear that fear of migrants does not correlate with knowledge of them. In fact the strongest opposition to migration often comes from areas of our countries that have very few immigrants: Knowsley, for example, in north-west England, has a population that is 97% white – "the least diverse corner of Britain," as a recent writer describes it – voted overwhelmingly to leave the EU in the Brexit referendum, while much more ethnically mixed urban areas voted the other way. There is a stark *negative* correlation between levels of migration and support for UKIP across most of the UK. It seems that there are many proxies for a drift to the right, many prejudices and hatreds that can be instrumentalised without evidence or knowledge. Fear of immigration, of irreversible and fundamental change to societies which are often much more traditional than the metropolitan left understands, is Ebert's "indefinable fear." The fear, though, comes first and the object of that fear is only then defined.

If fear specifically of immigrants were the tap-root of *angst*, then fear might be dispelled by knowledge. This is generally not the case. What is happening is more indirect than that: the unease, the shaken identity, the sense of loss – the *angst*, in fact – pre-exists, looking for social phenomena in which it can find hosts, like an intestinal worm fastening itself inside an animal's stomach. Immigration is a prime candidate, aggressing as it does against the narrower, more introverted identities into which humans regress at moments of critical insecurity. Of course there are widespread instances of generosity and open-mindedness (and certainly not just from 'Us'): one need only look at the crowds of volunteers a year ago, welcoming refugees as they poured into railway stations from Vienna to Munich, and across Germany, the humbling outpouring of funds and clothes, offers of help and hospitality all along the refugee trail from the Levant to Central Europe. But the opposite is also true, with migrant hostels attacked and burned; and some governments (and many politicians) have pandered to this perceived xenophobia as a way of bolstering their own positions. Along Hungary's border with Croatia and Serbia, apart from the razor-wire fence and the water-cannons, there were erected large sign-boards telling would-be arrivals that there were no jobs for them and that they were not welcome. The signs, written in Magyar, were in reality aimed not at the migrants (amongst whom Magyar was not, to put it mildly, a widely-understood language) but at Hungarians, whose fears were being carefully worked upon and judiciously propitiated. A Fidesz MEP suggested stringing pigs' heads on the border fences to deter Muslims. Despite, or because of, all this a significant, if relatively small, number of Hungarians demonstrated in favour of

admitting refugees. Right across Europe, the fear of immigration – of 'unfair' competition for housing, jobs, education and healthcare – is a rhetorical trope that is unscrupulously deployed to attract support from the marginalised. As a voter from Sunderland said, interviewed after the Brexit referendum in which he had voted to leave the EU, "It's because of the immigrants." Were there many immigrants in Sunderland, asked the interviewer? "No, not round here, but I've heard all about them."

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So we find Europe divided increasingly into two camps, with open communication difficult. In Britain, as now in the US, judges who decide matters of law in ways that challenge populist governments and stridently nationalist newspapers find themselves labelled – almost incredibly – as traitors. The causes of the right are not debated so much as shouted, but this is becoming a more symmetrical phenomenon, with a gradual breakdown of civil communication. Often, watching the heedless and loud assertion of views from both sides of the political divide, I am uncomfortably reminded of *takfir*, the assertion by groupuscules of extreme and violent Muslims that the vast majority of other Muslims who do not agree with them are heathens – not Muslim at all – and therefore legitimate enemies. Our political life is increasingly given over to this bizarre post-modern *takfir*, and those with whom we disagree are somehow reduced to holding arguments that are simply not discussible. Whole echelons of people and opinion are ruled out of court, put beyond the pale, in a moral wilderness where we no longer have to engage with them. Were this just a phenomenon of the right it would be bad enough; but it is also a phenomenon of the left, and the booing that I heard once or twice even at the Bozar in December, was a sign of it. Where is Voltaire's (doubtless apocryphal) belief that while he disagreed profoundly with his adversary's opinion, he would fight to the death for his right to express it? Instead, we find ourselves divided into camps, generally two, which are socially and politically far apart. Just as Zadie Smith wrote, the breakdown of society into binary pairs - rich and poor, black and white, metropolitan and provincial – is leading to a society in which we do not know each other. And I write this not in the sense just that we do not understand each other, but that we live separate lives. After the Brexit referendum, I was astonished to discover that I knew virtually nobody who had (or would admit to having) voted to leave the EU. On enquiry, I find the opposite to be true too, amongst Leave voters. And the bisection of our society in Great Britain is echoed across the continent, perhaps not yet quite as strongly, but the outline is clearly in place. There is a baying tone about what passes for conversation: fewer and fewer people are trying to persuade each other, or to advance their own understanding of complex issues - just to shout each other down.

It is this loss that should worry us more than anything else, a loss of the ability to disagree in civility and to face argument with argument. But this requires trust in one another's sincerity. This trust is the cement of society, without which we fall apart. The great writer on science, Simon Shapin, wrote that "the great civility, therefore, is granting the conditions on which others can colonize our minds, and expecting the conditions which allow us to colonize theirs." True, competitive engagement, in other words, with an openness as to the outcome. "The ultimate incivility," went on Shapin, "is the public withdrawal of trust in another's access to the world, and in another's moral commitment to speaking the truth about it: those who cannot be trusted to speak reliably and sincerely about the world may not long belong to the community of discourse. It is not just that we do not agree with them; it is that we have withdrawn the possibility of disagreeing with them." That is painfully close to what has happened in the moral and intellectual breakdown of our societies: we have withdrawn the possibility of reasoned disagreement, and we simply reiterate our prejudgements, loudly, *at* each other. We are not persuadable: we have withdrawn the possibility of disagreement.

We should be very apprehensive about where this will lead, not least because it isn't clear that it is reparable. All the external conditions seem set against a reintegration of intellectual and moral argument. We live increasingly in our self-made bubbles of comfortable opinion, disdaining to immerse ourselves in what others think, wrapped in solipsistic social media blankets. We have become uncritical, and isolated. We seem content (for all the brouhaha) to chuckle maliciously at stories we know to be at best half-true, the 'fake news' that relativises truth and undercuts objectivity. Indeed we watch democratically elected (and undemocratically elected) heads of government not only lying through their teeth, but appearing quite insouciant about truth and perhaps unaware of its meaning. Indeed in at least one case – that of Russia – it seems likely that a long-term strategic campaign is in progress designed to soften all evidence-based statements of fact and reasoned assertions of truth by reducing them to plastic, debatable opinion. And this is carried further by presenting countervailing factual scenarios which are blatantly disprovable, but which still undercut the crisp objectivity of sincerely designed, and open-ended, debatable fact that has been the aspiration of European culture for centuries.

And lest we think that the Kremlin has a monopoly of such behaviour, we need only look at Great Britain to see the disparaging of expertise becoming routine – the assertion, for example, by a government minister that "people in this country have had enough of experts," as though subjectivity and prejudice were preferable to a life-time's study. This is what Simon Shapin meant by "the public withdrawal of trust in another's access to the world, and in another's moral commitment to speaking the truth about it." The astronomer Prof Brian Cox commented equably as an expert himself of some distinction, "You [the expert] are not necessarily right – but you are more likely to be right than someone who has not spent their life studying it." And this is how *angst* is cultivated: a natural enough phenomenon it may be, but in the hands of the unscrupulous a raucous disdain for expertise can all too easily be used to manure the great incivility. As Michael Metz Mørch asked of the Bozar conference: "what kind of shit are we actually in?" Well, that kind.

This theme was taken up, more gently, by the Turkish writer Elif Shafak, who insisted that "the job of artists is empathy – trying to see through different eyes, the Other's view," in other words the opposite of the neo-*takfir* of binary thinking (if that last word is quite legitimate in the context). You might think of it as willed ability to don different *kulturbrille*. She gave a refreshing and invigorating call to exactly the intellectual openness that Shapin demands: "We've forgotten," she said, how to say *I don't know*. We confuse information with knowledge and knowledge with wisdom. We fail to deal holistically with complexity. We are segmented. Anti-intellectualism is rampant, and intrinsic to the new populism. Although we have information we know little of the world … we need a radical new humanism." Zizek felt necessary to reply "Behind every ethnic cleansing there is a poet. All the Yugoslav republics had their poets of purity," which entirely missed Shafak's point, about the capacity and duty of the artist to empathize and to inculcate empathy in her readers: Serbian and Croatian blood-poets were not in the business of empathy or open-mindedness, but of shortening horizons and closing down possibilities. There's nothing inevitable about virtue: it too must be cultivated.

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The one tangible conclusion reached by the Bozar conference was a Manifesto 'of the students of Europe,' which was the collective response, intellectual and emotional, of 42 young men and women who had won a competition to be present. They came from all over the world, only 20 of them from the EU, and they represented a generational mindset which was open, attractive and positive. Though the same pinkish pair of *kulturbrille* was worn by all or most of the group, it in no way invalidates their positions, which were staunchly and convincingly liberal; though the collective and

comfortable use of the word 'we' is notable throughout the document in assuming a very particular shared viewpoint. "We need a common dream for Europe, we need politicians who stand up for this dream, and we need to empower civil society actors to make it come true." What I miss is the realisation that the darker vision, however much we all dislike it, comes from the same place as our own *angst*; it is a different expression of the extreme dislocation of our time. One that is deeply uncomfortable to liberal Europeanists, but inescapable. The most impressive passage in the Manifesto, says:

> *Populism and extremism thrive when people feel that their concerns, hopes, and fears are at odds with the current political and societal norms; when they no longer feel represented by the political leaders and lose hope in the ability and willingness of 'elites' to address their issues. It is therefore vital to open up political and public debates, to give space to concerns about open borders, global trade, and the challenge of integrating newly arrived refugees into host societies. We need to reclaim from populist parties the critical discussions about the challenges, problems and opportunities of migration. We have to develop a dialogue with those who feel marginalised by globalisation, and address and genuinely listen to the concerns of those who disagree with us. While condemning sensationalist language and making it clear that there is no room for racism, hate, and xenophobia in Europe, we need to move beyond simply preaching to the choir, so that those who feel ignored can begin to feel part of the solution.*

I don't think the conference itself reached any more concrete conclusions, and I doubt there are any yet to reach beyond the idealistic statement of the Manifesto. It may be a long time until larger conclusions begin tentatively to take shape. We are *in medias res*, stumbling forwards in a political and ethical cavern that is without much light. The mood of the hall (distinct in this from that of the students' drafting-room) was gloomy and even – I think – pessimistic. But one firm, clear note of grim optimism did shine through. Michael Metz Mørch, having examined the "shit we are actually in," insisted that there *is* a way out, that this situation has the capacity, if we can use it well, to be the beginning of something new – Elif Shafak's "radical new humanism," perhaps.

What does *well* mean? I think it means struggling to understand, not to condemn, the Other – and recognizing that this is just as true of the small-minded and apparently irrational amongst ourselves (a description that is deliberately non-specific, for we shall each have *very* different views of who we mean by it), as it is of the stranger arriving in our midst from Syria, Somalia, Iraq or Libya. Shafak put nicely the path we need to follow: "How can I understand you, when I don't understand myself? Cultivate political distance - and learn." However infuriating we may find those who bluster and fume, however exasperating the slippery refusal to engage, we must struggle to be open, to seek to understand, and to be rational. No *takfir*, no contempt (though a proper scepticism) for expertise, no wallowing in the solipsism of social media isolation, but a constant, relentless, untiring promotion of the great civility.

Which is, I think, just what the student Manifesto was getting at with its final exhortation, to "listen, communicate, open your eyes, and challenge your own perceptions." This is a serious challenge to us all: become aware, often painfully, of your *kulturbrille*.

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