The Fight for The Victim Role

Globally networked communication brings everyone and everything within the reach of everyone. At the same time, prosperity gaps and global shifts in labor markets are causing global migration. The complexity, confusion and speed of globalization overburden our emotional competence even more than our rational competence. The extent to which anxiety and diffuse indignation can be exploited for obscure purposes is shown by the political shifts of recent years.

Crucial to understanding these shifts is the question of whether they have a common denominator. The answer is a resounding yes. In the foreground is everywhere the fight for the victim role. The diffuse fears and confused defense postures come together in a shared sense of being transited and abandoned. Not only in the struggle for distribution about the material benefits and costs of globalization, but also in the distribution struggle for media attention. The lack of social recognition is so hurtful because it does not remain outside but hits the heart of the person: that which the person is allowed to think of herself, her self-esteem.

But if there are withdrawal symptoms of social recognition that are behind the rampant willingness to be incited, then one should hold back with those diagnoses of irrationality and sheer regression of the agitated masses. Instead, we should take the opportunity of a meaningful and understanding interpretation, which may also open up new perspectives of resistance.

Social Recognition and The Economy of Self-Worth

Self-esteem is the affective side of self-awareness. And it has its own logic. In contrast to the cognitive side of self-awareness, affective self-awareness must not claim autonomy. It eminently depends on outer esteem. The lack of social recognition is so hurtful because he does not remain outside but hits the heart of the person: that which the person is allowed to think of herself, her self-esteem.

The conversion of attention income into self-esteem not least proves as a veritable economy by its inclination of resorting to forms of ‘creative accounting’ under stress. Since the stress in the case of affective self-awareness can originate both from the income side and from the own claim of self-esteem, different forms also of creative accounting should be observed.
In fact, fraudulent accounting of self-worth knows two common tricks. One is called vanity, the other resentment. Vanity comes into play when the inner claim overdraws the outer means. The trick, then, is to double standards in evaluating income depending on whether it comes from a flatteringly or negatively-minded side. If you adapt the appreciation opportunistically, the flatterers’ attention rises in book value. One can, therefore, butter up one’s balance by choosing one’s friends according to their preparedness to adulate one.

We all know the corruption by flattering praise not only, but we all have made acquaintance also with the terrible distress that the attention we believe we cannot do without is denied. We no longer know what else to do than to resort to an act of self-help: we try to persuade ourselves and others that those who deny us the oh-so-awaited attention, are themselves not worth respect. We make unreserved use of the trick that vanity resorts to only furtively. In self-help, we feel unquestionably as victims, having the license to unrestrained bullying.

Does not the insurrection of the insulted masses have something of a rally / mobilization of such self-defense? Is it not a mass release of resentment that is behind the emotional climate change? Whoever feels pressed to denigrate others in order to save his or her own self-esteem, will not be serious about facts. He or she now has a quite another problem, namely that a new dependency on attention. Resentment is in need of resonance. If the denunciation is to be effective, it must be absorbed by others who are seeking confirmation of their own resentment.

The mass release of resentment may therefore have two reasons. First, significant parts of the population must have become acquainted with the distress of keeping self-esteem intact with their income of attention. Second, it must have become easier to get media resonance in his distress. Both these conditions apply to the recent economic and technical development in those societies that most violently encounter the emotional climate change. First, economies that make the most profit from globalization also produce most dear-cut groups of losers. Second, the most technically advanced commodities of mass consumption are so-called social media.

The concerns of those worried about job losses and labor migration have a hard time to get into the leading media of public opinion. Not only that the articulation of their reservations all too easily fails on the filter of political correctness. Their ability to reach out to a wider audience has also remained systematically curbed as long as the mainstream has been controlled by the gentle paternalism of dedicated journalism. It belonged to the professional honor of the classical journalist to serve the audience with paternalism of dedicated journalism. It belonged to the professional honor of the classical journalist to serve the audience with the objectivity and reflection instead of “looking at the crowd’s mouth”. Since longer, to be sure, the media of classic journalism have been under existential pressure, where they have to compete against new media. New media in the sense that they have left the sale of information for money behind, only to focus on the attraction of attention to be sold as service to the advertising industry. Under the pressure of producing attraction services in the first place, a shift of power between journalism, public relations and advertising has taken place, associated with a sustained loss of trust in journalism (as sharply analyzed by Fengler, Susanne & Stephan Ruß-Mohl, Journalists and the information-attention markets: Towards an economic theory of journalism, in: Journalism, 2008 - journals.sagepub.com). Where the service of the attraction becomes more important than the production of news and reflected opinion, vox populi also gets new chances against the journalistic virtue.

A real breach of the dam occurred with the arrival of social media. The business idea of Facebook, Twitter & Co is to scale the business model of ads-financed mass media down to the vendor’s tray. They make it possible to publish, with nothing more than a smartphone at hand, in the world wide web and to make usurry with the attraction performance measured by the medium. Anyone who can publish in the world wide web can, what matters, participate in the global battle for attention with measured results. Anyone can grow to a star by uploading a video on YouTube or serving on Facebook a lying story for popular wishful thinking. It suffices that the number and rate of increase of the clicks is noticed, the content is secondary. The new media succeed less in providing significant content than in exploiting our tendency to pay attention to what others pay attention to. Everything proving successful in attracting attention enjoys re-enforced success in attracting attention.

This tendency of self-reinforced conspicuousness is particularly conductive to the resentment that is in search of confirmation. By itself, this search is charged with potential synergy since it is only in its resonance that resentment is in its element. Where the willingness to revolt is common, it requires just a spark of confirmation to release avalanches on aggressive insults, hatred and infamous suspicion, which, once released, clang through the new media up to the echo chambers in the weakened old media. The proverbial shitstorms roaring through social media and the common sharing of negative emotions have blossomed into real recipes for success in the battle for likes and followers.

So, it is not only to explain how rampant frustration and media resonance came together, but also that the use of resentment has risen to the dominant strategy of oversized narcissists. With nothing it is easier to capture those masses of attention, of which the very big ego lives, than with the facilitation of popular outrage and a promise of revenge on the arrogant elites. Thus, even as part of these elites and in unsurpassable arrogance, one can rise to be the leader of the storm on the bastions of these same elites - and this only for the purpose of setting the crown on one’s own vanity.

So it is not only to explain how rampant frustration and media resonance came together, but also that the use of resentment to the dominant strategy of oversized narcissists has risen. Nothing will make it easier to bring in the very masses of attention that the very big ego lives on, than the support of popular indignation and the promise of revenge on the arrogant elites. So it happens that even as part of these elites and in unsurpassable arrogance, you can rise
to be the leader of the storm on the bastions of these same elites - and only for the purpose of crowning your own craving for favor.

**The Moral of The Story**

If it is not sheer irrationality behind the heating of the emotional climate, but ‘creative accounting’ in the assessment of self-esteem, where does the appeal of emotional climate protection go? To two addresses: first, to the controlling of the bookkeeping of the self-esteem and second, to the causers of the frustration.

Unfortunately, the uprising of the insulted masses has nothing to do with a liberation from oppression. The resentment is content with well-organized self-deception and the destruction of social capital. Social capital, as defined by the American sociologist Robert Putnam, is the stock of strong trust that social life has. This capital is of hardly over estimable value, because its availability makes the difference between a civil society and one in civil war-like conditions. Where the opinion becomes majority, that only strategic and opportunistic behavior counts, then it is out of social peace. In addition, self-deception turns against what one can keep of oneself. For it is by no means only external self-esteem, but also immediate self-esteem, which determines self-esteem. Although applause can put the ego in a state of megalomania, self-esteem remains fragile and uncertain when the self does not meet the demands of others. Self-esteem, however, means exactly this: to measure oneself with the same yardsticks as you apply to others.

However, the appeal to self-esteem now goes not only to those who falsify the balance sheet out of necessity, but also to those who invite forgery. The invitation to play with the resentment is based firstly on the self-centeredness of the elites and secondly on the ever-widening discrepancy between their income and earnings. Self-respect demands of the elite that it shows itself worthy of the privileges it enjoys. Where the privileges are in no proportion to the benefit to the society that grants them (and pays them), then the slanderous denunciation of those up there goes into substantive indictment.

Thus, in both directions, the appeal is not about relinquishing self-esteem, but about the greater accuracy in dealing with that value, which we cannot resist. Self-esteem is based both on the income of appreciative attention and on the direct self-esteem. Self-esteem prohibits dual measurement and punishes with the knowledge of self-deception. No resentment rescues from the existential distress of self-esteem dependent on recognition, and no elite can be sure of its happiness, which does not know its privileges worthy.

Unfortunately, that’s the conclusion, emotional climate change is a thoroughly moral issue. However, this is a morality that is not a matter of duty or religious revelation but of the right self-esteem.

**Acknowledgement**

None.

**Conflict of interest**

Author declare no conflict of interest.