Hard Facts, Distorted Views, and Hope: How to Square Democratic Theory with Realism. An Interview with Lisa Herzog and Enzo Rossi

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Andreas Busen / Alexander Weiß: This special section, and the contributions in it, revolve around the question of how to square democratic theory with realism. To what extent, or so we put the question in our introduction, should democratic theorizing take into account reality, or specific elements of our existing reality (such as economic constraints, the digital transformation of society, or the fact that certain natural resources are finite)? And, more specifically, what kind of impact should the resulting realism have on our theory-building? In your work, you are both interested in finding ways of incorporating reality into political theorizing which do take the effects of existing realities seriously, yet still offer at least some perspective as to how things might be transformed, as it were, for the better.

Let us start with questions to each of you to give us an idea of where you are coming from, what your perspective is and what your contribution to this discussion might be. Let us start with Lisa. Lisa, your work is located at the intersection of political philosophy and economics – a field that you have been working on for quite a long time. To what extent, in your opinion, do philosophers and economists refer to reality differently, and what does this mean for your own idea of how theorizing should reflect reality?

Lisa Herzog: Let me start by telling you that my reasons for wanting to study economics, in addition to philosophy, were partly motivated by a certain kind of realist drive. I had the impression that while there is a wide consensus on certain idealistic principles about how to make the world a better place, people still disagreed on which economic policies would achieve this. And I wanted to understand why that was.

I finished my studies just before the big financial crisis, which was certainly a watershed moment for economists. The mainstream of economics was (and arguably still is) the rational choice approach: You start with an individualistic picture of human agency.

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You express human behaviour in a utility function. All agents are usually modelled the same. It's all about choice given a certain set of incentives. It's not about burdens, it's not about responsibilities, it's not about commitments. Maybe it's about costs. But this already raises the question of whether that is the same or not. Also, the choices are never tragic. And, whatever choice you make, it is always seen as just. Do you buy this or that, do you hire a few more people or not? All of this is presented in a very serene way, and that is meant to be realistic. But of course, in certain ways, it is also completely unrealistic.

And in a certain type of philosophy, you have similar underlying assumptions. People sometimes characterize this as a variation of a negative, egoistic *homo economicus* approach because it is focused on people's own utility. But, at the same time, it is obviously also a somewhat flattering picture of human agency, precisely because it is all about individuals, free from social constraints, making their own choices, and being entirely sovereign consumers or investors.

What is really unrealistic, however, when this approach is used either in philosophy or in economics, is that the social embeddedness of human action, human thinking, and human behaviour is entirely missing from the picture. So, social norms hardly play a role, culture hardly plays a role, and even the very language in which things are framed is not made an issue – and that, of course, all makes it very unrealistic in a certain way. In my own research, I have always found it very important to use qualitative empirical research, either by reading from other people or, to some extent, doing my own empirical research, as a counterweight to this highly abstract modelling in order to get a better understanding of the dazzling variety of different social contexts. This gives you a chance of grounding things more.

But there is an immediate challenge, which I think both philosophers and economists tend to be allergic to, which is that it gets incredibly messy and complex both on the descriptive and on the normative level. Both economics and philosophy (or political theory) are disciplines that want to say general things that hold across contexts. Yet this messiness of reality makes it very difficult to find the right level of abstraction if you want to be both realistic and yet be able to say things that don't hold just in relation to one specific case study.

Andreas /Alexander: You have described your motivation for studying economics as an attempt to complement the study of philosophy with a more realistic perspective on the social world. To what extent was economics the obvious choice in view of this particular aim? After all, you have just alluded to the mainstream of economics not being based on an exactly realistic view of the human agency…

Lisa: This speaks very much to the huge frustration I felt when, having studied economics, I realized that while I had learnt so much about models, in order to understand what those models actually say about economic reality, I needed to delve further into economic history, economic sociology, organization studies, psychology, and many other fields. In hindsight, this frustration did in no small part result from realizing that my choice of economics as a subject had been influenced by the – ideological – notion that economics is

'hard science', that economics can tell you what things are really like, and thus provides a sort of reality check on what is or isn't feasible. I was, to some extent, susceptible to that narrative: I was definitely struck by the idea that, in the end, things cost money, while at the same time you don't have an infinite amount of money. It is fundamental 'facts' like these that economists point to when claiming that their approach is particularly realistic – and it seems to me that there is undeniably some truth in it: if there are hard economic constraints, you surely have to take them into account.

At the same time, however, not all of that is true, obviously. If you look at the world through abstract models in which so many assumptions about social reality are taken for granted, then you are working within a very limited, predefined framework and, accordingly, you will quite simply overlook all these other perspectives (and aspects of the social world). In retrospect, what I *should* have studied – and what I think all students in economics should study – is philosophy of science (in order to understand what all this modelling is good for), sociology, history of economics (and/or history of the economy), and quite a bit of psychology.[1]

Andreas /Alexander: There is certainly a lot to follow up on here, but let us first turn to Enzo and try and bring him into the discussion. Enzo, you have been advocating realism in political theory for some time now. At this point, there seems to be a very lively (and ever broadening) debate about 'realism' as a way of doing political theory. Could you provide a brief sketch of what realist theorizing characteristically entails? What do realists perceive of as 'reality', and which features of this reality are of particular importance for political theory?

Enzo Rossi: I should start by saying that there is realism, which is by now a family of views, some of which are really quite different from each other. And then there is the kind of realism that I am particularly interested in, radical realism. It's probably a good idea, then, to give you an account that goes from the general to the particular.

In general, what all the various realist accounts have in common, is that they are inspired by the work of more recent theorists like Bernard Williams and Raymond Geuss. But it's a tradition that goes all the way back to many classics and the history of Western, but also Chinese and Middle Eastern political thought. However, since I'm not a historian of political thought, I will stick to presenting an abstract account of what I take to be characteristic of realism. First of all, I don't think that realism is such a huge break with traditional political philosophy, but very much a reaction against a specific mould of political philosophy that has been distinctive to the English-speaking world since the second half of the 20th century. John Rawls has certainly been the initial inspiration here, but it have arguably been his critics who have subsequently set the tone and have firmly established the idea that the primary task of political philosophy, which is understood as

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1   For an excellent book on how to ground models in reality – which requires other disciplinary approaches – see Spiegler, Peter, 2015, *Behind the Model. A Constructive Critique of Economic Modeling*, Cambridge, UK.

normative political theory, is to see what morality has to say about politics. We look to universal moral principles such as justice, fairness or respect and try to discover what they have to say about politics. It is this kind of moralism that realism might be described as a reaction to. Realism, then, is the view that, more often than not, general moral principles are ill-suited to politics as an object of study.

My own position within the realist family of views is probably a bit more of an extreme, a more radical view. I happen to think that a lot of moral commitments are not suited to the analysis of politics specifically because they are themselves the product of political power relations. Raymond Geuss has a very good line, which is actually adapted from Nietzsche, where he says that "[e]thics is usually dead politics: the hand of a victor in some past conflict reaching out to try to extend its grip to the present and the future".[2] This, too, is an old idea, one that is familiar from some strands of Marxism. It is simply the idea that moral commitments present themselves as standing outside of social and political life so that you can use them to judge social and political life. But in reality, they are themselves the product of power relations. So, when you make moral assessments of real-life political developments, you are – or so I sometimes like to put it by way of an (admittedly somewhat forced) analogy – like an author who referees her own paper, and I think that you should try to be more cognizant of this.

The kind of realism I favour is centred on a reformed critique of ideology that keeps these kinds of insights in mind. The general approach, then, is to make normative claims about politics grounded in epistemic rather than moral normativity. This means that you would analyse the reasons for believing, for instance, in the legitimacy or the appropriateness of a set of political arrangements. In turn, you would come to see that because of the impact of power relations some of respective views people hold are epistemically suboptimal. Take, for example, a patriarchal society in which people think that 'father knows best' or 'father has everybody's interests at heart', and accordingly believe that this is a sound principle from which to judge politics. Yet it turns out that this is the result of inculcation, and that makes it a problem epistemically, as people clearly don't have the best possible picture of how society works. The problem is not that the patriarchy is unjust. What is doing the normative work is trying to get to a state in society in which we can make good decisions about how to organize society precisely because our understanding of how society works is devoid of the biases that come from existing power relations.[3] Interestingly enough, I think this relates reasonably well to something that Lisa has been saying about the use of abstract formal models in economics. It seems clear to me that you could see at least some of the assumptions here as a resulting from certain kinds of power relations that shape the very field of enquiry.

Anyway, this is the sort of reality that I am trying to get at. It's a reality that has been cleansed as much as possible from the kinds of epistemic distortions that are the result of

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2   Geuss, Raymond, 2010, *Politics and the Imagination*, Princeton, p. 42.
3   See Aytac, Ugur / Rossi, Enzo, 2022, *Ideology Critique Without Morality: A Radical Realist Approach*. In: American Political Science Review. https://www.doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422001216.

relations of power. This differs, I believe, in some ways from classic critical theory, but we might want to get into that later.

Andreas /Alexander: Thank you both for these stimulating initial statements. Maybe we could try and extrapolate your respective positions a little bit and see to what extent your accounts of both politics and realism differ. Lisa, you have argued that – despite the various problems you pointed out – economics might still provide a perspective which highlights pertinent aspects of 'the real world' (such as scarcity, for instance) that any 'realistic' type of theorizing about politics should take into account. The implicit assumption here seems to be that these aspects of reality, while not necessarily having an immediate impact on politics, still constitute limits to what can conceivably be achieved through politics. You, Enzo, have highlighted the pervasiveness and effects of relations of power as the most important aspect of reality which political theorists should pay (more) attention to – not simply because politics itself is characterized by power relations, but because the norms and beliefs we use to reflect on politics are themselves the products of existing power relations (rather than a 'view from nowhere'). Does this sound like a correct representation of your respective views?

Lisa: First of all, I should say that I very much agree with the emphasis on the epistemic dimensions of things and the implicit assumptions that people make about different social roles, about who can do what, and so on. I agree that we need a critique of these assumptions – the old-fashioned term would be *Ideologiekritik* – to open up spaces that seem to be set in stone but are really social constructs. Incidentally, this is true across various social spheres, and so if you put this at the core of your definition of 'political', then everything is political, of course.

However, this means that you lose the term 'political' for describing a certain sphere of life and I think sometimes, for certain questions, it is helpful to speak about different spheres and to inquire into the particular logic operating within specific spheres. I'm probably influenced by Niklas Luhmann here, who speaks of different currencies and different systems (although I do not agree with the conservatism that he derives from this descriptive analysis). As a first approximation, in any case, I find this terminology quite helpful. Michael Walzer presents a similar view in his theory of justice but takes it in a normative direction. On the descriptive level, at any rate, I believe this is more or less how our societies are organized. We have different frames, different ontologies, that we use for organizing different social relations, and then we call one the economy, another one academia, and yet another one politics.

If you understand politics in that sense, as that social construct about a certain realm, then I would indeed say, with Luhmann, that it is crucially about power relations. We should not forget, though, that power also plays a role in other realms. Now, what is really interesting – but I think tends to be neglected in today's academic world because we have different academic disciplines focusing on these different social realms – is precisely the intersections between them. For example, how do economic and political

power intersect? That is the kind of questions you can only ask if you leave that standard picture, where economists think about the economy and political theorists and political scientists look at politics. You really need to intertwine these different things and look at the relations between them. To do so, we do need a conception of 'the political' and we need to ask what's specific about it. But we must not essentialize and reify it in a way that would, in turn, blind us to certain effects that do occur in reality.

Enzo: I think I agree with a lot of what Lisa has said. There is, I believe, a growing tendency to distinguish between two (stereo)types of political philosophers: There is, presumably, one type of philosopher who thinks that politics is primarily about the use of coercive power and who will, accordingly, look first to state power, and then to things that look somewhat similar to the state (like the power of corporations), and so on. And then there is another type of philosopher, the more or less Foucauldian, social theory type, who thinks that power is everywhere (and therefore nowhere). I think that we need to navigate between this Scylla and Charybdis. There are undoubtedly some aspects of power that are of specifically political relevance, but the question of what politics *is* is not a question that can be answered from the armchair, as it were.

One project that I've been working on for a long time is to recover a sort of quasi-Aristotelian notion of political naturalism. What I have in mind here is the view that human beings are inescapably political in the sense that, empirically, there is just no record of a human society that didn't have some form of organization that we may deem 'political' in the sense that there are some shared norms that are used for solving certain kinds of coordination problems. This is why I have a long-standing interest in integrating evidence from archaeology and anthropology in some of my own work.[4] I do think that, at the bottom, politics is something that can be observed empirically and about which we can make some theoretical observations and extrapolations, but it's not something that we can give a universal definition of once and for all. What I'm trying to say is that I think in different contexts with different material realities, what politics is or what reasonably counts as politics might vary considerably. In certain contexts, you would find that worrying about the state is a big part of what politics is, and in other contexts it isn't. Yet there is this tendency to reify what is prevalent in one context and make it the general definition of politics. I believe, in contrast, that it's important to be open to the possibility that what we think of as central to politics is open to change. We need to be open to notions of politics that might very well be unrecognizable to us as we are now. And I think it's one of the jobs of political theory to try and imagine some of these futures.

Andreas/Alexander: Something which has featured in both of your answers, and in Lisa's in particular, is the idea that we might usefully distinguish between different social spheres, but that, at the same time, we need to be aware of how these different spheres

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4   Rossi, Enzo / Argenton, Carlo, 2021, *Property, Legitimacy, Ideology: A Reality Check*. In: The Journal of Politics 83 (3), 1046–1059.

interact with each other, to what extent one sphere might have an influence on another, and so on. In addition, Enzo has put forward the notion that political theorists should think beyond what is actually there and imagine alternative versions of 'our reality'. Now, one could easily point to a number of self-professed normative political theorists (of the kind Enzo has referred to above) who share this vision of the task of political theory. Quite a few of those theorists go further, however, in assuming that the alternatives drawn up by the theorist can actually be achieved – namely by way of politics. This is because, or so the argument would go, the sphere of politics holds a special position vis-à-vis other social spheres insofar as political decisions (and the resulting laws, regulations, et cetera) can effectively bring about changes in those other spheres. Granted, politically engineering the desired changes (for instance, replacing the current capitalist organization of the economy with market socialism, as Jerry Cohen envisages in his 'Why Not Socialism?'[5]) might not necessarily be easy (Cohen himself points to "the limits of social technology"[6]), but this does not take away from the fundamental fact that politics is a – if not the single most – potent way of purposefully changing reality. If you feel somewhat uneasy about this account of the 'power of politics' – and we assume that you do: What, in your opinion, is wrong with this account?

Lisa: There is one way in which this can be read as a definitional truth: Politics is what changes reality, and therefore politics changes reality. But I think there is also a much more dangerous version of this, namely a somewhat naïve picture of a 'happy' democracy in which the citizens, and then the parliament, make decisions, and then those decisions are realized in the form of laws. Against this picture, we certainly need to acknowledge that things are far more complicated. There is, to give just one example, robust evidence that a lot of the time, proposals about changing the economic system are killed already at the agenda-setting stage because there is powerful opposition from the rich and powerful through lobbying, or because politicians censor themselves to the extent that they don't even try to initiate certain reforms because they fear that certain companies might leave the country (or similar economic repercussions).

So, in that sense, it's certainly very naïve to assume that politics can simply change reality. Yet, at the same time – and this is where my view might differ from Enzo's – I still think that we need to hold on to a notion of politics as the possibility of change for the better. However, we need a much more realistic version of this notion, one which depicts politics as taking place in lots of different spheres, having a lot to do with the framing of issues, having a lot to do with the media perception of things, having to do with how constellations of certain groups that come together at a certain point in time create windows of opportunity, and so on.

5   Cohen, Gerald A., 2009, *Why Not Socialism?*, Princeton.
6   Ibid.: p. 55.

Enzo: I agree that this kind of naïve picture of politics is a very real risk. I work in a political science department, and I think that a few of my colleagues definitely have a tendency to equate politics with electoral politics and the things around it, and this, I think, is a terrible mistake.

I feel that Otto von Bismarck was probably right when he said that politics was the 'art of the possible'. But, then again, like all nice quips, this requires a lot of explicating. There are, I think, at least two interpretations of that statement, depending on whether you read 'possible' to mean 'feasible' or 'logically possible'. If you listen to Jerry Cohen, it seems like he is exclusively talking about 'logically possible', while others seem to be talking – equally exclusively – about 'feasible'. It seems to me, though, that what we should be looking for is likely somewhere in between – something which may not be feasible here and now but which, in light of our current reality, still provides a reasonable prospect of bringing about the intended change. The challenge, then, would seem to be to figure out how to use empirical input to make sure that your utopian project is still grounded in reality in the right way. It's likely not very difficult to determine what is feasible, but it's very difficult to determine what is a reasonable horizon for feasibility.

Andreas /Alexander: Picking up from this last remark of yours, Enzo, it would seem that in order to come up with reasonably realistic utopias, we need to know not only which aspects to take into account in our theorizing but also at which stage of the process of theory building we should do the required 'reality check'. From a Rawlsian perspective, for instance – and probably in the debate about ideal and non-ideal in general – considerations about reality are supposed to come in rather late, namely when you examine your theory and the resulting proposals in terms of feasibility. Is this where reality should come in, or are there reasons to pay attention to reality at other – earlier – stages of theorizing?

Enzo: I have to say that I'm not terribly interested in feasibility myself, and I have, in fact, argued elsewhere that you really don't need to bother much about feasibility if you are a realist.[7] But there is another way of building empirical information into your theories – fidelity to the facts, as I like to call it – and I think it's the following: You want to have an empirically correct, or at least as plausible as possible account of how people come to believe the kinds of things that they believe about how society is organized. This goes back to the point about ideology that we discussed earlier. So, what you want to know is why people think, for example, that private property is an important right and that it should ground certain practices in society, and so on. And this is, at the end of the day, an empirical question. How do people come to have these beliefs? Where do these strongly held moral commitments come from? Are they contaminated in their genealogy, so to speak, by the very power structure which they uphold? If they are, then it seems

7   Rossi, Enzo, 2019, *Being realistic and demanding the impossible*. In: Constellations 26 (4), 638–652.

to me that they are epistemically defective moral commitments, and so they should not inform our ideas of how to organize society.

But these are questions that you can't really answer from the armchair. These are *empirical* questions, and, to me anyway, this is the most important element of factual empirical reality input that we need in political theorizing.

Lisa: Let me just add one thing. It's something I haven't entirely come to terms with on the methodological level yet, but it does seem extremely important to me. As you know, there is now very solid evidence from the natural sciences telling us that there are certain planetary boundaries for human life. It seems to me that, even if we're not very interested in debates about feasibility, we need a way of being realistic about how our way of living harms nature, how this, in turn, is going to endanger the human species in the long-run, and how this is going to harm the most vulnerable members of the human species first. To my knowledge, this is not really touched upon in the various discussions of feasibility, but I think this is precisely where we should apply these considerations.

The different natural sciences, relying on and combing different methodologies, give us a pretty accurate picture of the effects that climate change, loss of biodiversity, and other forms of environmental damage will have in the longer run. This is where I think we need to employ a kind of realism that would put us in touch with the natural sciences and their findings – which, outside of the climate justice debate, you don't find much in political theory. My sense is, however, that all the questions we standardly address in political theory and political philosophy really need to be examined in light of that premise. We need to change the way in which we deal with the planet and with natural resources because, otherwise, we're going to see a huge catastrophe.

Enzo: I completely agree, and I believe that we could maybe combine Lisa's point with what I was saying earlier about the origins of our moral commitments. A number of people have observed that there are many aspects of at least Western economic and political thought that presuppose something like an inexhaustible reservoir of resources for development. This has been analyzed as the product of, among other things, the *Industrial Revolution*, but also of the era of colonial expansion, when people like John Locke and many others would think of the entire *New World* as effectively uninhabited and endless. Here, too, we should look more closely at the genealogy of these ideas. We might then find that they are, at least partly, a result of trying to justify the specific power relations being created at that time. I certainly think that our current way of thinking about the use of natural resources is still 'contaminated', as it were, by the particular ideology which served the interests of the groups and classes of people who were driving the period of capitalist industrial development and colonial expansions. Uncovering this particular genealogy might go a long way in terms of making us take more seriously the evidence from the natural sciences that Lisa mentioned.

Andreas /Alexander: One might argue, though, that uncertainty plays an important role with regard to these questions. After all, it is notoriously difficult to predict what effects a given political decision will have in the long run. And so, presumably, even with the information provided by the natural sciences – about the effects of global warming, for instance – we cannot know for sure in advance which political decisions will prove most effective in tackling these problems. If there is this kind of fundamental uncertainty, however, would this not provide a certain justification for more utopian theorizing which largely neglects empirical information?

Lisa: I would be very careful with these kinds of arguments because they have often been used to discredit scientific evidence pointing towards a need for change. Think of the tobacco industry saying that the scientific findings about smoking being harmful were not reliable. Very much the same argumentative strategy has been applied to climate change and other areas.[8] It is true that all human action happens under a certain amount of uncertainty, and yet we have degrees of certainty, we have degrees of evidence for certain scenarios, and that's what we need to work with.

There might certainly be changes to the better that are completely unexpected, though. And there might be windows of opportunity for pushing things forward – and here it might be helpful to have a sense of utopia envisaging possibilities beyond what we currently take to be feasible. I'm quite on board with the need for that. What I sometimes wonder is whether it's philosophers who are best at providing this sense of utopia, or whether we should leave this to artists, to writers, song writers, and so on. Personally, I find many of the latter's accounts about possible futures much more inspiring than what you get from ideal theory. Maybe it takes artistic abilities, or a certain kind of creativity, to really think beyond the limitations of our current situation. I'm just not sure to what extent we philosophers are in the best position to do that.

Andreas /Alexander: Maybe we have reached a point where we might try and look more specifically at democracy and democratic theory and inquire about how the thoughts about realism and political theory we have been discussing so far could apply here. Perhaps we could start with a question to Enzo this time? One of our starting points for putting together this special section was the observation that advocates of realism in political theory don't seem very interested in democracy (in contrast to justice or legitimacy, for instance), while democratic theorists don't seem to take much notice of realism as an approach in political theory (yet). Naturally, there are some exceptions – like your paper with Gordon Arlen[9] –, but this certainly seems to be the overall state of affairs. Do you share this observation and, if so, do you have an explanation for it?

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8   Oreskes, Naomi / Conway, Eric, 2020, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*, London.

9   Arlen, Gordon / Rossi, Enzo, 2021, *Must Realists be pessimists about democracy? Responding to epistemic and oligarchic challenges*. In: Moral Philosophy and Politics 8 (1), 27–49.

Enzo: I do share this observation, but I know that there are quite a few people working on the intersection of these two fields now. In fact, I think that we can expect something like a small wave of realist democratic theory very soon.[10] But you are right that one might have expected to see more. Is there a particular reason for this? It seems to me that a lot of democratic theory has been devoted to figuring out which very abstract, single ideals could provide the basis for at least an idealized version of a democratic polity. Accordingly, you find in all of these accounts some view of equality, some account of epistemically optimized decision-making, and so on. If that is indeed the dominant mode of doing democratic theory, then – in light of my earlier characterization of realism – you can easily see why it would not be very attractive for realists.

I do think, however, that there is definitely room for a more realistic analysis of democracy as a practice. What is it about democracy that makes it particularly good (or bad) at solving certain kinds of coordination problems that we take to be distinctive of politics? There is also a perspective which I find some realists pursuing in their recent work and which frames democracy as a mechanism for the dispersion of power.[11] These kinds of power-centric accounts obviously employ a more or less instrumentalist view of democracy, which obviously also fits rather nicely with a realist perspective. This probably also includes a number of people who incorporate agonistic theories of democracy and read theorists like Chantal Mouffe as precursors of the more recent realist critics of Rawls, Habermas and others.[12]

As you can see, though, I don't really have a comprehensive answer to your question.

Andreas /Alexander: *When you characterized your own brand of realism just before, you emphasized the goal of disposing of epistemic distortions and, reversely, improving the epistemic quality of politics. How might this feature in a realist democratic theory? To what extent might democracy enhance the epistemic quality of politics in a way? Is that a theoretical avenue you might see yourself going further down?*

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10 E.g., forthcoming work by Janosch Prinz and Manon Westphal on realism and democratic innovations, and recent realist work on democracy and digitalisation, such as Cozzaglio, Ilaria, 2022, *Can Realism Save us from Populism? Rousseau in the Digital Age*. In: European Journal of Political Theory 21 (2), 276–298. There is also recent realist work on the democracy/economy interface, e.g. Arlen, Gordon, 2022, *Citizen Tax Juries: Democratising Tax Enforcement after the Panama Papers*. In: Political Theory 50 (2), 193–220; Prinz, Janosch / Rossi, Enzo, 2022, *Financial Power and Democratic Legitimacy: How to Think Realistically About Public Debt*. In: Social Theory & Practice 48 (1), 115–140.

11 Arlen, Gordon, 2011, *J. S. Mill on Democracy, Oligarchy, and Working-Class Mobilization*. In: American Political Science Review. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000363; Bagg, Samuel, 2018, *The Power of the Multitude: Answering Epistemic Challenges to Democracy*. In: American Political Science Review 112 (4), 891–904.

12 Aytac, Ugur, 2021, *On the Limits of the Political: The Problem of Overly Permissive Pluralism in Mouffe's Agonism*. In: Constellations 28 (3), 417–431; Cross, Ben, 2017, *Normativity in Chantal Mouffe's Political Realism*. In: Constellations 24 (2), 180–191; Westphal, Manon, 2021, *For an Agonistic Element in Realist Legitimacy*. In: Social Theory & Practice. https://dx.doi.org/10.5840/soctheorpract20211217150.

Enzo: If you put it like this, it sounds quite a bit like the views of Hélène Landemore, or David Estlund and various others: Crudely, you take one theorem, like some version of Condorcet or something, and then you idealize. It is almost an economics approach to democracy. That's not a view I find attractive.

I think I more or less share Lisa's reticence about our ability as philosophers to imagine what a better system, a significantly different and better system, might look like. I don't want to write recipes for setting up a universally 'good' social organisation. What I'm interested in is how we might create conditions so that people can be left to their own devices – because I think that institutions which are supported by people for reasons that are not themselves the result of the influence of the power of other groups have the best chance of being epistemically optimal, in the sense of tracking the truth about what society is like, and so on. I'm not sure whether this counts as a democratic theory. It's a theory about letting people decide how to organize their social and political life.

Lisa: I think I slightly disagree with Enzo here. While I appreciate Enzo's scepticism about ideals in democratic theory, I think that even he ultimately cannot do without ideals, for reasons having to do with the general relation between knowledge and democracy, which I explore in more detail in my forthcoming book.[13] Let me make just two brief points here:

My first point is that we need to get rid of this notion of the 'marketplace of ideas', that is, the idea that we should simply let everyone speak their mind and the truth will come out. This is wrong for so many reasons (which I won't go into here) but, most importantly, this is simply not the way in which public speech and truth are connected. It's plain economic ideology, and it serves those who have the means to dominate public discourse, exclude others from it, and so on.

My second, related point is that democracies need certain institutional settings, and quite possibly also a certain ethos if they want to be able to deal with different forms of knowledge in the complex societies with divided labour that we have at the moment, with so many different forms of knowledge. And we cannot expect those things to come about on their own. Rather, we need to make sure that these epistemic infrastructures for democracy, as I call them, are not undermined by market powers. And I think that, ultimately, we cannot have epistemically well-functioning democracies as long as there also is the degree of economic inequality which we have at the moment. We need to radically rethink how much economic inequality is compatible with having a truly democratic discourse. Otherwise, the risk of these ideological power constellations will never be manageable.

Andreas/Alexander: Lisa, at the beginning of the interview, you argued that taking a closer look at the sphere of the economy (be it by way of economics or otherwise) may provide an important kind of 'reality check' for political theory – and your last point seems

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13 Herzog, Lisa, forthcoming 2023, *Citizen Knowledge. Markets, Experts, and the Infrastructure of Democracy*, Oxford.

to be a good example of this kind of 'reality check', specifically for democratic theory. Your observations, however, very much like other recent studies examining the impact of the (neoliberal) economy on democracy,[14] seem to paint a rather pessimistic picture. Does taking into account reality – and economic reality at that – always mean bad news for democratic theory?

Lisa: I'm not so sure. I suppose it depends on what you count as reality, and on whether you discount what one might call 'manufactured reality'. I think that the latter offers some grounds for optimism. What I have in mind here is the research on democratic innovations, where it turns out, in many, many field studies that if you ask people from all walks of life to deliberate on certain issues, they are often able to do so quite well, quite reasonably: they can process information, they are not polarized afterwards, they see that the other side is not so evil after all, and that you can actually get along.[15] Now, you might want to object that these findings are indeed 'manufactured', since there are all these facilitators, since 'difficult people' would not even participate in all these social experiments, and so on. These are certainly valid points. But there are also many examples from real social movements – people getting together, often locally, trying to address local problems, finding solutions – and the research on that does make me somewhat optimistic that people are not as utility-focused or egoistic as a lot of economic theorizing implies.

Overall, I think that there are many different aspects of reality that show us both light and shadow, if you like, and we probably need to rebuild our theoretical frameworks to take them all into account rather than overlooking either the negative or the positive dimensions because of certain blind spots in our theorizing. The power of certain economic actors, for example, certainly adds to a more pessimistic outlook for democracy, yet, ironically, it's an aspect of reality which has often been hidden by economic theorizing that just doesn't look at power relations (which is not to say that there aren't areas in economics – such as political economy research, and heterodox economics more generally – in which this *is* taken into account). At the same time, there are all these grassroot movements, these forms of citizen engagement, where there is a lot going on, which provide reasons for optimism. We need to understand much better, however, under what conditions these models can be successful and to what extent the structural circumstances under which they operate could be reformed to allow for more of these kinds of initiatives and bottom-up structures. Incidentally, this applies not only to democracy, but also to the realm of economics. I'm very interested in workplace democracy and how that can be made to work. Here, too, I see a lot of positive examples.

So, I really don't think that looking at reality necessarily makes you want to throw up your hands in despair because it's all so bleak. There is also good stuff.

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14 See, for instance, Brown, Wendy, 2019, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West*, New York.

15 See for example recently Fishkin, James / Siu, Alice / Diamond, Larry / Bradburn, Norman, 2021, *Is Deliberation an Antidote to Extreme Partisan Polarization? Reflections on "America in One Room"*. In: American Political Science Review 115 (4), 1464–1481.

Andreas /Alexander: Having talked about the potential impact of reality on democracy, maybe we should also look at the inverse relation between the two. Some versions of democratic theory – and this includes arguments from John Stewart Mill to Amartya Sen[16] – claim that democracy is better suited to track reality than other types of regimes. Democracies are, or so the argument goes, better at preventing famines than autocracies, among other things – precisely because democratic regimes allow for a more realistic way of accessing social reality. Does this notion merit further exploration in terms of working towards a more realistic type of democratic theory?

Enzo: I think that it might be useful to distinguish here between democracy – our actually existing electoral democracy, the kind of thing that we commonly call democracy – and democracy as an ideal. And I should preface my answer by saying that it seems to me that a lot of what we consider to be the bad news about democracy concerns specifically our existing democracy. To that effect, a lot of what we consider bad news about democracy is really bad news about what capitalism does to politics.

This brings me to your question, which I think is really an empirical question that I am not a hundred percent confident to answer. Sen's argument, for example, that democracy is particularly good at satisfying certain kinds of preferences – but is he not talking about preferences which people have developed specifically under democratic institutions?[17] When it comes to Mill, I also think that he was talking about democracy within a very specific historical context which was marked by the emergence of universal suffrage, the emergence of early mass society, and so on. I'm generally in favour – and maybe this is to some extent a realist view – of understandings of democracy that are a bit more context-sensitive than some of the more 'classical' arguments. At the moment, however, under the conditions that some refer to as 'late capitalism', I don't see that there is an enormous amount of epistemic prowess built into the main institutions of actually existing democracies.

It's true that, as Lisa was saying, in an interstitial way, in the cracks here and there, there are many possibilities for a more clear-eyed understanding of social reality. But I'm not sure whether this is specific to the actually existing version of democracy. Democracy as an ideal, on the other hand, – or maybe the idea of self-government – might indeed entail a notion of the benefits of diffuse knowledge. However, I find that we don't have a very good account of how to translate this abstract idea about the epistemic abilities of democracy into concrete institutions.

Lisa: My view is that if you believe in democracy as a principle of government, and if you also believe – which I think is very much a realistic assumption – that people will not be content with a system that fails to deliver on certain basic tasks of government, then there is actually a normative imperative to make democracy such that the potential of the

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16   Mill, John Stuart, 2008 [1861], *Considerations on Representative Government*, New York; Sen, Amartya, 1995, *Rationality and Social Choice*. In: The American Economic Review 85: 1–24.

17   Argenton, Carlo / Rossi, Enzo, 2013, *Pluralism, Preferences, and Deliberation: A Critique of Sen's Constructive Argument for Democracy*. In: Journal of Social Philosophy 44 (2): 129–145.

'knowledge of the many' is productively used. What Sen's example of democracies being better at preventing famines points to, I think, is that there is a particular kind of knowledge that people can provide. A shortage of food is something I can clearly see when I go shopping. I don't need special expertise to make this kind of observation. I don't need to assemble different forms of expertise to make sense of it. It's this very basic kind of feedback that citizens can provide, at any rate, I think. How to tackle climate change, or how to make the global economy more just – these are much bigger challenges in that respect, because the relevant knowledge cannot be easily gained through everyday experiences. People typically don't get to experience the complex interplay of the different effects involved with these issues. Moreover, some of the longer-term consequences obviously cannot be experienced at all yet. Yet, it is crucially important that democracies deal with these things. And that's why these questions of providing the epistemic infrastructures of democracy, of resisting the notion of the 'marketplace of ideas', and of resisting also the economic actors trying to dominate public discourse, are so important.

Andreas /Alexander: It seems like one interpretation of what you just said might be that there are limits to democratic deliberation and democratic decision-making or that, epistemically speaking, there is a limit to the usefulness of democratic discourse. There are, on this interpretation, areas where we need to rely on experts for the kind of knowledge that ordinary citizens simply cannot gain. But then, how do we know where to draw the line? When do we need to hand things over to the experts, as it were?

During the 2008 financial crisis, for example, there was this prevalent argument, with regard to the question of whether a state-funded bank bailout was called for, that this was not something the general public could reasonably comment on. After all, or so the argument went, the potential consequences of those banks failing were so complex and manifold that only the expertise of economists could provide any kind of guidance. As you remember, those experts (or some of them anyway) then went on to lay out scenarios envisaging the end of the world as we know it – if the banks would not be bailed out. Now, on the one hand, we might certainly question to what extent these scenarios were even close to something like a realistic prediction – and why economists would have presented their expertise in the form of these in the first place. On the other hand, however, we might wonder if this doesn't point to a general danger of passing things on to the experts too quickly – even if we do believe that there are limits to what the public might sensibly decide upon. After all, even as political theorists (or experts in another field, for that matter), our drawing a demarcation line between what can be decided by citizens and what must be decided by experts might itself be the result of an ideologically distorted view of reality.

Lisa: The way I think about these questions is that there are certain areas for which we need expert knowledge, or expertise in the form of practical knowledge, which is not available to everyone – not because people are cognitively limited, but simply because we have limited time in our lives, and we need to rely on the knowledge of others in many areas of our lives. This is obviously not restricted to politics. With regard to democratic

politics, however, the more specific question is how we can square the epistemic authority of certain groups in areas where this is really legitimate with democratic equality. And how can we prevent the kind of abuse of epistemic authority which – following up on the example you have just given – we may have witnessed in the expertise given by economists in the 2008 financial crisis?

However, I wonder whether we might not be too quick to dismiss the notion that those experts were honestly trying to provide as objective an account as possible of the potential repercussions of the crisis. What went wrong during the 2008 crisis, I believe, was that the epistemic community of economists had been, to a great extent, caught in a certain paradigm that made them see some things and not others. And there were only a few outsiders who warned against the crash, and maybe, if there had been more of them, they might have anticipated what banking bailouts would actually result in. But that didn't happen for reasons which – from a sociology of academia perspective – are rather straightforward: You just need to look at who gets to be an economist and who doesn't, which kind of projects get funding, and so on.

What was certainly missing, though, was a democratic counterweight to the expertise of these mainstream economists who were stuck in a certain paradigm and not willing to question certain assumptions. And what you need in order for that uneasy relationship between expertise and democracy to go better, or to be at least manageable – because there is always going to be a certain tension – is this: If certain groups in society generate certain forms of knowledge – in the particular case of the 2008 crisis we might refer to banks generating certain forms of knowledge about financial markets – then you absolutely need to have publicly minded, democratically minded experts who can monitor this process and offer a kind of counter-expertise to those experts who work for specific interest groups. I think that there are areas where this works reasonably well, and if it does go reasonably well, we are usually not even aware of it. For instance, I would argue that in many European countries, public health authorities are still reasonably independent and do enforce certain standards against private interests.

This, I think, is the most fruitful way to think about these kinds of issues. You cannot deny the existence of different degrees of epistemic authority for certain areas. We cannot decide everything by deliberation alone, but then we absolutely need to think about the relationship between these epistemic communities and democratic society at large. Ultimately, there are a lot more aspects to consider here. But I do think that one crucial element is a certain democratic ethos on the part of those experts not to abuse their position and to really put it into the service of democratic governments and not assume more authority than it is due to them because of their expertise.

Andreas /Alexander: It seems that, once more, Lisa is helpfully reminding us not to lose sight of the possibility of a somewhat more optimistic outlook here. Still, slightly less optimistic realists might point out that attributing the status of 'experts' to certain people and determining which decisions should be taken by those experts are inherently political decisions. If you frame the role of experts in politics in this way and look at the way

in which experts have influenced politics in the recent past, then you might conclude – as Enzo and others have done – that there is a very real danger of a slippery slope leading towards a problematic form of epistocracy.

Enzo: I agree, there definitely is this danger, and I have tried to present similar arguments to the ones you have just referred to in a couple of papers.[18] I should say, though, that unlike Lisa I'm really not an expert on financial issues. Still, with regard to the European debt crisis (which is, of course, a consequence of the banking crisis, which in turn is a consequence…), I think that we can observe two ideological fallacies in public discourse – one of technocracy and one of moralism.

The technocratic fallacy is the misrepresentation of consensus or certainty about certain economic matters. This very much resonates with some of the things Lisa was saying just now. I think the best remedy against an expert's overreach, such as the mainstream economists' during the 2008 crisis, is precisely to do an ideology critique of the very discipline of economics, right? We're seeing this all over again now with what economists tell us about inflation. There's quite high inflation again in much of the world, and this is certainly a very ideologically charged debate – but economists never seem to discuss it in a way where there may be two or even more different views. Rather, they will always say 'Well, *science* says that…' – there is always this kind of ideological overreach. And in response to that, I think entangling the power relations that lead to this is a way to partly limit this epistemic overreach of experts.

The other ideological fallacy, as I have said, is one of moralism – where you think that paying debts, for instance, is really a matter akin to keeping your promises or something like that, as if the former was perfectly analogous to everyday interactions. This is a case where, for example, the political issues at stake can't be captured very well through analogies to the moral obligations associated with ordinary intrapersonal practices such as making promises: yes, in a sense a country's sovereign debt is a kind of promise, but really, and more importantly, it's also the result of many untransparent and barely foreseeable power struggles, which are hard to understand with conceptions of agency and responsibility imported from moral philosophy. And this is why we need a realistic political lens.

Now, I certainly don't think that some sort of populism could be a remedy to the epistemic overreach of experts, but, at the same time, I don't think either that we have to yield to those suggesting that we should embrace the idea of epistocracy. In fact, I think that those advocating epistocracy, or technocracy for that matter, are in a highly problematic way naïve, namely insofar as they downright glorify the epistemic position of elites as if they were somehow immune from the power relations that work the thinking of basically everyone. This in itself, I believe, is enough of a reason to be sceptical of this technocratic, or epistocratic, drift.

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18   Arlen, Gordon / Rossi, Enzo, 2022, *Is this what democracy looks like? (Never mind epistocracy)*. In: Inquiry 65 (1): 1–14; Prinz, Janosch / Rossi, Enzo, 2022, *Financial Power and Democratic Legitimacy: How to Think Realistically About Public Debt*. In: Social Theory & Practice 48 (1), 115–140.

Lisa: Maybe I could add a very brief example underlining just that point. You may have heard of Bryan Caplan, an American economist and self-proclaimed 'realist', who wrote this book about how uninformed ordinary voters are.[19] One of the examples he uses in that book is that voters have wrong ideas about the effect of the minimum wage on the economy. The book came out in 2007, and evidently, the mainstream economics approach to minimum wages has not exactly aged well: last year the Nobel Prize for economics was awarded to a group of researchers who had shown that economists were wrong about minimum wages – and while ordinary people did not have an entirely correct intuition, they were not as far off as Caplan and other economists at the time thought.

So, deciding who should be recognized as having superior knowledge about certain things is extremely tricky, to say the least. I do think it is telling, though, that some of these alleged expert elites are actually socially extremely homogeneous, and it seems to me that we might see this as an indication that there's something going wrong there. If a group of experts consists only of elderly white men, then you might justifiably wonder whether the composition of that group has to do with real expertise or whether it's the result of certain power relations.

Andreas/Alexander: If you are still up for it, we do have one last question, and it's a question regarding the potential limits of both democracy and democratic theory. We have already talked about how democratic theory, in identifying potential limits to democratic decision-making, might end up with two kinds of problematic results. On the one hand, by reproducing – and reiterating as unsurmountable – certain actually existing limits on the level of theory, the theorist's account might itself become ideological. On the other hand, by accepting no limits to democratic decision-making whatsoever, the theorist might end up with a straightforwardly populist account, insisting that, in a democracy, the people should be able to get what they want, and thus questioning the legitimacy of any government failing to bring about this kind of un-filtered will of the people.

A lot seems to hinge, then, not only on which aspects of reality we take into account in our theorizing about politics but also on what status we ascribe to those particular aspects. Is there, for instance, such a thing as social facts – or maybe you might want to call them facts of social life or something to that effect – which cannot be easily changed or cannot be changed at all? Could we identify such aspects of reality as something like 'hard facts', which would be constraints on any account of democratic politics we might envisage?

The existence of different epistemic positions in society which we were talking about before might, for instance, be considered such a hard fact. Limited resources – in terms of natural resources, but potentially also in terms of time constraints – might be considered a hard fact. Some people might even say that capitalism is certainly a hard fact about our current situation in as far as, if not unsurmountable, it certainly would be extremely difficult to change.

Do you think that there are at least some such hard facts about the social world that any political theory would absolutely have to take into account?

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19 Caplan, Bryan, 2007, *The myth of the rational voter: Why democracies choose bad policies*, Princeton, NJ.

Lisa: I agree that there might be such hard facts. But I would also say that the notion is hugely dangerous because it's a perfect smokescreen for ideology to say that something is a fact of life and can't be changed. So, we need to be extremely careful here. Thinking of capitalism as a fact of social life, for example… I think that's extremely dangerous. Don't do it! I mean, there have been periods where there hasn't been capitalism, and I think that, more often than not, history provides a pretty good check regarding the supposedly factual nature of something. Of course, someone might want to point to path dependencies or ratchet effects and argue that once one has moved in a certain direction, it's often very difficult to move back. But even then, I think this at least gives us a certain indication of how changeable or unchangeable things are.

One thing that I would say is a social fact of life is that human beings are vulnerable and fragile and depend on the help of others for long periods of their life. So there will always be the need for care work. And one of the problems resulting from the entanglement of capitalism and patriarchy is, of course, the denial of a need for care work, along with the assumption that we are these atomistic, ready-to-go entrepreneurial selves who just want to maximize our income in the labour market.

So, I think there are things that we may acknowledge as having at least a certain kind of stability over all periods of history. But we still need to be really, really careful. I mean, even with regard to the need for care, maybe we could imagine a future in which humans are genetically modified in a way which largely does away with this need, and so even this might not be set in stone entirely. But for the moment, it still seems to be very much a social fact, and I'd say that we need to take it into account.

Enzo: Lisa bringing up this kind of sci-fi scenario made me think of a very good line by Ursula Le Guin, where she says: Look, the end of capitalism seems very difficult to imagine. But then, you know, once upon a time, people would have said the same thing about the divine right of kings.[20] What I take from this is that even our best empirical enquiry, both into the human condition and into the natural world, is partly shaped or, more accurately, partly distorted by power relations. We just don't have the best possible account of what these hard constraints are. The best approximation that we do have is maybe something like the notion that physics and chemistry are more reliable than economics.

So, it seems to me that what we could (and should) do as democratic theorists here is to contribute to bringing about a world in which the understanding of that world is as free as possible from distortions so that we may learn more about what these hard constraints are. I do think that we can improve our grasp of reality by criticizing the sources of ideological distortions, and changing our political institutions accordingly. That, I think, is our best shot at learning what potential hard constraints might be (if there are

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20 "We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable – but then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings." Ursula K. Le Guin, 2014, Speech at National Book Awards (https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/nov/20/ursula-k-le-guin-national-book-awards-speech, 16.12.2022).

any). I think in every given period of human existence, there have been different dominant distortions of our perception of reality. Right now, we live under capitalism, and we think of ourselves, as Lisa was saying, as little utility-maximizing machines – and a lot of people think of this as a hard constraint. Had we been living in a different era, we might have thought of certain elements of the natural order as hard constraints, or that society was ordained by God to be divided into warriors and priests, and labourers, or something to that effect. What we see here, I think, is that there is certainly a close link between what we think of as hard constraints and the ways in which power distorts the way in which we perceive and make sense of reality. So, it seems to me that the best that we can hope for as a theorist is to reduce the ways in which power does that.

And I think, in a way, maybe this actually is a kind of democratic theory, at the centre of which there is this idea of trying to leave people to their own devices. You know, for most of at least recorded history – a small part of our history as a species – there have almost always been chieftains, governments, and so on – and so, most people about whom we have written records haven't really been left to their own devices, and thus we don't know how people would see reality, and which institutions they would come up with if they were. This shouldn't stop us from trying to find out, though.

Lisa: Could I add a final thought? You see, I haven't really framed my own thinking in terms of realism much, but, in a sense, I've more or less always been motivated by looking for realistic solutions. At the same time, I wonder to what extent that's actually compatible with my commitment to participatory democracy, which may sound completely utopian and idealistic. It seems to me, though, that we're at a point in time where we really need to make a choice. Either there's a deepening of democracy where we push back market forces, lobbyism, and all that, and also create opportunities for empowering people, use digital communication to connect people – and really have this enabling moment that brings more transparency, more participation, and more accountability of the powerful. Or we slide down even faster into a kind of post-democracy where we end up in a completely corrupt state in which democratic ideals are really just dreams.

And so I think I'm utopian out of realism, because I think our only chance to save basic democratic principles and values in the current situation is to demand pretty radical change compared to the status quo. In that sense, then, I don't think that being a realist and being a utopian radical has to be a contradiction. Sometimes the situation is such that you have to bring both together, and I certainly think that the current situation in many democratic societies demands just that.

Andreas/Alexander: The way you present your own position certainly makes a lot of sense. It seems to underline, however, that there is a rather sizable difference between your view and Enzo's, after all. Lisa, it seems that you still hold on to some sort of constructive outlook, where you start with the idea that we should strive to achieve certain ideals, and then might have to figure out how to deal with certain obstacles along the way…

Lisa: I guess my starting point is really more about knowing what we don't want. At the moment, we see very clearly that there are tendencies in that very direction, and having a firm idea of what you don't want gives you a sense of realizing what is at stake if you don't at least defend what we still have in terms of democratic principles and institutions. So maybe I do have a somewhat more positive outlook in that respect. But on my hopeful days, I think you just need hope, there is a sort of moral duty to be hopeful.

Enzo: Now, I don't know. My view is that we are a long way away from having a good picture of social reality. I honestly don't know what people would do if they were truly left to their own devices. Yet, *my* hope is that we might be able to bring about conditions where we might find out – that we might be able to clean up the cognitive windscreen of society, as it were.

Getting there might indeed involve some kind of reinforcement of existing democratic institutions, through which we might effect some reduction of power, of influences from economic actors and others (possibly including the state itself). In the end, though, I think the best that we can hope for is to enable people to work out for themselves what they want to do with their social and political lives. And this isn't a moral commitment. It's an epistemic one, akin to an empirically-grounded form of standpoint theory: those living a life are, in principle, best placed to understand what they might want from it – if they are left to their own devices.

Lisa: See, that's perfect because I think you're saying that we, too, could be among these people…

Andreas /Alexander: *We might say, then, that what Enzo is envisaging, and what he would like to bring about through his work, is a world where everyone can play the role that Lisa before attributed to artists.*

Enzo: That's a very nice way of putting it. I mean, maybe this is childish optimism. But I think it really is possible that things could be a lot better. We just don't really know how they could be. The possibilities are much wider than is commonly thought. It's not a promise of utopia, but it's a promise of at least knowing what is actually possible. We might still find, if we had a better grasp of social reality, that we really are horrible creatures and that things are absolutely hopeless. So, maybe there is hope, or maybe there isn't – but I certainly would like to know. So what we need to do, I think, is we need to get better at finding out.