Barbara Strohschein

Defense and Recognition in the Climate Crisis

How to Communicate About Truths, Facts and Opinions

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Contents

Introduction

About the Approach, Ideas and Procedure

<div style="text-align:right">**1**</div>

What Do You Think About Climate Change?

How would you, dear readers, answer the following questions?

"How do you assess climate research and the current climate debates?"

"What nature experiences in your childhood do you remember?"

"What goes through your mind when you see and hear reports of climate catastrophes in the media?"

"Have you yourself been affected by such catastrophes?"

"What power do you think you have to contribute to climate protection?"

"Which authorities in which areas do you recognize?"

"What power do you think politicians have today in terms of climate?"

"What influence should climate researchers have on political decisions in your opinion?"

"Which climate protection measures do you consider to be sensible or sense-less—and why?"

"What importance do you attribute to science in solving climate problems?"

"From which information sources do you derive your knowledge and justify your opinions?"

"What content in terms of climate change do you exchange with others?"

"How do you deal with someone who is of a completely different opinion than you?"

"What values are important to you in life?"

"What are the values, in your opinion, that hold a society together?"

A colleague and I conducted numerous in-depth interviews as part of a research project on *argumentation patterns in the climate debate and the psycho-*

social background.[1] We wanted to find out what opinions there are about climate change and what factors influence opinion formation: such as family background, attitude towards nature, assessment of science, media and politics, as well as hopes, fears, values and visions. We learned a lot about how people think and feel about a central crisis topic today and what they know or do not know about climate change. In the course of the project, participants from different social classes, professions and age groups gave us detailed answers to our questions.

When we thought about the first ideas for this project, it was open whether interview partners could be found and whether and how they would engage with the questions. We prepared the acquisition carefully with personal letters and phone calls, clarified the goal of the investigation and guaranteed anonymity. Perhaps our interest in the potential participants and our enthusiasm for the project played a role in convincing people to take part in this study. It actually seemed to be no problem to find enough interested parties who were willing to engage in the survey. In the interviews themselves, it became clear that it was the interviewees' declared need to answer our deeper questions, which no one else asks, and to report what concerns them.

What Does a Look into Social Reality Show?

Actually, we could have made it easier for ourselves with a quantitative study than to travel and conduct detailed interviews on site. That is: to start an online opinion poll with predetermined answers that are ticked off. Even if this procedure is common today and enjoys a much higher reputation due to the quantification of data, this would not have been an option for this project, which is about psycho-social background of argumentation patterns: With predetermined answers it is difficult to determine what really moves interviewees.

The concrete look at the empirically observable reality and here at the personal conditions is important for findings and analyses, not just speculation about concepts. This was also the view of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein.

This perspective is all the more important if one wants to find out where the causes of conflicts lie. And that the climate crisis brings many conflicts with it is

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[1] This is a qualitative study entitled "The so-called climate skeptics. Argumentation patterns and psychosocial background." Commissioned by DBU, with thanks to the head of the environmental communication department Dr. Thomas Pyhel, in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Dieter Flader, FU Berlin and Prof. Dr. A. J. Wulf, SRH Hochschule in Berlin, 2019.

beyond question. This already raises the first questions: What problems do citizens have with the climate crisis?

What concerns them? What are they thinking about? What do they know? What do they feel? How do they get involved, or not?

The climate, like the pandemic and wars, affects the entire world population equally. And crises are not caused by heaven, but by humans.

But how to deal with it? Scientific results, technological and political solutions, the debate about the costs of climate protection are all mentioned.

But on closer inspection, the climate crisis is not only about causes such as CO_2 emissions, forest fires and floods, environmental pollution, consumer consequences and the like. This is also about people who, as affected people, experts, politicians, consumers, environmentalists, climate skeptics, global players, etc., are not only part of the event, but also actors in the ongoing event.

But this is rarely or never the case.

Sometimes it seems to me that humanity not only destroys its livelihoods through environmental destruction and wars, but also destroys itself by losing sight of itself and its possibilities and limits. They rely on technology, science, financing and politics, without considering that these are also made by humans.

As social and humanities scientists, we noticed that while human-made climate change is blamed, individuals who think, speak and act, regardless of their position on climate change, are hardly ever mentioned.

Are people to blame, but otherwise they don't play a role at all?

Please understand this question as a hint at a paradox: The climate crisis is and will be man-made, but the discourse almost exclusively revolves around technical problems and not around interpersonal problems that arise in communication and make it difficult to implement reasonable measures.

There are undoubtedly many efforts to involve citizens, motivate young people to get involved in climate protection. But that does not mean that the obvious or hidden resistance to dealing with the climate issue constructively has already been understood and overcome.

How communication is taking place and should take place in order to define and solve urgent tasks that are so far hardly or not at all in the focus, these questions have hardly been asked so far. However, without communication nothing actually happens. I am not talking about communication here only as a logical means to an end, but about the question of how people communicate and act with each other in order to recognize and solve problems. It is therefore important to ask which *problems arise from* and *in* communication and which *solution-Means can be created by* communication.

And to find this out, it is obvious to deal (exemplarily) with the thinking, speaking and acting in relation to the climate problem.

Anyone who, like us, deals with deeper-lying crisis causes cannot avoid dealing with social reality and asking: How does communication work?

Communication is life, is exchange and takes place in an incessant change. It creates, reflects and solves problems or creates them in the first place.

Of course it is impossible to answer such complex questions in toto.

But what is possible is to find out through theory-based interviews how the argument is in the case of the climate. With the intention of finding out what citizens from the German-speaking area think, feel and *speak* about the climate crisis—and which conclusions can be drawn exemplarily for politics, business and science from these statements.

What Guides the View into Social Reality?

"Research means to be questioning at first."[2] Research means not to know something yet and to want to know it. And the questions are usually based on interest, curiosity and knowledge. This ideally allows to ask the right questions and to create a target perspective. What does that mean for a research project on climate communication?

As humanities and social scientists, we cannot be concerned with the climate itself and its scientific research. Even if we have consulted with climate scientists and done a lot of research, the climate itself could not be in the focus here for obvious reasons. Our interest relates to the communication *about* the climate.

In the preliminary work of the survey, it was already shown on the one hand how climate change and its consequences were considered undisputed, but on the other hand how skepticism and criticism from experts and laymen towards many publicly conveyed climate statements could be observed.

So it was only natural to ask: What arguments do climate skeptics have? And how do laymen justify their skepticism? Is skepticism urgently needed? Or does skepticism also lead to everything being questioned and relativized? And why are the disputes between the camps (climate opponents and climate proponents) so bitterly fought?

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[2] This sentence is from the philosopher Ernst Bloch and could be guiding for all research work.

These and other questions were guided by our hypotheses about the deeper reasons for communication conflicts, which were justified by our preliminary work with a view to effective factors that have never been discussed in the climate issue:[3] How does the unconscious affect climate discourse? What role does injury play?

First of all, we came across colleagues and supporters of the project who were astonished by these theses that the unconscious and the injuries in public opinion-forming on the climate issue could play a role, for us understandable reasons: How? The unconscious should affect rational discourse? The climate is injured, although only people injure each other? And in addition: How should these two effective factors—the unconscious and the injury—be empirically examined in a qualitative study?

But these questions can be answered on the basis of theories of language and action for the interpretation of data: In speaking and acting, what can be documented and interpreted is expressed. And from the interpretation of the data, conclusions can be drawn about human behavior.

We were able to convince with our approach and successfully carry out this project. With a final report and a guide with recommendations for climate communication, we have completed the project. The interviews—thanks to our conversation partners—have made highly interesting insights into the formation of opinions on the climate issue and the psycho-social backgrounds possible.

How New Perspectives are Opened Up by Informative Results

The extensive data material challenged me to continue my research or to ask questions after its completion. The evaluation of the data had shown that the interviewees (directly as well as indirectly) often expressed fears and feelings of powerlessness with regard to the climate, as well as skepticism. However, it is very important to me to mention here that I will reproduce the quotations from the interviews as faithfully as possible in Part III of the book. For this it is necessary to mention that a verbal statement is connected with small interruptions, with incomplete sentences, pauses for thought and jumps in thoughts. These phe-

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[3] Dieter Flader: From mobbing to the climate debate. How the unconscious determines social behavior. Giessen 2016; Barbara Strohschein: The offended society. The suffering from devaluation and the happiness through recognition. Munich 2015.

nomena of speaking are not "ironed out" here in the reproduction, but reproduced authentically. This procedure is typical in qualitative research and should not disappear in the notes here, but be mentioned as part of the method.

As it turned out, not only the declared climate skeptics were skeptical, but almost all interviewees: skepticism, for example, towards the media, towards the politicians, towards the industry. The climate proved to be the topic that almost always evokes negative feelings and doubts: fear, powerlessness, anger, aversion, self-reproach, opinion battles, injuries, etc. In contrast, many interviewees were aware that the climate crisis exists with life-threatening consequences and is becoming a permanent danger.

These insights and experiences were reflected in the arguments of the interviewees. And it was striking that, on the one hand, the climate issue was rated as absolutely relevant, but on the other hand also as a problem that one does not want to, can and does not want to deal with on a daily basis: a comprehensible defense of something that burdens. Unpleasant feelings and rationally recognized insights meet here.

This remarkable finding gave me a hint to ask further: What is why—consciously as well as unconsciously—defended in the confrontation with the climate crisis? And what is how and why recognized?

For these questions the data had to be viewed further: With the help of the theories from psychology on the subject of defense and the theories from philosophy on the subject of recognition.

Defense is an aspect of the unconscious, which is reflected in language and action. The psychic and social defense is to be examined accordingly with psychological, psychoanalytical theories and theories of language and action. These, in turn, are to be made usable for the interpretation of the data,

Recognition is a philosophical topic. Recognition is, from a philosophical point of view, not primarily analyzed as a social act, but, for example, by Hegel (and other, also contemporary philosophers), explained as a complex process of consciousness with different forms, modalities, related to persons, social processes, facts, institutions, as well as occupied with norms and values.

Defense and recognition are, as seen and explained in this book, the two basic patterns of human behavior and human communication. They work like a binary system in which something (often prerational and unconscious) is spontaneously negated or affirmed.

Many variants and expressions follow from these basic patterns, all of which have an impact on communication processes with far-reaching consequences. This also applies accordingly to defense and recognition in the climate crisis.

The idea for this book arose from the results of the study "Argumentation patterns in the climate debate", from publications and research, and from the thesis that the patterns of thought and action play a decisive role in communication through *defense and recognition*.

What Goals are Pursued with This Book

It follows logically from this that the goals of this book are to analyze, explain, understand and suggest solutions for constructive climate communication by way of example. The basis for the analysis and the suggestions for solutions are created in the four main parts of the book. The basis for this are the empirically obtained data and their interpretation with the help of selected psychological and philosophical theories, as well as a critical position towards the scientific and conceptual premises of my approach. The psychological and social defense can relate to persons, to truths, facts, opinions, to scientific results and to feelings triggered by climate change, etc., and finds expression in language in every case. The same applies to recognition.

The processes of recognition are so complex and multi-layered that one may wonder how the limited everyday language meaning differs from the philosophical definitions of recognition.

This book also responds to the following research and thinking needs:

There are hardly any studies on the deeper psychological and social causes of climate communication conflicts. Philosophical theories are usually not related to empirical social research. Climate issues have hardly been reflected philosophically so far.[4] Psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology have so far (with the exception of the exceptions to be mentioned here) not been the basis for communication analyses, let alone with regard to the climate problem.

How This Book is Structured

This results in the structure of this book.

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[4]An exception is Hans-Joachim Schellnhuber, who reflects philosophical and political aspects in his book "DIe Selbstverbrennnung" 2015, München.

In Part I, *Inventory "The psychic and the social defense"* I will show how defense works, where it comes from and how it works. It will be shown that injuries play a major role in the defense process.[5]

First I will describe the defense process in general (1st chapter).

Following this, I will present the empirical study "Argumentation patterns in the climate debate". This research report serves to convey to the readers how this empirical study was set up, justified, carried out, and how the data was evaluated. The focus is on the analysis of the arguments about the climate.[6] I will also present other reasons for the psychic and social defense from the perspective of cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis.

In Part II it is about which *methods and concepts* I consider to be fundamental and necessary for my understanding of science and my approach as a whole.

To the methods: Based on which basic assumptions are scientific knowledge gained and conveyed today? And on which basic assumptions do I base myself? In order to answer these questions, I refer to the philosopher and science theorist G.H. von Wright. In his book "Explain and understand", von Wright describes with which concepts and methods science has been practiced since Plato and Aristotle and what effects this has on the quality of scientifically founded statements. With the explanations of this author I will describe my understanding of a process-theoretical theory-practice-relationship, or the connection between theories and empiricism in more detail (1st chapter).

To the terms: Which basic concepts do we have available to us to communicate with each other in climate communication? I came across Hannah Ahrendt's work "Truth and Politics" when looking for an answer to this question. She convincingly explains why and how conflicts arise in communication when one does *not* agree on the differences between truths, opinions and facts (Chap. 2). Her work served here to define the three central concepts.

In Part III *Analyses* I will present the philosophical recognition theories of Hegel, Ricoeur, Ikäheimo and Honneth. It is about differently defined aspects of the modes, fields, forms and structures of recognition, which I will explain in detail in order to then interpret the arguments from the interviews with them. These interview statements are examined and quoted according to three aspects:

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[5] Cf. B.Strohschein: "The offended society". B. Strohschein, Munich 2015 "The offended ego." Munich 2018.

[6] Cf. D. Flader: From mobbing to climate debate. How the unconscious determines social behavior. Giessen 2016; Psychoanalysis, Culture an Social Action: Act Signatur of the Unconscious. London New York 2021.

In which statements are truths? (Chap. 1, with reference to Hegel). In which statements are facts mentioned? (Chap. 2, with reference to Ikäheimo). In which statements are opinions expressed by means of which something is recognized or not. (Chap. 3, with reference to Ricoeur.) I will also deal with the socially and historically conditioned forms of recognition and ask which values are considered important today (individually and publicly) for someone or something to be recognized or not. This is an aspect that also plays a role in the climate debate and has so far been hardly or not at all taken into account (Chap. 4, with reference to Honneth).

In Part IV *Proposals for insights, findings and solutions* I will present corresponding insights, findings and solutions on how to deal with the problems of climate communication.

And so I hope that the readers will forgive and be curious about the perhaps unusual-seeming path into the human psyche and ways of thinking and see that the climate crisis *can also* be a topic for the humanities and social sciences in order to better understand the individual and collective problems in dealing with the climate issue and to deal with them differently.

Part I
The Psychological and Socially Conditioned Defence

Stocktaking

Preliminary remark

At first glance, it may not seem necessary to examine the term "defense" in climate communication. After all, it is known that more and more is being done to protect the climate. In addition, 94% of the population in Germany is convinced that climate change exists and is man-made. The worldwide movement *Fridays for Future* has shaken the public awake to finally wake up and act in the face of the consequences of climate change. The bourgeois parties, of course led by the Greens, have climate protection programs on their agenda. As is now also the case with the SPD and the CDU. For what reasons should a fact like the climate crisis be *defended*?

As I will show in the following chapter, there are numerous reasons and motives for this.

In the following inventory *I will analyze essential reasons for this. I will show how the psychologically conditioned and social defense, which is reflected in the interpersonal communication about the climate in language and action and leads to the problems that influence the consistent implementation of climate protection measures.*

As already anticipated, many influencing factors interact with each other in the way the climate crisis is dealt with: political resistance and indecision, economic interests, the gap between rich and poor, different lifestyles, cultural and local differences, disputes between climate skeptics and climate protectors, emotions such as fear and powerlessness, widespread ignorance and misinformation.

It is important to distinguish between the *psychological defense* on the one hand, which often remains unconscious, is emotionally conditioned and usually does not find direct expression. On the other hand, there is a *social defense,* which arises from interests and declared reasons and is communicated with corresponding arguments.

In order to make the content and structure of this inventory comprehensible, several approaches are possible and, in my opinion, also necessary:

- *First of all* I will describe the mechanisms, i.e. vicious circles of defense—in general, in order to show how defense works and what follows inevitably from defense. I will distinguish between the two forms of defense and explain them.
- *Secondly:* Based on the results of the aforementioned empirical study, I will explain how defense is expressed. In order to give the readers an insight into how this study was created and carried out, I will present the concept and the results.[1]
- Thirdly: To examine climate communication from psychological and social aspects is new. Exceptions to this include the studies by G. Marshall, a cognitive psychologist from the USA; as well as the contributions of a volume edited by S. Weintrobe, a psychoanalyst from Great Britain. I will summarize both approaches in relation to the topic "defense".

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[1] Of course, these are only small excerpts, due to the sample. But in the statements of individual people, the basic moods and trends of many are reflected.

Dynamics, Forms, and Consequences of Defense. An Overview

Why it Makes Sense to Differentiate Between the Psychological and the Social Defense

Even if it is not easy to differentiate between these two forms of defense, this is sensible for several reasons. Psychological processes often cannot be expressed directly because they are not conscious or only semi-conscious. As I already hinted, it is a matter of being able to interpret the sites of the unconscious, namely language and action.[1]

The focus here is on how this psychologically conditioned defense works in general and how it can be represented and interpreted in climate communication.

This is to be distinguished from the socially conditioned defense, which is communicated directly from interests with different motives. It is above all economic and political motives that lead to the rejection of these aspects of reality and the justification with the corresponding arguments.

These are the arguments in climate communication that explain why there is no climate crisis, why climate protection is therefore not necessary.

The refusal of industry, e.g. the gas and oil industry, to commit to climate protection can be referred to as social *defense*. Here, massive economic interests become relevant, which become the motive for the massive and effective resist-

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[1] This is the topic of D. Flader's research work, which has linked basic research in psychoanalysis with theories of language and action in order to interpret unconscious processes in language and action. See his book: Psychoanalysis in the Focus of Action and Language. 1995.

ance. (G. Marshall has reported on these mechanisms of action in his study, see Chap. 3.)

Similarly, political attitudes and views on certain world views show a socially conditioned defense. It also comes from right-wing populist circles, not infrequently in connection with conspiracy theories.

The arguments here are, without *only* being politically motivated: climate change is a lie, climate change is not man-made. Climate change has always existed. CO_2 is necessary for the growth of plants and does not have to be "curtailed".

With these statements, a basic skeptical attitude towards climate change is expressed, which can also be used politically with the further justification that the measures would be too expensive, based on scientifically insufficient results and not enforceable against the population and industry.

But an identity problem also plays a role here, both directly and indirectly: The climate does not belong to us, it is something that has nothing to do with human beings and to which human beings can also have no influence.

Both the political and the economic as well as the identity-related arguments against climate change are communicated more or less clearly with corresponding justifications and evidence.

What is not communicated directly are the psychological aspects, above all the feelings that drive the "fact-based" resistance: will to power and powerlessness, greed, fear and anger.

Are factual arguments supposed to be emotion-driven? Some readers may be wondering this. The answer would be that we (not only since Freud) have to say goodbye to the hubris that human beings are rational beings who always know what they are saying and doing.

As will become clear, the economically and politically as well as identity-related resistance is ultimately also indirectly psychologically shaped. Simply because every speech and action motive has psychological and unconscious sources, no matter with which rationally justified arguments a resistance is expressed. For this reason, I will repeatedly refer to this distinction between psychological and social resistance in this chapter, knowing that the two are closely linked.

This interplay of unconscious and emotion-based resistance on the one hand and rationally explained and communicated resistance on the other hand also explains the contradictions that are reflected in the attitude of the population:

Even though it is increasingly considered a no-go today *not to behave in an environmentally friendly way and not* to verbally commit to climate and environ-

mental protection, the obvious as well as the latent resistance in the population against climate change is nevertheless present and effective, as I will now show.

And with regard to all forms and motives of resistance, three questions concerning the climate crisis are in the background: What is true? What are facts? And what are opinions? Which truths are resisted, which facts and which opinions? The three conceptual aspects of meaning, under which reality and the statements about it are communicated, are also of importance in the following chapters. And that for the reason that this distinction between truths, facts and opinions plays a decisive role in the mechanisms of resistance as well as in the acknowledgement.

These mechanisms have an effect on communication.

But first it will be about the psychologically conditioned defense. It is not a question here of attributing responsibility for the climate conflicts to individual people from this perspective. Rather, I will try to make it clear here that the psychological mechanisms of action not only play a role in individuals, but also have an effect collectively and socially. Every individual is part of society and shaped by it, just as society is influenced by individuals and collective trends. So not only do the psychological and social defense mechanisms interact with each other, but also the individual and the collective.

Not Wanting to Perceive as Protection and Escape from Crises

There is hardly any area of life in which the psychological *defense against the unbearable* does not take place for various reasons. The defense against something or someone, even against oneself, takes place in the psyche as in all social contexts. It is a general human reaction that then follows when a danger seems to threaten, against which one instinctively defends oneself, no matter what the individual case may be.

Defense is a form of psychological protection. "Dangerous" can mean many things: people from whom one feels threatened, statements from someone who is perceived as unpleasant and hurtful, personal and collective crises that are perceived as unbearable, life situations that challenge anxiety-provoking changes, facts that one feels powerless against.

The consequence of this protective impulse by defense is that what is perceived as unbearable is pushed away. But where to? Into a drawer that is not opened again?

Perhaps we can actually imagine the unconscious as a drawer, to make it more concrete. The unconscious is a kind of catch-all term for what escapes our consciousness or is to be kept away from it. This happens when unconscious inner prohibitions or condemnations are at play that are supposed to prevent us from feeling this or that threat. Fear is the motor for this, to have to preserve oneself from certain feelings at least in this way in order to retain control.

It can be the fear of anger, of sadness or of pain, but also the fear of fear.

The psychological defense as a protective wall against overwhelming feelings can not only be a reaction to negative feelings, but also to positive ones. The feelings that are associated with love, enthusiasm and joy are then avoided out of fear of disappointment. And with the disappointment comes the fear of pain that is unbearable. This mechanism explains why people seem or are emotionless.

Defense as a protective mechanism has two sides: On the one hand, defense protects against the unpleasant, on the other hand it prevents us from dealing with it as well as with unwanted aspects of our own person, with other people, with whom conflicts threaten or/and with aspects of reality that seem unviable.

Whoever defends, does not want (something) (anymore). In psychoanalysis this process is called repression. Whoever represses, cannot *recognize* something or somebody accordingly. Because recognition necessarily requires *perception*. This perception is avoided by defense. Avoidance means not to listen, not to look, not to feel. This avoidance has far-reaching consequences. There are "blind spots" in the view of reality, of oneself and of interpersonal relationships. This in turn has the consequence that one does not react to what is not perceived, more precisely, what one does not want to perceive.

As strange as it may sound, the *climate* practically challenges this "non-perception"—for several reasons: It is abstract in itself. It is everywhere and nowhere. It is confused with the "weather", against which one cannot do anything anyway. The consequences of climate change, such as the increasing number of disasters, are not always and not everywhere directly perceptible. For a normal citizen, to put it exaggeratedly, the climate is not immediately visible. (I refer to the results to which the US cognitive psychologist G. Marshall also came in the following chapter about him.) In addition, there is the attitude towards nature and the climate, which was mentioned several times by the interviewees. In summary, the often quoted statement from the Bible can be summarized as follows: The nature and the climate would be much more powerful than the people had previously imagined. (As if, as often quoted from the Bible in the interviews: Make the earth subject to you!) The conclusion: Humanity would have far less power than previously assumed. With this attitude and these arguments, which we have found to a high percentage in the statements of our interviewees, an injury is indirectly

discussed. An injury that occurs when an individual or a group does not or only very limitedly consider itself to be effective.

Why Climate Change Hurts

The earth is not the center of the cosmos, but only a small planet revolving around the sun. This was the first great injury caused by the discovery of Kepler. The second was caused by the doctor and founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud: Man is not the master in his own house. With this knowledge, Freud made it clear what has always been a problem for humanity: Feelings and drives act much stronger than reason and understanding. They control our thinking and acting much more than our self-conscious and reasonable reflection.

This mechanism becomes particularly virulent when something is interpreted as powerful and dangerous from the outside and also *is* powerful and dangerous. This danger triggers fear and powerlessness, in turn with the experience of being powerless or fearing powerlessness.

One could say that feelings of powerlessness, whether justified by external circumstances or not, go hand in hand with a feeling of injury. Simply put: I or we are not strong enough, we are not effective enough to solve a problem. And what am I, what are we worth if we think we are not able to do that?

The climate crisis is, even if this is rarely or never stated, a new injury to humanity. That, in the face of the "overpowering" of nature and the climate, a conscious and unconscious defense appears like a rescue in order not to have to deal with human powerlessness, is understandable.

That in the technocratic, political and scientific and all the more in the public opinion this initiated psychological defense by fear and powerlessness is not directly reflected, has to do with a phenomenon that is typical for the way of dealing with injuries: What hurts is defended and not directly communicated in order to protect oneself from unpleasant feelings.

In addition to the unconscious and defended injuries by the feelings of powerlessness towards the climate and nature, defense therefore takes place very often in climate communication without this cause of conflicts ever being addressed.

This happens, for example, at conferences, congresses and in environmental committees: In a factual discussion about the coal phase-out, one expert insults another expert who has a different opinion or criticizes the statements of his "opponent" sharply. The injured person does not want to show weakness, swallows the insult, does not answer, but tries at the next opportunity to do everything in his power to prevent the implementation of a resolution for which his attacker

is fighting. Below the fought out dispute about the coal phase-out, feelings are activated and at the same time suppressed or defended in order to protect oneself and to take revenge for the experienced criticism.

But injuries do not only occur through obvious attacks. They also happen when an expert (e.g. from science) is committed to the implementation of necessary environmental measures and encounters incomprehension and deaf ears among decision-makers (e.g. municipal politicians). These are frustrating experiences in which defense in different forms of expression such as criticism, ignoring, refusing arguments and silence leads to the fact that urgently needed decisions are not made.

I have observed this mechanism not only in public discussions. Experts have told me from their own experiences how sessions proceed in this way and how important decisions are repeatedly called into question and postponed, only to become obsolete in the end. The conflict dynamics and their causes are, as already mentioned, hardly ever discussed on a meta level. This also leads to the fact that many sensible and necessary decisions are not carried out. This is also an experience that scientists, environmental experts, politicians who are committed to certain goals, make over and over again, but do not report publicly that they have not achieved these goals.

How Injuries Arise—The Biographical Reasons and the Psychological Consequences

Do psychological aspects really play such a big social role, also in the public debates in politics, economy, culture and science? If one considers the usual ways of thinking and behaving, according to which experts decide and how people think and act in everyday life, then *not* is not started from mental mechanisms, such as the injury and its consequences, which control communication.

It is not my intention here to individualize conflicts, but to show mechanisms.

If we look deeper, these psychological factors play a big role. Not only because it is inevitable that everyone is injured every day at work and in everyday life, without becoming aware of it and still having an effect, but also because every individual moves on the tracks of his own childhood, in which injuries took place and still have an effect. That every human being was once a child and the experiences in childhood inevitably have an effect into late adulthood is not conscious in our society. It is a largely still unexplored topic how, based on individual childhood experiences, men and women make politics or/and how decision-makers deal with these early experiences of injury.

There is no life without injuries. This fact is not morally evaluated here. Injury is here considered as one of the causes of defense.

Not only the children of unloving parents who have not experienced empathy due to their own life story are injured. We find this phenomenon in all families for different reasons. The main problem is that parents unconsciously pass on what they have experienced themselves. Injuries often take place and continue to have an effect unconsciously and unintentionally and are hidden behind the best intentions of the parents.

Children from the educated middle and upper classes with so-called helicopter parents who do everything to pamper and protect their children and educate them to be well-functioning high achievers are psychologically in no better a position than children who experience not only material but also emotional needs. If the sheltered children do not meet the performance expectations of their parents or do not show enough gratitude, the parents often react with disappointment and accusations and anger. In addition, as psychologists know only too well, pampering and massive performance expectations lead to narcissistic disorders, ego-behavior and lack of community spirit. Children who grow up with this perfection and performance claim and also do not experience enough love and understanding, act out the mental deficiencies and the feeling of failure in front of their parental claims in adult life accordingly. In all occupational fields we find today adults who have to struggle with these problems. They create and cause problems for themselves and others by acting out previous experiences of this kind and trying to assert themselves with ambition, will to power and the ruthless enforcement of their interests. Children from the lower class often have stressed parents who act without knowledge of the children's needs and have little time and empathy for their children due to the everyday stress.

In addition, more and more children are growing up in conflict-ridden patchwork families or only with one parent, usually the mother. Therapists, teachers and educators report on these phenomena that many children today are confronted with either mental neglect through neglect or also with the neglect through pampering.[2]

In all cases, parental education is not about the child, but about the acting out of the problems that the parents themselves have: their own inability to love and the feeling of not counting for anything and not achieving anything in society.

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[2] See reports and publications by Michael Winterhoff, Jesper Juul and especially the books by Wolfgang Bergmann as well as the psychohistorical studies by Lloyd de Mause, see bibliography.

In addition, the social decline of father or mother through unemployment and other causes affects the children and their self-esteem. Many children grow up in incomplete families with overloaded mothers. And just because of the increase in such cases, the children do not receive the attention and emotional involvement that they urgently need for a good self-esteem.

Again, it is not my intention to make value judgments about such behavior, but to understand and explain it.

Value judgments are no longer made today, as in the past in the black pedagogy, through punishment and violence, but through overstrain and internalized value judgments such as perfectionism and functioning, which have to be met in many families in order not to be considered a failure.

Without going into further investigations on this problem here, I would like to present some trends. This trend between pampering and neglect is also a consequence of the 68er movement, which is a consequence of the insecurity of many parents in terms of education, combined with the aim of not repeating the authoritarian educational goals of their parents and grandparents.

With what self-awareness, with what self-esteem are children turned into adults? Adults who are striving to assert themselves, to be great and successful, in order to cope with the deeper lying self-esteem problems in this way?

Not only the family education, in which injuries are almost inevitable, affects the self-esteem. The dictum of the performance society, which many people internalize and in which everyone feels the need to be perfect, plays a further significant role in Western societies.

This self-denigration sits so deep that it is often not consciously perceived on the one hand. On the other hand, it is expressed in everyday opinions about oneself, such as: "I will never manage that." "I'm too old for that." "That's too high for me." "I will never understand that." "I've never looked good." "I will never manage to finish on time."

Such statements are also fed by early childhood experiences.

Even if our interviews did not directly concern questions about one's own self-awareness, this self-deprecating self-criticism often played a role. It showed itself in statements like: "I'm not sure about that." "I don't know, I'm not competent enough for that." "I don't have a clear overview" etc.

But the admission that one does not know and understand enough is usually not communicated in detail. Because then it is rightly feared not only to devalue oneself, but also to be devalued. Very many interpersonal conflicts are based on this mechanism. It can only be broken when it is recognized and discussed by a third party.

But this process does not only work in interpersonal relationships.

Even truths and facts like opinions can hurt and are therefore rejected because one feels powerless in front of them. For example, the simple and hurtful truth that people grow old and lose strength and influence. Or the fact that there are no job offers available in certain professions affects the self-esteem of those affected. If someone is ill, certain performances can no longer (fully) be achieved, this has a negative effect on the self-esteem of the person concerned.

But also political decisions and regulations that affect all or certain people directly, offend.

I have an example in mind for that: After I had conducted a radio interview on the topic "Fight for Recognition" in the main studio of ARD in Berlin some time ago, a staff member who had heard the interview spoke to me afterwards.

"Finally someone is talking about something like that," she said to me and then told me how disadvantaged she feels compared to the refugees. She, who has to work hard to secure the livelihood of the family, as well as her teenage daughters, would live in the vicinity of an asylum seeker's home. The young men from this accommodation would have nothing to do all day, would loiter on the street and would do nothing but harass the women passing by. This employee felt humiliated, frightened and not respected in her interests and needs by politics.

Now one can interpret these statements as xenophobia, but also as an expression of feeling disadvantaged and devalued.

The pandemic led to many cuts and restrictions that everyone has to put up with to a greater or lesser extent, also to such "fact-related" offenses. People are afraid, feel patronized, restricted in their living spaces, cannot pursue their professions, cannot adequately perceive their education, cannot meet the need for physical closeness, etc. The self-esteem is not only impaired by the regulatives, but also above all by the resulting feeling of powerlessness. The attempts by the population to free themselves from this "powerlessness" are by no means conducive to social cohesion, as the protest movements of the lateral thinkers show, for example. The right-wing populist movement is also an expression of resistance to the state, which on the one hand no longer has national self-confidence and on the other hand demands too many "restrictions". I can only hint at these injury backgrounds here.

How Injuries Steer Defense

Every psychological defense is inevitably associated with devaluations, emotional as well as mental. This means that the person, the facts and things etc. that are defended are also devalued by means of the defense. It is easy to understand if we