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The Enjoyment of Complexity: A New Political Anthropology for the Anthropocene?

The concept of the Anthropocene calls for a new political anthropology that focuses on human enjoyment of a complex world. The global scale of human influence on the environment means that we are embedded in various social, economic, and—especially—ecological contexts that are inseparably connected. Therefore, as I will show, even though the Anthropocene originated as a geological description of a new Earth period, it is by necessity an ethical and normative reflexive concept as well. Depending on what framework of political anthropology is used, the ethical and normative aspects of the Anthropocene can be considered either in an institutional or in a conflict model. With reference to these two models, I will finally show why a paradigm change in political anthropology—from the *Homo sapiens pauper* of Hobbes to the *Homo sapiens luxus* of Sloterdijk—might be reasonable and realistic as a way of establishing dams against human self-destruction in the Anthropocene.

The Anthropocene Concept

Alteration of biochemical and water cycles, losses of biodiversity, climate change, and the transformation of landscapes are the characteristics of the Anthropocene, which developed—according to Paul Crutzen, Jacques Grinevald, John McNeill, and Will Steffen—in three steps (Steffen et al. 2011): It began with industrialization, and so its first period lasted, in their view, from 1800 to the end of World War II. After 1945, the Anthropocene entered its second stage: “The Great Acceleration,” which continues through the year 2000 and into the twenty-first century. In this second step of the Anthropocene, population growth, urbanization, infrastructure development, escalation of consumption, and the development of genetic engineering and synthetic biology go hand in hand with the global collapse of ecosystems, global exploitation of resources, global cutbacks on biodiversity, and—of course—global warming. The third stage of the Anthropocene begins in the present as a period of “growing awareness of human impact on the environment at the global scale and the first attempts to build global governance systems to manage humanity’s relationship with the Earth System.” But Crutzen and his

colleagues have doubts concerning this third period; the failure and disappointments of global governance of climate and biodiversity leave them with the same question which they started with: “Can human activity really be significant enough to drive the Earth into a new geological epoch?” And in their answer to this question, Crutzen and his colleagues compare Darwin’s understanding of evolution to their perception of the Anthropocene: “Darwin’s insight into our origins provoked outrage, anger and disbelief but did not threaten the material existence of the society of the time. The ultimate drivers of the Anthropocene, on the other hand, if they continue unabated through this century, may well threaten the viability of contemporary civilization and perhaps even the future existence of *Homo sapiens*” (Steffen et al. 2011, 862).

This reasoning shows that the Anthropocene is obviously different from other labels for geological Earth periods. “There is”—according to Joachim Radkau (2011, 28)—“no greater risk than categorizing the present epoch.” Geological ages have all gotten their names retrospectively, and they are—in many cases—named after extinct species found in the fossil record during that period. The Anthropocene is obviously different: It is a “history of the present,” and mankind is not extinct—yet. But if one follows the argument of Crutzen and his colleagues carefully, for them the Anthropocene is not a mere geological classification. They speak about an “Anthropocene concept” (Steffen et al. 2011, 843). This “Anthropocene concept” does not simply name geological facts, but is shaped by politics and governance. This conceptual framing is—at least in my view—a meaningful approach to understanding the Anthropocene, which refers back to the role of humans in the Earth system at every level. Firstly, the Anthropocene is the Earth time of humans (“Menschenzeit”) (Schwägerl 2012, 9–54; Crutzen and Schwägerl 2011). Secondly, the Anthropocene describes a space dominated by humans: Humans see and shape the Earth as “their” world (“Menschenwelt”) (Reichholf 2008, 105). An inspiring pamphlet captures this new, claustrophobic spatial self-understanding of humanity in stating that the “spaceship Earth has no emergency exit” (Crutzen et. al. 2011). Thirdly, the central actor in the Anthropocene is humanity, which is altering the Earth’s ecosystems with dramatic consequences for the environment that humans need for their own survival. And fourthly, the concept itself is a product of human thought and reflection: Who else is able to name, describe, and manage this new Earth period, if not human science?

These four dimensions—time, space, action, and science—explain why the Anthropocene is necessarily different from classical geological classifications and why the

Anthropocene concept is not only about facts, but automatically about ethics and laws; not only about science, but automatically about politics and governance. Involvement results in responsibility. Christian Schwägerl (2012, 358) has aptly formulated this normative requirement in the maxim that no individual and no society should behave as if they were the last to live on this planet. This advice already implies the idea of an Anthropocenic Enlightenment (WBGU 2011, 84–85), in which a green Immanuel Kant might formulate the new categorical imperative of the Anthropocene: “Live your life in such a way that it can be made universal in a globalized world in which there is no longer a clear distinction between nature and culture.” The concept of the Anthropocene not only recombines facts and ethics, but also constitutes a framework for an interdisciplinary scientific understanding of a new relationship between nature and culture. The Anthropocene can tell us something about the very complex ecological, social, and technical development of our Earth time and its cultural perceptions, with their consequences for our present understanding of art, biology, chemistry, diet, ecology, economy, education, ethics, geology, media, politics, science, society, technology, and—last but not least—law.

To summarize, the Anthropocene incorporates interdisciplinary scientific analysis and evaluation of the human impact on global biology, geology, and ecology, which are thus inseparably connected with cultural developments. Against this background we can focus now on the question of how this concept of the Anthropocene changes our views on political anthropology.

Homo sapiens pauper

Political anthropology addresses the fundamental question about the nature of human beings and the logical implications our answers have for society and politics. Many approaches in political anthropology try to create the impression that determining human nature is an act of self-evident insight or even pure scientific deduction. But of course this is not true: Political anthropology is a normative construction through and through. And the norms that are chosen will depend upon what assumptions are made about the sort of creature that human beings are. The discussion in this paper will start with the view of a “*Homo pauper*” (Sloterdijk 2004, 702), humans as “poor creatures,” as formulated by Hobbes, who proclaims that the “life of man” in its natural status is

“solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes [1651] 1985, 186). Certainly there are more positive characterizations of humans in political theory. But this formulation in its provocativeness has been enormously influential and can be seen today in the political and economic institutions of our globalized world.

The social implications of Hobbes’s theory are, in simplified form, as follows: The original poverty and powerlessness of humanity in its natural state leads to us to be selfish. It is a struggle for survival in which everyone is at war with everyone else. Out of their selfish passion for a good life and their fear of being killed, humans create their most powerful institution—the state—through contract as a way of protecting their own self-interest (Hobbes [1651] 1985, 183–228). But this picture of the *Homo sapiens pauper* has consequences not only for the creation of political institutions, but also for the relationship between humans and nature—a relationship that is not yet regulated by a social or a social-ecological contract. There is no mutual agreement to protect or conserve natural resources for future generations; nature is there to be used and exploited for our own immediate, personal needs. Max Weber has pinpointed the consequences of this approach in his famous prediction that the current economic system will come to an end on the very day “when the last ton of ore has been smelted with the last ton of coal” (Sombart 1928, 1010) or—as Peter Sloterdijk ([2009] 2013, 367) adds—when the last barrel of oil has been used up by driving SUVs through the suburban jungle.

As a consequence, some scientists and policymakers have taken up this classical idea of the social contract to develop an institutional model for the Anthropocene.

A Global Social Contract for Sustainability?

One such model is outlined in a report published by the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) in 2011. This “Social Contract for Sustainability” aims to tackle the global environmental challenges of the Anthropocene, in particular climate, energy, and natural resources. The report calls for a “Great Transformation” that will result in “a low-carbon and sustainable global economic system” (WBGU 2011, 1; Leggewie and Welzer 2011, 174–230). The proposal for a global social contract is founded on the idea that all of us—whether private individuals, states, or industries—are jointly responsible for preventing climate change and other changes to the Earth

system that threaten the future of humankind. Therefore the new global social contract requires creating “a culture of attentiveness (born of a sense of ecological responsibility), a culture of participation (as a democratic responsibility), and a culture of obligation towards future generations (future responsibility)” (WBGU 2011, 277). A particular emphasis is given to the role of governments in creating a new society: the “formative” or “proactive” state (in the original German, the “gestaltender Staat”) sets priorities and standards for the “Great Transformation,” increases the number of ways in which its citizens can participate, and offers sustainable options for the private sector (WBGU 2011, 277–78). Beyond that, the new social contract suggests new global institutions and new forms of global cooperation—for example, the establishment of a “UN Council for Sustainable Development” and the formation of international alliances of climate pioneers between states, international organizations, cities, corporations, and scientific and civic organizations (WBGU 2011, 316).

In the context of the Anthropocene, this contract draft is interesting, because it follows—maybe not explicitly, but certainly implicitly—an all-embracing institutional approach (von Weizsäcker 2011), which is based on three key ideas: firstly, application of the concept of the social contract to global society; secondly, fixation on the principle of sustainability as a normative standard; and thirdly, agreement that implementation should take place by means of active involvement on the part of states and institutions. But all three of these principles raise serious conceptual questions.

Firstly, the application of the concept of the social contract to global society: the German Advisory Council’s revision of classical contract theory as a political framework for governance in the Anthropocene (WBGU 2011, 277) is undoubtedly an improvement, as natural environment is given more consideration than in the classical contract concepts of natural law. And self-organized civil society and the community of scientific experts are given a voice in the revised contract terms. At the same time, though, these revisions assume that the social contract is still an appropriate normative framework for conceptualizing global society. This assumption is questionable at best: the concept of the social contract is too monolithic, too undifferentiated, too uniform, and—especially—normatively too strong to reflect the social, political, and economical pluralism of global society. And this is conceptually even more surprising in a time when network theories are at hand to (re)assemble the social cohesion in a fragmented world (Latour 2005).

Secondly, the fixation on the principle of sustainability as a normative standard: Of course, it was and is revolutionary that sustainability has become the central principle of international, European, and national environmental governance (Beyerlin and Maruhn 2011, 14–17, 73–83; Kahl 2008). But sustainability is—at the same time—in itself a very conservative principle, in that it is concerned with preserving what currently exists (Sloterdijk 2012, 490–91). One can almost hear the voice of Edmund Burke when the term “sustainability” is used: the notion of “a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue; and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are born” (Burke [1790] 1986, 194–95; Haverkate 2005). Nothing against Edmund Burke! But the ecological developments characterizing the Anthropocene are already beyond the point where the conservative principle of sustainability could possibly offer any guidance. What does sustainable development mean with regard to the collapse of biodiversity? The losses of biodiversity are irreversible and accelerating. This is not sustainability, and even resilience seems scarcely possibly for such damaged ecosystems (Kersten 2012). What does sustainable development mean when considering the path of nuclear energy: Three Mile Island—Chernobyl—Fukushima? Nuclear pollution has already turned parts of our planet into no-go areas. And the long-term disposal of nuclear waste constitutes one of the most hazardous mortgages on our collective future: “Some nuclear wastes and part of Chernobyl’s fallout”—so John McNeill—“will be lethal for 24,000 years—easily the most lasting human insignia of the twentieth century and the longest lien on the future that any generation of humanity has yet imposed” (McNeill 2000, 313). We are far beyond sustainable development here as well: We do not have to assess options for sustainable development, but dangerous situations and futures (Spaemann 2011, 7–11).

Thirdly, the agreement to implement change through comprehensive, proactive measures: When the Advisory Council called for a “gestaltender Staat”—a “proactive state”—it of course had in mind a state with an active political agenda that would set standards decided in part through democratic participation and an extensive dialogue with and within civil society (WBGU 2011, 203–9). But the German term “Gestaltung”—“shaping” or “formation”—develops a quite different significance when we consider that the Anthropocene challenges the traditional distinction between nature and culture. In today’s world, ecosystems and landscapes are no longer untouched. They are

influenced, if not designed, by humans. So it cannot be a real surprise that “planet gardening” by “world gardeners” has become a leitmotif in the Anthropocene (Schwägerl 2012, 349; Leinfelder 2013; Lenzen 2013). Reinhold Leinfelder has explained what is meant by this: the Anthropocene concept highlights how we can no longer trust the traditional antagonism of “good” nature that has to be preserved and “bad” technology that has to be contained. Nature and culture are part of a single, unified system that has to be proactively “gestaltet”—arranged, designed, configured, constructed, mapped, and shaped—in a sustainable way in order not to lose its balance (Leinfelder 2013), or rather, its “stable unbalance” (Reichholf 2008, 115–37). In this argument, the culture of the Anthropocene is a *cultura* in the etymological sense of this Latin term and focuses therefore on “handling, care, and cultivation” of nature in the “rambunctious garden” of a “post-wild world” (Marris 2011).

Taken together, then, the key elements of this global social contract call for an all-inclusive Anthropocene *cultura*. From the perspective of law, there are instruments that could be taken up and developed to implement this institutional approach legally. The concepts of the common heritage or the common concern of humanity try to combine legal mechanisms governing cultivation, education, harvest, justice, participation, property, protection, research, solidarity, and the use of global commons or global public goods.

But these legal perspectives do not answer the key legal question: Should we really give up an adversative normative understanding of the relationship of nature and culture in favor of a legal approach that institutionalizes a cultural design of nature and a natural design of culture guided by the overall principle of sustainability? There is no definitive answer to this question. It depends very much on what model of human nature we base our political anthropology on: If, following Hobbes, we believe that the “life of man” is “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short,” human selfishness will lead us to value our own social and economic welfare over ecological values in an institutionalized sustainability model of the Anthropocene. Our political experience of the last two hundred years since the beginning of industrialization, which are the last two hundred years of the Anthropocene, tells us: When EGO-systems meet ECO-systems, the ECO-systems usually lose.

With the loss of the normative distinction between culture and nature, nature is at risk of losing the normative resistance, reluctance, and resilience that it has won in the

legal developments of the last 30 years. And even worse: Because the institutionalized concept is legally all-inclusive, there can be no legal criticism or even legal opposition from “outside” when nature is culturally consumed. All decisions concerning nature and sustainable development are made within a comprehensive institutional framework. If you want to take part in the decision-making, your voice has to be legally comparable to and legally recognized by the framework’s institutions. If you do not share principles of the institutional design, you are legally precluded from the decision-making. These exclusions will especially affect the political activism that has given nature a sensible and radical voice in the social and economic welfare discourses of *Homo sapiens pauper* in their (post)industrial societies, which will dominate an all-embracing institutional design of the world contract for sustainability. Therefore, the comprehensive institutionalism of the Anthropocene *cultura* will not offer the necessary legal dam against the selfish and destructive forces of the *Homo sapiens pauper*.

A Conflict Model of the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene was in the past, is at present, and will be in the future a period not of harmony created by institutions, but of severe global conflicts of national and economic interests for resources, driven by social welfare, market competition, and—of course—by political sovereignty (Welzer 2010). These social, political, and economic interests threaten individual ecosystems as well as the ecological balance of the whole globe. I therefore favor a conflict model of the Anthropocene that is still based on the *normative* distinction between culture and nature, and in these conflicts nature needs—at least in my view—a strong legal voice.

As I have shown, an institutionalized legal approach guided merely by sustainability does not ensure that nature is given this strong legal voice. If, however, our approach to governing the Anthropocene is based on an understanding of society, economy, and ecology as a series of conflicts between different interests, then the role of law is to protect nature in this conflict and give it a voice that it otherwise would not have. In this model, the basic rule for the solution of ecological conflicts reads: Every intervention into the natural world—air, climate, fauna, flora, soil, water—has to be justified by socially and economically *reasonable reasons*. So in this concept of “ecological liberalism,” the burden of proof to legitimize interventions into ecological systems is shifted:

Society and economy have to justify every single use of nature and every single design of eco-structures. Nature is legally not free of charge anymore.

The most important point in this balancing of interests is that sustainability is no longer the primary criterion for making decisions; the principle of ecological resilience must also be considered. In this context, resilience—related to the concepts of vulnerability, adaptation, and coping strategies—describes the capability of (eco)systems to tolerate disturbance (Allenby and Fink 2005; Ehlers 2008, 16–17; Gusy 2013, 995–97): Criteria determining ecological resilience are an ecosystem’s power to preserve its self-organization and basic functions, and its capacity of adaption to and neutralization of interventions from outside. These criteria make it possible to evaluate social or economic interventions into ecosystems in a “de-escalation model,” which turns around the escalating deformation and destruction of the Earth’s ecosystems by focusing on the three legal categories of danger, risk, and balance. In the case of danger for an ecosystem, no social or economic interventions are allowed at all. In the case of risk for an ecosystem, social or economic interventions are allowed only if an adaption of the ecosystem is probable or if the ecological consequences of the intervention are easily reversible. Finally, in the case of a stable ecosystem, social or economic interventions are allowed if they live up to classical sustainable standards.

Of course, this conflict model has its problems as well. Let me address two of them. The first problem is concerned with the key question of the Anthropocene: What is meant by “nature” in that legal discourse, if nature in the Anthropocenic *cultura* is and will be in most cases socially and economically “designed nature”? The answer to this question is quite easy from a legal perspective: law can treat even designed nature as “nature.” This legal gift of fictitious normative thinking with (contra-)factual consequences in the real world enables us to value the “designed nature” of the Anthropocene as and like “natural nature” in the sense of law and to apply the basic rule and the “de-escalation model” developed above. To illustrate that with an example: a tree in the “rambunctious garden” that represents the post-wild Anthropocenic *cultura* might be “gestaltet” (“designed”), but can be protected by law like any “natural tree.” This approach has the advantage that we reflect on social, economic, and ecological co-evolution in the long run by deciding on any social and economic driven intervention into ecosystems in every single case.

The second problem of this approach is the understanding of *Homo sapiens pauper*: Will nature not end up as the loser in this conflict model, just as, I have argued, it does in the institutional approach, if *Homo sapiens pauper* is still *Homo sapiens pauper*? Again, there is no straightforward answer to this question: My argument for the conflict model is that it reflects the legal problems of the Anthropocene with more transparency, that it can give nature—hopefully—a stronger legal and political weight in every single conflict, and that it allows legal criticism and political opposition against the social and economic decomposition of nature “from outside the system.” So the conflict model is a theoretical and legal reaction to the anthropological assumption of the *Homo sapiens pauper*. However, this model is not the only possible approach. If we were to base our political anthropology on a different model of human nature—not Hobbes’ *Homo sapiens pauper*, but something else—the balance between social and economic interests and values of nature will also change.

From *Homo sapiens pauper* to *Homo sapiens luxus*

After this assessment of the Anthropocene, the central question is: What therapy would the *Homo sapiens pauper* accept? What changes in political anthropology are reasonable and realistic? And the answers to these questions are important, regardless of whether you prefer a comprehensive institutional approach or the fragmented conflict model to understand the Anthropocene.

In our answer we can follow and criticize a conservative line of anthropological thinking in Germany that developed between 1930 and 1990 as an “anthropology of the technological age” (Sloterdijk 2001; 2004, 699–711; Leggewie and Welzer 2011, 100–102). It was Arnold Gehlen who came up with the idea of humans as “Mängelwesen”—humans as “deficient creatures” (Gehlen [1940] 1988). Gehlen took up Friedrich Nietzsche’s description of humans as the “nicht festgestellte Tier”—humans as the “animal whose nature has not yet been fixed” (Nietzsche [1886] 1990, 88). On this basis, Gehlen developed his anthropological theory that humans, as unadjusted and unspecified creatures, will do everything to compensate for their sensual “openness” by creating social, political, religious, and technical institutions that promise cognitive relief and allow action in a complex world. The crucial point of this approach is not the more-or-less plausible explanation of the development of culture, but the normative turn of this anthropology:

Humans as “deficient creatures” do not simply develop technical and cultural institutions to compensate for their own deficiencies. They think that they have the right to do so. So we see here not a mere descriptive but a highly normative theory, in which humans try to gain a normative title for an “Inkompetenzkompensationskompetenz”—for a “competence in compensating for incompetence” (Marquard [1973] 1989)—with disastrous consequences for the exploitation and pollution of nature.

But this normative turn was not enough for the self-immunization of humans against the consequences of their self-imagined deficiencies. Niklas Luhmann offers another explanation, referring this time not to humans’ physical deficiencies but to their intellectual limits (Luhmann [1984] 1995, [2002] 2013): The world according to Luhmann is far too complex for humans. Humans cannot understand the complex world and therefore create systems based on binary distinctions that represent simplified pictures of the world. They communicate in terms of the code of each system: economics, education, law, politics, religion, science, and so on. But in this epistemological tradition of the “deficient creature” no one can be baffled by the fact that systems theory does not know the “ecology of society” (Luhmann [1986] 1989): the environment is not a social subsystem. Furthermore nature has no counterpart in society, because “society” as a whole has no representation (anymore). And it is even difficult to speak of “ecological communication,” because the subsystems of society only understand their specific code. When they consider ecological questions at all, it is within their particular framework; outside of this framework, “ecological communication” is for them just a disturbance.

If we follow the logical consequences of this “modern” picture of *Homo sapiens pauper*, one thing is quite clear: If we are indeed naturally poor beings with a right to compensation for our deficiencies, and if our mental capacities are limited to an “ecology of ignorance” (Luhmann [1992] 1998, 75), then humans do not have a long future in the Anthropocene. But what are the limits and potentials of humans in the Anthropocene?

The limit is—in my opinion—the Hobbesian assumption of individual selfishness. We will not change that, and that is why I would prefer the conflict model to solve the clashes of social, economic, and ecological interests in the Anthropocene. On the other hand, with a purely egoistic habitus humanity will not be able to establish the barriers necessary to prevent self-destruction. Of course, in the Hobbesian model death

and destruction are the only motivation for humans to enter into the social and political contract in order to survive. But this motivation for humans to “behave” is not sufficient in the Anthropocene. The reason for that is not the overall apparent reluctance to accept the apocalypse as an argument in our ecological discourses: Predictions of impending doom are not regarded as “helpful.” The Anthropocenic bourgeoisie do not fear anything but an “ecological Puritanism” that calls for a change in their habits or even in their lives (Sloterdijk 2011, 105; 2009, 709–14; Reichholf 2008, 133–34). They regard all notions in this direction as the road to “ecological dictatorship”—a very ambivalent argument, because the Anthropocenic bourgeoisie promotes the “dictatorship” of economic reason in their everyday lives.

Nevertheless, apocalyptic worst-case scenarios are problematic when they lead to reactions that only exacerbate the situation (Sunstein 2007, 6–7; Schwägerl 2012, 356–57). One of these overreactions has already been described as the “Green Paradox” by Hans-Werner Sinn (2012): The fear of having their activities restricted as a result of green politics might encourage the proprietors of natural resources to exploit them even faster and to cash them as soon as possible on the world markets, with dramatic consequences for the environment. On the other end of the spectrum, neglect could prevail in the Anthropocene as well, especially with respect to its long-running developments of climate change and biodiversity losses. The Anthropocenic bourgeoisie could react with a devil-may-care-attitude, which would make the bad ecological developments even worse (Sloterdijk 2011, 105; Schwägerl 2012, 356–57; Giddens 2009, 2). So the Anthropocene might result in defeatist Anthropocynicism.

How, then, should the probability of apocalypse be handled in the Anthropocene? In this context, Peter Sloterdijk has encouraged us to develop a “Critique of Prophetic Reason” (Sloterdijk 2011, 96). We should not assume that something is inevitable just because it is predicted; nor should we fall into the trap of believing that a prophecy was a panic-making overreaction simply because we were warned in time to prevent disaster. Worst-case scenarios are political arguments that always visualize their catastrophic projections within the context of the social concept of time. Thomas Hobbes has shown what that means in the *Homo sapiens pauper’s* worst-case scenario of civil war: war consists not just of the period of active fighting, but in the disposition towards war (Hobbes [1651] 1985, 185–86). Because times of war are in part socially conceived, citizens should not be discouraged from trying to prevent war, but rather motivated to

behave peacefully. Those who still have time also still have political options and may act to prevent worst-case scenarios.

This basic idea of a “Critique of Prophetic Reason” could motivate humanity in the Anthropocene as well. There are political options in the timeline of present and anticipated ecological developments. But in order to realize and to implement these political options in the Anthropocene, humans have to change their habitus. Hobbes could stick to the picture of *Homo sapiens pauper* in his description of the problem (war) and his presentation of the solution (state), because both—war and state—focus on the security of humans as possessive individualists (Macpherson 1962). In the Anthropocene, the character of *Homo sapiens pauper* is—again—part of the problem: They use natural resources in an egoistic way that threatens the balance of individual ecosystems and the ecological balance of the whole globe. But exactly for this reason—the egoistic consumption of nature—*Homo sapiens pauper*, who does not know anything but self-interest, cannot be the answer to the ecological challenge of the Anthropocene. For that reason, “nature” emerges in the Anthropocene as the non-human third party that has been neglected in the classical contract theories of natural law.

Therefore, the Anthropocenic self-understanding of humans has to reflect “nature” not only as a value in itself, but in its inseparable connections with all social and economic dimensions of human life. This requires a paradigm shift in the political anthropology of the Anthropocene. Peter Sloterdijk (2004, 699–711) has shown us how we can move from *Homo sapiens pauper* to the *Homo sapiens luxus*: Humans are not just poor animals, they are also rich ones. They have emotional and intellectual capacities to reflect their embeddedness in various social, economic, and—especially—ecological contexts that are inseparably connected in the Anthropocene (Leggewie and Welzer 2011, 106–10). This has consequences for our understanding of our place in the world.

In accordance with the rights of humans on this planet, we must move beyond our understanding of ourselves as self-victimizing creatures, a victimization for which we seek compensation, especially compensation from global nature. If we change our self-understanding and see ourselves not as a poor but as a rich species, we will more easily follow the paradigm shift of the conflict model and at least accept its basic rule, together with the “de-escalation approach.” This would allow us to change our active lives of individual freedom and our passive lives in our collective infrastructures to be more

respectful of nature and the resilience of the global ecosystem(s). We must stop hiding behind the strategic concept of defensive ignorance. We can no longer use the argument of complexity reduction as the decisive element in political anthropology. On the contrary, we can and we should establish and develop an Anthropocene culture that enjoys complexity—and again: enjoys complexity in our active lives of individual freedom as well as in our passive lives in collective infrastructures.

With this enjoyment of complexity, *Homo sapiens* has the chance to develop a more modest self-understanding and might even overcome the diagnosis of an “Unbehagen in der Natur” (Žižek 2008, 420)—a “discontent in nature”—as the new psychological status of humanity in the Anthropocene. Humans will be citizens of the Anthropocene when they begin to enjoy the complexity of their age.

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