

## No More Free-Riding

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Many people hold the so-called *just-world hypothesis* and rationalise people's suffering on the grounds that they 'deserve' it.<sup>1</sup> I meet people all over the world, particularly men, who feel personally humiliated and attacked by 'the lazy' of this world who they think have no other goal but to free-ride on the hard work of others.<sup>2</sup> These men attribute their entitlement to privileges to their own hard work and react with fury when I try to draw their attention to the structural violence that afflicts the world.<sup>3</sup>

To use the image of the Titanic, these men think that if the poor people in the lower decks were to work as hard as they do, the ship would have much fewer lower decks, everyone would live on whatever deck they deserve, and the ship would avoid the iceberg. These men are appalled by the 'enabling liberals' on the luxury first deck who, as they see it, intend to allow the lazy to live off the hard work of those who have created the good life on the first deck in the first place.

*Free-riding* is a phenomenon studied in economics and game theory literature, discussing cost-benefit analysis, rational choice, and (the paradox of) cooperation, usually underestimating the impact of social norms on actions and motivations related to altruism.<sup>4</sup> *Social loafing* is a related phenomenon studied in social psychology, showing that, indeed, under certain circumstances, people invest less effort to achieve a goal when they work in a group than when working alone.<sup>5</sup> Social psychologists discuss matters of motivation, diffusion of responsibility, and feeling of effort as dispensable. As social loafing hurts both the individual and the group, it is not regarded as free-riding from the economists' focus on rationality, the term is used only when the choice to loaf is presumed to originate from a rational cost/benefit analysis.

We could say that free-riding is the 'smartest' strategy in the world of *Homo oeconomicus*, the world defined by market pricing, the context where the most admired achievement is the accumulation of monetary resources.<sup>6</sup> Research shows that money is an extrinsic motivator that incentivises free-riding, as only intrinsic motivation supports other goals.<sup>7</sup> 'Tangible rewards tend to have a substantially negative effect on intrinsic motivation', and 'even when tangible rewards are offered as indicators of good performance, they typically decrease intrinsic motivation for interesting activities'.<sup>8</sup> If we want to place blame, then society as a whole is guilty of systemic free-riding through giving priority to monetary accumulation as a foundation of society. Such a choice could be called systemic political *corrumpalism*.<sup>9</sup>

As I see it, *communal sharing* — Alan Page Fiske's concept of solidarity — must guide the design of our constitutive rules at macro levels, we must dethrone *market pricing*.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, research on multi-level selection has shown that, while altruists often lose out within groups, groups with more altruists are more resilient.<sup>11</sup> We must dethrone the *dominator model* of society

and the concept of *Homo oeconomicus* and nurture the *partnership model* of society<sup>12</sup> and *Homo amans relationalis*, or the ‘loving relational being’.<sup>13</sup>

To return to the image of the Titanic, it is true that there are loafers and free-riders in the world. We could say that those on the luxury deck are free-riders insofar as they exploit the work of subordinates, they enforce a ship design with a hierarchy of decks where many of those at the bottom work much harder than those at the top but have no way to rise up. Indeed, everyone on the ship needs to be responsible and work hard to change the course so that the iceberg can be avoided, and to change the design of the ship to make it less hierarchical, more like a Viking ship perhaps.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This hypothesis has been widely studied by social psychologists since Melvin J. Lerner, 1980, first established this research.

<sup>2</sup> In a 1993 meta-analysis, Karau and Williams, 1993, proposed the Collective Effort Model (CEM), and found that the magnitude of *social loafing* is reduced for women and individuals originating from Eastern cultures, that individuals are more likely to loaf when their co-workers are expected to perform well, and that individuals reduce social loafing when working with acquaintances and do not loaf at all when they work in highly valued groups.

<sup>3</sup> See in this context our experiences at the 2017 Annual Conference of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies, ‘Dignity in times of globalisation’, in Indore, India, 16th–19th August 2017, [www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/29.php](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/29.php). See also Thomas Pantham, 2009, ‘Against untouchability: The discourses of Gandhi and Ambedkar’, in *Humiliation: Claims and context*, edited by Gopal Guru. Chapter 10, pp. 179–208.

<sup>4</sup> See, among others, Hustinx, et al., 2010.

<sup>5</sup> See note 329 above.

<sup>6</sup> See, among others, ‘Privatization increases corruption’, by Jomo Kwame Sundaram, *Inter Press Service*, 23rd July 2019, [www.ipsnews.net/2019/07/privatization-increases-corruption/](http://www.ipsnews.net/2019/07/privatization-increases-corruption/).

<sup>7</sup> Deci, et al., 1999, p. 658. See well-written reflections in ‘Why universal basic income won’t work’, by Kacy Qua, *Medium*, 6th December 2017, <https://medium.com/@kacyqua/why-universal-basic-income-wont-work-f40f8a1f1148>.

<sup>8</sup> Deci, et al., 1999, p. 658. See well-written reflections in ‘Why universal basic income won’t work’, by Kacy Qua, *Medium*, 6th December 2017, <https://medium.com/@kacyqua/why-universal-basic-income-wont-work-f40f8a1f1148>.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Corrumpalism’, by Glenn A. Albrecht, *Psychoterratic*, 6th February 2016, <https://glennaalbrecht.com/2016/02/06/corrumpalism/>. I thank Linda Hartling for making me aware of this article. An example of corrumpalism is presented in *Who is protecting our forests?* a documentary film by Manfred Ladwig and Thomas Reutter, Arte, 2018, [www.arte.tv/en/videos/072571-000-A/who-is-protecting-our-forests/](http://www.arte.tv/en/videos/072571-000-A/who-is-protecting-our-forests/): Forest expert Sebastian Kirppu explains that ‘the Forest Stewardship Council is the international organisation which sets standards on timber products to make sure that the world’s forests are managed responsibly’, yet, the result is the opposite: ‘this is not sustainable forestry. This is killing forestry’.

<sup>10</sup> I discuss this predicament among others, in my book on *A dignity economy*, Lindner, 2012. See in this context also the work of Christian Felber, 2017, and his verdict that ‘money or capital is a means but it’s not the goal’, and the organisation Economy for the Common Good, which works for values-driven businesses to be mindful of and committed to (1) human dignity, (2) solidarity and social justice, (3) environmental sustainability, and (4) transparency and co-determination. See [www.ecogood.org](http://www.ecogood.org). It was a privilege to listen to him explain his work in the event ‘Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie auf EU-Ebene: Anwendung und Potenzial’, organised by Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, Member of the European Parliament for the Alliance 90/The Greens political party, on 1st October 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Research on multi-level selection has shown that altruists often lose out within groups, but groups with more altruists win, see, for instance, Wilson, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> See Eisler, 1987. Her most recent books are Eisler, 2007, and Eisler and Fry, 2019. It is a privilege to have Riane Eisler as an esteemed member in the global advisory board of our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship.

<sup>13</sup> I thank my friends from different linguistic backgrounds for counselling me on the best Latin translation for ‘loving relational being’. I started out with my suggestion of *Homo amans relationis* or *Homo amans relationalis* and then asked the Latin teachers at the school where I once learned Latin. Oliver Lange was so kind to reply and suggest *Homo amans et referens*, ‘der liebende und sich beziehende, in Beziehung befindliche Mensch’ (personal communication on 13th July 2020). German philosopher Bernhart Taureck’s suggested to abandon words such as *relationis* and *relationalis* and rather choose *concinntas*, or harmony, and form *homo amans et concinntatis*, ‘der liebende Mensch, in einer

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angemessenen Beziehung’ (personal communication on 10th July 2020). I also asked poet Ion-Marius Tatomir from Romania, since the Romanian language descended from the Vulgar Latin spoken in the Roman provinces of Southeastern Europe, and on 12th July 2020, he kindly responded by saying that he felt that *relationalis* was not ideal, but acceptable. Finally, I thank Bärbel Köhler-Schnegg, my former classmate, for asking her friends and relating to me, in a personal communication on 3rd September 2020, that the verb *referre* with the meaning of mutual reference is actually a legal term, a verb that was rather not used for interpersonal relationships or emotional relatedness, and that *concinntitas* would indeed be the best Latin translation. However, she suggests, since English-speaking readers may probably understand a formulation evocative of *relation* better, correct Latin or not, *relationalis* might be the best solution after all.

<sup>14</sup> In his book *Viking economics*, George Lakey, 2016, a scholar of social change, shows that the ‘insecurity model’ of the United States is less productive than the Scandinavian ‘universal services states’, as it creates an incentive to resist efficiency compared with the high-productivity Nordic model, because U.S. unions, for wanting to keep workers in jobs, sometimes defend labour practices that undermine productivity.