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Discipline

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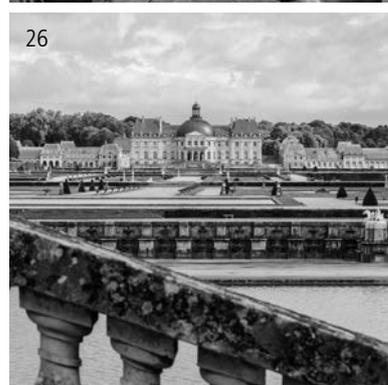
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Dear Readers,

The old Germanic tribes already counted it among their “Nine Noble Virtues,” and since the time of King Friedrich Wilhelm I it’s been the epitome of the Prussian value system: discipline. Its reputation has suffered somewhat in more recent times, not least because we also associate it with military things – but this hardly does justice to this important character trait. Whether in our work or our everyday routine, in sports or our lifestyle, we cannot achieve any of our goals without a certain degree of discipline. At its best, discipline is joined by further qualities such as creativity, a positive attitude and, above all, a sense of joy in what we do.

All of these are embodied by Annette Fredskov from Denmark, who is the subject of our cover story. After being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, she ran no less than 366 marathons in a single year. To manage this, she set up her own marathon course – one named after her – and she also had a huge amount of fun.

For the children who took Walter Mischel’s “Marshmallow Test,” on the other hand, “fun” was subject to specific limits. But those who were patient enough to wait for their promised marshmallow were not just rewarded with two treats instead – they also benefited for the rest of their lives from this ability to exercise restraint. We interview the distinguished psychologist Professor Mischel here, and he assures us that self-discipline is the key to success.

Robert Nef in his Essay explains why we urgently need more discipline in our public finances. And in his Report on the garden of Vaux-le-Vicomte, Michael Neubauer finds out what it takes to impose discipline on the proliferations of abundant nature.

But perhaps reading about discipline can bring the greater pleasure. To this end, Ijoma Mangold recommends Musil’s “The Confusions of Young Törless” – and for my part, I recommend this issue of CREDO.

I hope you find our journal informative and enjoyable.



H.S.H. Prince Philipp von und zu Liechtenstein
Chairman LGT

Marathon woman



Vigorous arm movements give Annette Fredskov energy and are as much a part of her self-motivation technique as her feel-good proverbs.



Text: **Clemens Bomsdorf** | Photos: **Simon Skreddernes**

Annette Fredskov from Denmark was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis – and afterwards ran a marathon every day for a whole year. On her 365th day she even ran the 26.2 miles twice for good measure. Since then, she has shown no more symptoms of the disease. Her recipe for achieving big things isn't the classical path of sheer self-discipline. Instead, she says you must have fun, and you can't take yourself or your goals too seriously.

The proof of Annette Fredskov's marathon successes – and thus a testimony to the most remarkable year of her life – is to be found in her 366 glittering, golden-colored medals. But she keeps them in two plain, flimsy IKEA boxes made of transparent plastic. They're stowed away, almost out of sight, in a toolshed at the back of her one-story single family home on the outskirts of the little town of Næstved, some 60 miles southwest of Copenhagen in Denmark. Here, next to bicycles and garden accessories, Fredskov keeps the medals she was awarded for running the marathons of Frankfurt and Paris, the "Great Wall Marathon" of China and hundreds of others.

Fredskov is "marathon woman." The only woman in the world to have run a marathon every day for a whole year – and two on the last day. In total, she has run this famed distance of 26.2 miles more than 640 times.

It's only thanks to her partner's prompting that she's had the unassuming boxes brought in from her shed. Glancing down at the host of precious-looking metal on the floor of her bright eat-in kitchen, she says quite matter-of-factly: "I'm one of those people who don't keep much. Perhaps I'll take the ribbons off the medals and throw them away – then everything would fit in just one box."

It's been five years since the beginning of her marathon series; Annette Fredskov is 45 now. But it isn't pride that she exudes when looking back on it all. It's a sense of contentment that comes across as she speaks. She also wants to share her experiences, to show that everyone can achieve a lot "when your body, mind and spirit work together," as she puts it. Her multiple sclerosis had been diagnosed shortly before her marathon year – but it's not something she wants to make a fuss about. She prefers to focus on positive thoughts and feelings. Perhaps that's the secret of her success.



Up to now, Annette Fredskov has run 646 marathons (as of August 21, 2017). Her quickest was her 504th marathon in Sorø in Denmark on April 19, 2014, where she clocked in at 3 hours 36 minutes and 45 seconds.

The ecstasy of running

“It never occurred to me that all these medals might be something special. But of course I remember all my wonderful experiences. Frankfurt in October 2010 was my first-ever marathon, and when I ran along the red carpet to the finish line at the trade fair center, I was ecstatic. I immediately knew that I had to do it again,” says Fredskov. She speaks Danish incredibly quickly, as if she still has surplus energy in her that has to flow out somehow. And this is despite all her daily training, and the fact that she still runs a marathon every few weeks.

“The idea of running a marathon a day simply came to me one evening,” says Fredskov laconically. The way she describes it, it was a spontaneous idea, just like other people decide on the spur of the moment to go to the movies. “I was sitting on the sofa with my then partner, and I simply mentioned the idea to him. He said: if anyone could do it, it was me.”

Most of all, Fredskov radiates sheer enthusiasm when she speaks of her year of extremes. As she talks, her sentences are punctuated with laughter. And it’s this enthusiasm and laughter that fill her house with energy and life. She shares her little

bungalow with her partner, and her daughter and son. It’s immaculate – the appearance and furnishings are as neat, prim and proper as you might otherwise find only when you check into a room in a top-notch hotel. The living room, kitchen and bathroom are spotless. People could be forgiven for assuming that the owner must be something of a pedant. But there’s nothing pedantic about Annette Fredskov, who’s really relaxed in person. She just likes things to be clean and tidy. Perhaps this is because it gives her more space for laughter and for simply enjoying life.

“For me, running marathons was exactly the right thing from the very start,” she recalls as we sit in her dining area. She’s dressed in black, casual clothes, and is leaning against the white wall behind her. Fredskov looks like a typical marathon runner – wiry, and with not an ounce of excess fat. And yet for a long time she wasn’t very athletic at all. “When I was a child I tried out lots of things – handball, soccer, badminton, tennis, gymnastics. I usually kept each sport going for a year at best. I just wasn’t having fun. Perhaps I wasn’t good enough, or perhaps team sports weren’t my thing,” says Fredskov. She did take part in a three-mile run on one occasion. She found it exciting, but only briefly.

“It never occurred to me that all these medals might be something special. But of course I remember all my wonderful experiences.”

Quitting wasn't an option

It took years – decades, really – for her to find her way back and ultimately discover the most celebrated distance of all: the marathon. “I rarely had to force myself to run, because it made me feel extremely good. In such cases you don't need any discipline, because the motivation comes almost by itself,” says Fredskov. And anyone who joins her on a short training run through the Danish countryside immediately knows that these are not just empty words.

When she's jogging, Fredskov is even more energetic than ever. She takes long strides, her shoulders hunched up high. “I normally prefer to run alone because then I can think properly, and don't have to plan when to take off,” she says. Despite her brisk pace, she's never out of breath even while she is talking. Her running circuit takes us past a little river where swans and ducks are swimming, then we cross a bridge and enter a forest. Just like everywhere else in Denmark, there are almost no hills here. At least this country doesn't make things unnecessarily difficult for its marathon runners.

Fredskov promptly rejects the notion that you can only achieve big things with a lot of self-discipline. “What matters is filling our lives with things that are fun. If you do that, everything works much better, and we can do anything we set our minds to,” she says. She doesn't sound like someone lecturing about things they've mostly read in books. Instead, she speaks the straightforward language of someone who just wants to pass on their experience of life without any fuss. “Of course it wasn't always easy. But I wanted to do it, and I approached my daily marathons just like any other job. It was a duty that was sometimes more fun, sometimes less,” she says. It never occurred to her to break off her project – she would have quit only if her children had told her to stop. “Of course it was tough now and then. I can remember running through Danish snowstorms, while in other marathons I had to walk a lot because I was simply shattered.”

Talking makes things clearer

Fredskov put her career on hold during her marathon year. She would not have coped otherwise. Her partner suddenly had sole responsibility for the family income, so in order to avoid getting into financial difficulty, they postponed buying the bigger house that they'd wanted. “These things are necessary sacrifices. It's also nice here.” She originally did an apprenticeship at a bank, then she became a teacher and a coach. Now she draws on her life experiences to motivate adolescents and young adults who've not managed to finish school and have no qualifications. Many of them have mental or drug problems. Fredskov's job is financed by the local authority. She meets young people on a one-to-one basis, and tries to help them get a grip on their lives again. Normally, she doesn't tell them anything about her success in sports. She just wants to help these young people to develop a more positive, more confident attitude to life so that they are better able to achieve small-scale goals. “For them, and for me too, even small steps are wonderful,” says Fredskov.

Marathon records

Annette Fredskov isn't the only person with an unusual running record. In October 2004, Xu Zhenjun from China ran the complete Beijing Marathon backwards, and he only took 3 hours, 43 minutes and 39 seconds to do it. Among the women, Shantelle Gaston-Hird ran a half-marathon backwards in less than three and a half hours in March 2017.

In the summer of 2014, the Danish twins Peder and Steen Mondrup completed the Ironman Copenhagen together in 15 hours, 42 minutes and 38 seconds. What's remarkable about this is that Peder has been paralyzed since birth. For the swimming leg, Steen towed him in a kayak; for the cycling, Peder sat on a bicycle made especially for him; and for the marathon, Steen pushed his brother in an ultralight wheelchair.

Life didn't always run smoothly for Fredskov, who suffered from depression in her early twenties. She herself learned that what matters most is how you deal with such problems.

"I recall that I went walking a lot with my father during the time I was depressed. That did me good. I got out, got myself moving," she says. "It's incredibly important to talk and to try and put your feelings in words. My father didn't have any answers. He just listened," she remembers. It seems to have been how Heinrich von Kleist described it in his essay "On the gradual production of thoughts while speaking."

For Fredskov today, running is like the walks she used to take with her father. "While I'm running I'm basically talking with myself – every day. That's why I don't have any pent-up feelings. I'm processing them – such as when things are difficult with the kids. While I'm running, I can get a clearer picture of what the problem is, and then it's better the next time."

Running against a diagnosis

Fredskov's enthusiasm for running only came back to her in her late thirties. "It all started after the birth of my children, when I wanted to do something to keep me healthy and to lose some weight. Then I remembered how I'd enjoyed running, long before." So she took it up again. First it was the usual three miles, three times a week. "Initially it wasn't nice at all, but then I forced myself to become more disciplined, and carried on with it. I wanted the kids to have a mother who was in shape and who would enjoy a long life with them. The more I ran, the more I got my teeth into it." Suddenly, she didn't need discipline anymore. She was running for fun.

Fredskov was on her way to becoming an ambitious runner, and it only seemed a matter of time before she'd run her first marathon. Then, in November 2009, she got a shock diagnosis: multiple sclerosis.



Annette Fredskov's parents Grete and Søren have cheered her on for most of her marathons. The starting line of the "Fredskov Marathon" was in their garage.

Just about everyone will have heard or read of this incurable disease of the nervous system, called “MS” for short. When you hear those two letters, you immediately conjure up an image of a patient getting ever weaker – first moving around on crutches, then sitting in a wheelchair. Such thoughts went through Fredskov’s mind, too, when she was properly informed about the possible course of the disease. It was almost as if she already felt stuck in a wheelchair. She was simply thinking too much about all the risks.

“I was really caught up in the disease and its negative perspective. And then there was also this physician who told me I ought to give up all my running – and in any case, he said, I could forget about ever doing a marathon.” That was the moment when she had had enough. “For 14 days I was completely devastated. Then I told myself: no, that can’t be true. I don’t want this disease.” That made her mentally stronger, she says, and she started running hard again. Soon she ran her first



Sometimes simple truths are the best motivation – an inspirational quote on the wall of Fredskov’s garage.

Interview with Professor Judith Haas, MD

Soon after she was diagnosed with MS, Annette Fredskov from Denmark ran a marathon a day for a whole year.

As a specialist in MS, what do you think when patients try to achieve such extreme feats?

These days, after giving our diagnosis we inform our MS patients that physical activity can have a truly decisive impact on the progression of their disease, along with their course of individually adjusted immunotherapy. Nor do we advise them against undertaking extreme challenges. Today, marathon runners with MS are no longer uncommon.

Fredskov believes that her untroubled life today is not least thanks to her running so much. Is it possible that she has mentally fended off her illness by turning to sports instead?

Sports are proven to affect the immune system positively by releasing stress hormones, and they can have a positive, regulatory impact on the chronic inflammation that is at the heart of MS. Above and beyond this, sport improves the abnormal fatigue caused by MS, it enhances resistance to stress and alleviates depression. It can also help to ward off osteoporosis. It is undoubtedly helpful when sport is the focus of your life, and not your MS diagnosis.

What can MS patients do to slow down the progression of their disease?

Besides physical activity, other healthy lifestyle factors play a role: a sufficient supply of vitamin D, giving up smoking, and a low-salt diet. Brochures with the appropriate information can be ordered via the website of the German Multiple Sclerosis Society (DMSG).

Professor Judith Haas, MD, is the head of the Center for Multiple Sclerosis at the Jewish Hospital in Berlin. She is also the Chairwoman of the German Multiple Sclerosis Society (DMSG), which provides information about MS, supports those affected and promotes research. The DMSG is dependent on donations for its work. www.dmsg.de



Her parents' garage is a kind of museum for Annette Fredskov, dedicated to her year of marathons.

marathon: Frankfurt, October 31, 2010. It took her 3 hours, 55 minutes and 58 seconds – the figures are still on her homepage. Two months later, she ran a marathon in Copenhagen on New Year's Eve. She was only a few minutes slower. Then one thing followed another: Ishøj, Skodsborg, Vigersted, Næstved, Paris, and by the end of June the next year she'd completed 23 marathons. Just over a year later, she had the idea for her marathon of marathons. As of July 15, 2012 – the day she ran her 92nd marathon overall – she started running one a day.

Logistical challenges

“As far as I knew, no one before me had ever attempted it. Which means that no one had ever failed it, either, so I had no reason to doubt that I could do it,” she says. No sooner said than done, as it were. But of course it was actually more complicated and more taxing than that. “This turned out to be a blessing, because if I'd known at the start just what the challenges would be, I might never have begun at all.” The athletic side of it was the least of her problems. Fredskov soon realized that she would simply have to run slower than normal, and this enabled her to be fit enough to run the distance every day. But the logistics proved much more problematic.

Fredskov's home lies a good distance from any of Denmark's big cities, and marathons usually took place far from where she lives. But the children still had to be fed and taken to their various activities, so it was simply out of the question for her to run over 26 miles a day if she also had to commute back and forth by car even farther. However, you only need three participants to organize an official marathon, so she quickly set up the “Fredskov Marathon,” and ran it over 200 times that year. Its starting point was her parents' garage, just a few minutes away from her own home.

Bicycle or wheelchair if need be

Contrary to her physician's prognosis, the more she ran, the better she felt. “Now I have no symptoms at all anymore. I've declared myself healthy,” says Fredskov today. She quickly adds that of course she's not really healthy, because MS progresses in phases and it could flare up again at any time. But at least she feels that she has been able to have a positive impact on the progression of the disease.

If another MS flare-up should occur that makes her weaker, she'd be sad, she says – but only for a brief time, “because then



Normally, her medals are stored in a box. She's laid them out for our photographer.

I'd ask: what can I do now? If I can't run, perhaps I can ride a bike, and if I can't do that, then perhaps I can take part in events in my wheelchair. I would concentrate on the possibilities before me, not on my limitations."

There are times that Fredskov's adages sound like something from a self-help book. But when you meet her, you immediately believe her when she says that everyone can achieve big things. Of course, the old idea that "you can do everything if you just believe in it" is exaggerated. But Fredskov teaches us that most people are capable of more than we think. She proves it too. Just because you can't change something doesn't mean that you should let it rob you of your zest for life. And if you're motivated enough, you don't even need that much self-discipline. ♦

Clemens Bomsdorf is the northern Europe correspondent of assorted publications, and a member of weltreporter.net.



You can find an audio slideshow about this portrait at www.lgt.com/credo



She was never an ace at sports in her younger years – Fredskov in front of the entrance to her old school.

Through excess to success



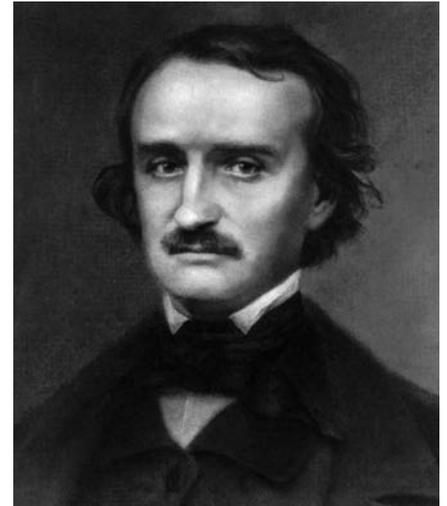
Winston Churchill (1874–1965)

A Member of Parliament at the age of 26, First Lord of the Admiralty at 36, Prime Minister at 65 and again at 76: Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill's lifelong presence on the political stage was a result of his iron determination. But it was only thanks to tobacco and alcohol that he was able to bear the resultant stresses and strains – not to mention his depression. In 1931, after he was hit by a car in New York, a physician prescribed him a daily dose of spirits – at least half a pint, though he was also allowed to increase it as desired. “Adolf Hitler was a teetotaler, a vegetarian and never smoked, but he lost the War,” quips the current Czech President Miloš Zeman, “whereas the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill every day drank a bottle of whisky and three bottles of champagne and smoked eight cigars; but he won the War.”



Amy Winehouse (1983–2011)

To call her a “queen of pop” or a “soul diva” would be a flagrant understatement. Melodious yet husky, both urgent and languid – whenever she stood before a microphone, Amy Jade Winehouse's alto voice became a force of nature. She managed to kick hard drugs, only for alcohol to become her constant companion. Her debut album “Frank,” with its autobiographical lyrics, was certified triple platinum, and its blistering successor, “Back To Black,” signified her international breakthrough. Amy Winehouse was a rebel, a vocal virtuoso, a style icon – but then everything fell apart. She gave disastrous performances, barely able to stay on her feet, and then came a final alcohol binge that she didn't survive. The last line of one of her most famous songs still seems to echo in our ears: “He's tried to make me go to rehab, I won't go, go, go.”

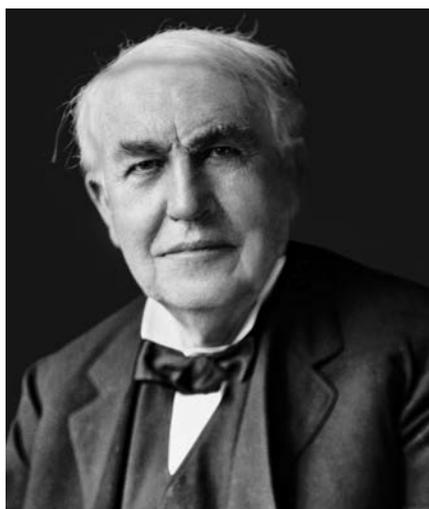


Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)

Edgar Allan Poe was abandoned by his father when he was only a baby, and his mother died when he was barely three years old. So he grew up as an orphan. His foster father was alternately generous and overly strict, and their relationship was ambivalent. But Poe was given a good education and became an excellent swimmer. Gambling and alcohol soon entered his life, however. Poe's brother died from over-imbibing, and he himself had debts of 2000 dollars after just eight months at university. Poe went from being an athlete to a Sergeant Major in the US Army. He then mutated from an occasional scribbler into a sharp-tongued critic, and his own early poems turned into the lyric volumes, essays and detective stories of a pioneering, modern writer. But he also progressed from a regular morning shot of schnapps to laudanum in excess. Poe survived an overdose, but was soon after found dead in Baltimore in mysterious circumstances.

From an early age, we're taught that discipline is the first step on the path to success. But we forget all too readily that our nature rarely keeps within the bounds of this man-made order. Many statesmen, inventors and artists who have demanded greatness of themselves – and who have also attained it – possessed character traits that could not be restrained.

Text: **Thomas Weibel**



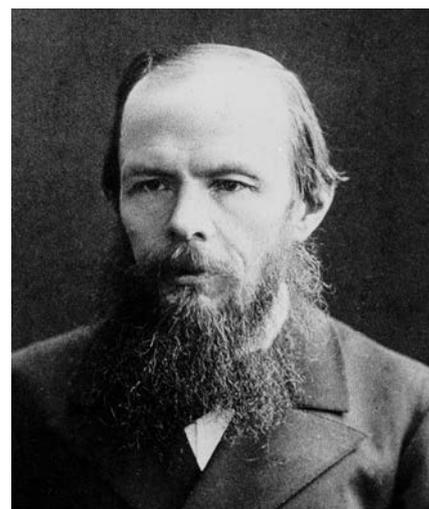
Thomas Alva Edison (1847–1931)

We owe him the phonograph and the electric lightbulb – and a lot more besides. Thomas Edison worked consistently with interdisciplinary teams, and is for this reason also considered the inventor of the industrial research and development facility. He was nicknamed “The Wizard of Menlo Park,” after the site of his laboratory in New Jersey. “Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration,” he used to say. In consequence, sleep did not figure large for him. In order to cope with just four hours of it a night, Edison took to Vin Mariani, a mixture of cocaine and wine invented by the French chemist Angelo Mariani in 1863. Contemporary advertisements claimed that it “Fortifies, strengthens, stimulates & refreshes the body & brain.”



Anita Berber (1899–1928)

The singer, actress and nude dancer Anita Berber was a nightmare to the bourgeoisie, even in the Berlin of the Roaring Twenties. The First World War was over, and the moral austerity of Imperial Germany had given way to a frantic pursuit of dubious pleasures. Svelte, long-legged, heavily made up, but never vulgar and with an infallible gift for provocation, Berber was a pioneer of womanly self-determination. As a vamp and a femme fatale she became an icon and an idol; wearing a monocle and a tuxedo “à la Berber” turned into a craze. The 29 years of her brief life were a story of singular excess: too many lovers, too much cognac, too much morphine, too much cocaine. She was on stage in Beirut when she collapsed, riddled with tuberculosis, and she died not long after in Berlin.



Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881)

He wrote just like he gambled – as if driven by demons. Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky took a mere 26 days to dictate his novel “The Gambler” to his stenographer and later wife Anna. That was all the time he had – he was mired in debt and had begged his publisher for an advance of 3000 rubles. He got the money, but with an impossible condition attached: that he should write a novel of over a hundred pages in just four weeks, or otherwise lose the rights to his future works. He delivered “The Gambler” just two hours before the deadline expired. It is a masterpiece, and a study of his own addiction. Money runs through his fingers like water, and roulette exerts a magnetic attraction for him. Gambling is at one and the same time both poison and elixir: it's his balancing act on the edge of the abyss that makes this Russian gambler one of the greats of world literature. ♦

No pain, no gain

Text: **Mathias Plüss**

Ants are regarded as perhaps the most disciplined creatures of all – their colonies are a paradigm of efficiency. But they still can't serve as an example for us humans.

In the Swiss Jura region, some twenty miles west of Lausanne, there is a megacity that hardly anyone knows about. It's got around 250 million inhabitants, and over 70 miles of trails. What's special about it is this: it's populated not by people, but by ants. More than a thousand nests of wood ants (*Formica paralugubris*) have come together here to form a single, powerful network. This so-called supercolony consumes over a ton of insects and twenty tons of honeydew every year.

This is just one of many such impressive examples. Ants have conquered the Earth not unlike us humans – there is hardly a corner of the planet where we don't find them. Together, all the ants in the world would weigh roughly as much as humankind. Nor should we underestimate their ecological impact. A huge supercolony of Argentine ants (*Linepithema humile*) dominates the European coastline from Portugal to Italy to such an extent that reptiles and mammals are deprived of their sources of food in some areas.

The success of ants is based on their efficient division of labor and their iron discipline. Unlike bees, which are capable of learning, ant behavior is determined wholly by instinct. An ant will thus always react predictably and never try out anything new. It knows no idle time, no wasted energy and no discussion:

everything is designed for maximum efficiency. A good example of this is their transportation network. Although the volume of traffic is certainly comparable with that of our own large urban areas, there are never any traffic jams along the ant trails. Ants never jostle each other and never overtake. Instead, they always move at the same pace.

Boundless loyalty

Their whole system functions so well because every individual constrains its egotism for the good of the community. When they gather food, ants first carry it to their nest and only then do they eat for themselves. They're even prepared to sacrifice their lives to ensure the welfare of the colony. Among California harvester ants (*Pogonomyrmex californicus*), six percent of their foragers die every hour in battles with neighboring colonies. For the colony as a whole, the loss of these individuals is of no consequence, for they are rapidly replaced.

Ant communities have fascinated thinkers of all kinds – some of them have even praised the ant colony as an ideally organized state. Company bosses could also take pleasure in its high-performance workers, because they show boundless loyalty, carry out their tasks tirelessly, and never complain. But this impression is misleading, because human beings would find



this kind of organization to be a hell on earth. In the ant colony there is no variety, no inspiration, no independence – and no sex. Reproduction is something the ants have delegated to their queen, who is nothing other than an egg-laying machine. “It would be terribly boring to live in such a society,” says the renowned ant researcher Bert Hölldobler. “I’d prefer an environment where I’m respected as an individual.”

And ants would no doubt be utterly unsuccessful as entrepreneurs because they lack creativity. There is no room for new ideas in their perfectly organized community, for that would disturb the smooth running of it. Discipline and innovation are opposites. The most creative companies and universities are precisely those that give their employees and students space to express themselves. For example, Google allows some of its employees to spend up to 20 percent of their working time on their own side projects. The result of this has been such lucrative services as Gmail, Google News and AdSense. In an ant colony, such innovation would be unthinkable.

Total destruction

There is one more reason why we shouldn’t take ants as our role models: they are incredibly aggressive. The more disciplined their life inside their colony, the more brutal they are outside

it. They sacrifice their individual needs to serve the common welfare, so they’re ready to fight to the death for their community. Ants are capable of driving away bears with their venomous stings, and in East Africa they will even attack farm workers, who have to wear protective clothing as a consequence.

Above all, however, their violence is turned against their own kind. “Ants in particular are arguably the most aggressive and warlike of all animals,” claim Bert Hölldobler and his US colleague Edward O. Wilson in their book “Journey to the Ants. A Story of Scientific Exploration”: “They far exceed human beings in organized nastiness.” These two leading ant experts also believe that “the foreign policy aim of ants can be summed up as follows: restless aggression, territorial conquest, and genocidal annihilation of neighboring colonies whenever possible. If ants had nuclear weapons, they would probably end the world in a week.” So we can be truly relieved that ants are not creative by nature; they will never be able to invent something as complex as nuclear weapons. ♦

Mathias Plüss is a science journalist and writes for the “Tages-Anzeiger” of Zurich and elsewhere.

“Only those who are in control of themselves are truly free.”

Interview: **Sacha Batthyany** | Photos: **Keystone/APA Picturedesk/Herbert Neubauer**

Self-discipline is the key to success, says Walter Mischel, the inventor of the world-famous Marshmallow Test. We've talked with him about our weaker self, chocolate mousse, and the right way to bring up kids.



CREDO: Prof. Mischel, your Marshmallow Test is one of the most famous psychological experiments. In essence, it's really simple: You give children a choice of either eating a sweet immediately, or of waiting till later to get an extra reward. It's about the ability to exercise self-control. How did you come upon this experiment?

Walter Mischel: Can I start a bit further back?

By all means.

Over 50 years ago I was on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, and I was struck by how the inhabitants of the island thought about each other. In the eyes of the immigrants from India, the Trinidadians of African descent were hedonistic and keen to live in the now. Conversely, the latter group regarded the Indians as workaholics with no idea of how to enjoy the moment. These differences awakened my curiosity as a researcher. It was only years later that I realized that my interest in these issues wasn't a matter of chance. You could say it was in fact my life's topic, and it's linked to my own childhood.

You're referring to your family's escape from Nazi Germany?

I was eight years old when we fled from Vienna to the USA back in 1938. We were a middle-class family and my father was a chemical engineer. But in America we landed in extreme poverty. As a Jew it was impossible for my father to get a job as an engineer. In the end he opened up a five-and-dime shop in Brooklyn, but his income was barely sufficient to feed us all. My father became depressed about our situation, whereas I remained optimistic and believed in the American dream: if you work hard, you can get to the top.

What does this have to do with marshmallows?

It's about imagining that everything will at some point get better. It's about setting yourself goals – and it's about self-denial, which was something we experienced at first hand as a family. Ultimately, it was my daughters Judith, Rebecca and Linda who gave me the idea about the marshmallows. Back then I was a young professor at Stanford and was watching my kids grow up. When they were small, they were highly impulsive and could never sit still, just like all babies. That changed when they were four years old. I wanted to find out what suddenly made my children able to pursue goals. Suddenly, they were able to defer eating a cookie – or a marshmallow – if they had a reason to do so. I developed our tests based on this. We made it clear to the children that they would get a second treat if they didn't eat the first one immediately, but they had to wait twenty minutes.

What was the result?

Roughly a third of the children eat the marshmallow immediately. A third hold back, but then give in to temptation. And a third of them wait. What was interesting was how much imagination the more patient children showed in order to distract themselves from the temptation to eat the sweet. Some of them turned away, others closed their eyes, clasped their hands and put them on the table in front of them. Some tried to sleep. Or they used their imagination to invent games. There were children who played their toes as if they were piano keys.

So it's about overcoming our weaker self – the one we all know so well.

That's right. You can look at the Marshmallow Test in symbolic terms and apply it to all spheres of life. In everyday life, the second marshmallow could represent a promotion that requires a greater investment of time, patience or hard work; or it could symbolize a slimmer waistline for which you're prepared to give up sweet things; or it could signify a partner to whom you'd like to remain faithful, despite temptations elsewhere.

This means that the findings of the Marshmallow Test can be applied to adults?

Based on our observations, I can offer advice that's meaningful for us as adults. When we work but are constantly being distracted by our smartphone, then it can be advisable to switch it into flight mode. The principle is similar when we're on a diet. We should remove objects of temptation out of sight, and consciously think of our real goals. Then there's a greater chance that we'll keep to our resolutions. And if a pretty colleague catches our eye at the workplace, everyone who's in a steady relationship and who doesn't want a crisis should either look the other way, or change seats.

Let's get down to the nitty-gritty. Does it do any good to make a New Year's resolution to quit smoking on January 1? And if we do want to reach such a goal, how should we proceed?

Smoking is a tricky business because nicotine is addictive in ways we shouldn't underestimate. 50 years ago, I didn't just smoke three packs of cigarettes a day, but a pipe too. One evening I was in the shower and realized I couldn't go on like this.

In the shower?

The water was coming out of the shower head and I noticed that I still had my pipe in my mouth. I knew I was addicted, and that smoking wasn't really healthy. But this insight didn't help me at all.



When he was a young professor in the late 1960s, Walter Mischel carried out several experiments in the kindergarten of Stanford University that his own daughters were attending. These later became known as the “Marshmallow Test.” Children were offered a marshmallow (or another treat) and had to choose whether to eat it immediately, or to wait for twenty minutes, after which they would be rewarded with two sweets instead of one. Mischel wanted to test the children’s ability to exert self-control. Over the ensuing years he investigated the life paths of his ca. 600 test children, and got astonishing results. Those who were able to exert self-control as a child also attained higher qualifications as an adult; they were more resistant to stress, had the more successful careers, and enjoyed a greater degree of self-assurance. (Stills from the YouTube video “The Marshmallow Test”)

So what did?

As a psychologist, I’m interested in the power of thought. How can we improve our self-control? We have to steer our perceptions. First, every smoker has to admit that he is under the influence of a stimulant. The cigarette controls the smoker, not the other way round – even though the cigarette advertisements are always promising us a life of freedom. In truth, the opposite is the case: smokers are totally unfree. Because only those who are in control of themselves are truly free.

And that was enough for you to give up cigarettes?

It was a first step. It helped when I saw a patient at Stanford

medical school who had lung cancer. I was shocked by how he looked. I never touched a cigarette again. Whether the shocking photos they put on cigarette packs today are of much overall use is not something I can comment on. We need studies to evaluate that. But in general, we are indeed more influenced by images. This brings me back to the Marshmallow Test. We observed that covering up the treat meant the children were more often able to wait and control themselves. The brain and consciousness of human beings are organized so that it’s the things we see right before us that seem emotionally compelling. This emotional effect weakens as our temporal distance from the object of our desire increases.

A black and white photograph of Walter Mischel, an elderly man with a balding head and a wrinkled face, sitting in a dark leather chair. He is wearing a dark, button-down shirt and a watch on his left wrist. He is gesturing with his right hand, which is raised and open. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a large arched doorway and a window. The lighting is soft, highlighting his features.

Walter Mischel, 87, is an Austrian-American personality psychologist. He has taught at Harvard, Stanford and Columbia Universities. At the age of eight he and his family fled from the Nazis in Vienna and came to the USA. After moving around several times, the Mischel family settled in Brooklyn where his father ran a five-and-dime shop. Walter Mischel is one of the most distinguished psychologists in the world, and has become something of a pop star of science. He has three daughters. He documented his findings of several decades in 2014 in his international bestseller: "The Marshmallow Test: Understanding self-control and how to master it."

Whether it's cigarettes, beer, chocolate or more sports: what goes on in our brain in this battle between self-restraint and our desire to give in to our impulses? It's reminiscent of the little devil in our heads and the constant inner argument between "should I?" and "shouldn't I?"

I differentiate here between two interlinked systems. On the one hand there is the limbic or "hot" system. It emerged much earlier during our evolution. Inside it we find the almond-shaped amygdala, which triggers strong emotions of happiness, but also fear. In the case of our sweets, it's our desire for their taste that's the attraction. This hot system is important – it's what makes us duck automatically when we hear a gunshot. It's responsible for our primary drives – sex, hunger, fear. To offset this, we have the so-called cold system, which developed later in our evolution. It also grows slowly when we're children. It's situated in our prefrontal cortex, directly behind our forehead.

So this cold system enables children to do without the marshmallow if they're promised a reward. Is it also what makes us adults go jogging instead of eating cake, because we know it's healthier?

Yes, we learn to analyze things and to weigh them up. The hot system thinks in the here and now. The cold system lets us learn to gauge the consequences of our actions. Over the years of our carrying out the Marshmallow Test, we've observed an interesting fact: namely, that a child's ability to exert self-control has been proven to have a positive impact on its later life.

Can you please elaborate on this?

I have put my marshmallows in front of some 600 test children, and as I've followed their progress through life, I've discovered some astonishing correlations. Those who were able to wait when they were children later demonstrated greater powers of concentration. They were better able to deal with life's frustrations, they were more self-confident, and got better grades. Twenty years later, they were more likely to have a university degree, their relationships were more stable, they took fewer

drugs, and were slimmer. And so it continued over the ensuing decades, time and again. In all possible facets of life, there were striking differences between the two groups. The ability to exert self-control is an important instrument in helping us to reach our goals.

If these differences in our level of self-control already become evident when we're still children, and if this impacts on our later achievements, does this mean that some of us are born successful, and others are born failures? If a little boy is barely able to show any self-control, should his parents already resign themselves to their son becoming a drug addict in later life?

This nature-nurture question is regarded as old-fashioned today – whether we're shaped by our environment, or whether we inherit self-discipline along with all our other character traits. We know now that genes in people can be switched on by environmental factors, and that they can also be passed on – such as in cases where a pregnant mother is under stress, or happy. Genes and the environment can't be separated from each other.

So what does that mean?

It means you can help children to cool down, to concentrate better, and to get a grip on themselves. This also makes them more self-confident. So our ability to exert self-control – which then correlates with professional success – can be developed and trained, just like a muscle. I myself am working today with people who find it difficult to keep their emotions in check. I help them to develop their cold system.

Emotional control, self-discipline, composure – they're all words that smack of the "good old days." Today's liberal education tends to focus on individualism instead. Children are expected to learn to express their emotions. Modern parents are advised to accept their child as it is – and to let it scream at times if it wants to.

Of course we should take children as they are. But we should also give them boundaries. That helps them to develop the self-discipline that they need in later life. We really have to try to be consistent so that children can learn that actions also have consequences. That also gives children the feeling that they can achieve something if they make an effort. Overprotecting them tends to be harmful. Mothers who are always running after their kids should rather stop. If children come across an obstacle in life, they can remove it themselves. And if they can't, then we should give them advice as to how to proceed.

“As a psychologist,
I'm interested in the
power of thought.”

“You can look at the Marshmallow Test in symbolic terms and apply it to all spheres of life.”

So we shouldn't spare our children the occasional frustration.

That's what I would urgently recommend. Though we have to differentiate here. If children are at a high level of stress, then advice isn't much use. It's better to pick them up and try to calm them down. We also know this from our own behavior. If we're stressed out, our hot system cranks itself up and our cold system shuts down. That makes us unable to contemplate the consequences of our actions. We run away or duck, we shout in our arguments, and we smash plates on the floor. But if our stress level is reduced, then our cold system can take control again. Stress is harmful to our self-restraint – and in small children, that's disastrous, because this could hamper the development of their cold system. Children who have to endure long periods of stress later find it difficult to control their emotions.

Here's a provocative question. Why should we constantly be exercising self-restraint? We're not robots. What about just living our lives?

That's a legitimate question...

To paraphrase the German poet Heinrich Heine: "It would be heavenly if I could compel / my sinful desires, / but if I'm not successful, / I'll certainly enjoy them."

I'm not preaching total self-control. That kind of life would be just as terrible as a life without it. It's about achieving a balance.

Have there been moments where you weren't able to control yourself?

Of course. I yield to temptation when I discover chocolate mousse on a restaurant menu.

And what do you do then?

It depends. If I want to lose weight, then I run through an “if-then” argument.

What's that?

It's like brushing your teeth. If I'm going to bed, then I'll brush my teeth. It's a procedure that we have had to learn, but which has become automatic. I can do the same with my chocolate mousse and other things: If I see it on the menu, then I order a fruit salad. Perhaps that sounds odd at first. But such rules actually work – and lots of people use them subconsciously. They link going to their office with a visit to the fitness studio. That, too, is an if-then model.

And yet self-discipline ultimately leads to asceticism.

For some professions, that makes sense. But what about creativity? "If I fancy a beer, why shouldn't I drink one?" asks the German author Tommy Jaud in his book: "Einen Scheiss muss ich" ("Like hell I do"). It's a homage to laziness. Then he should just drink his beer, there's no reason for him not to. After all, he wouldn't be able to write his books if he were drinking to excess every day.

But self-control is the enemy of art.

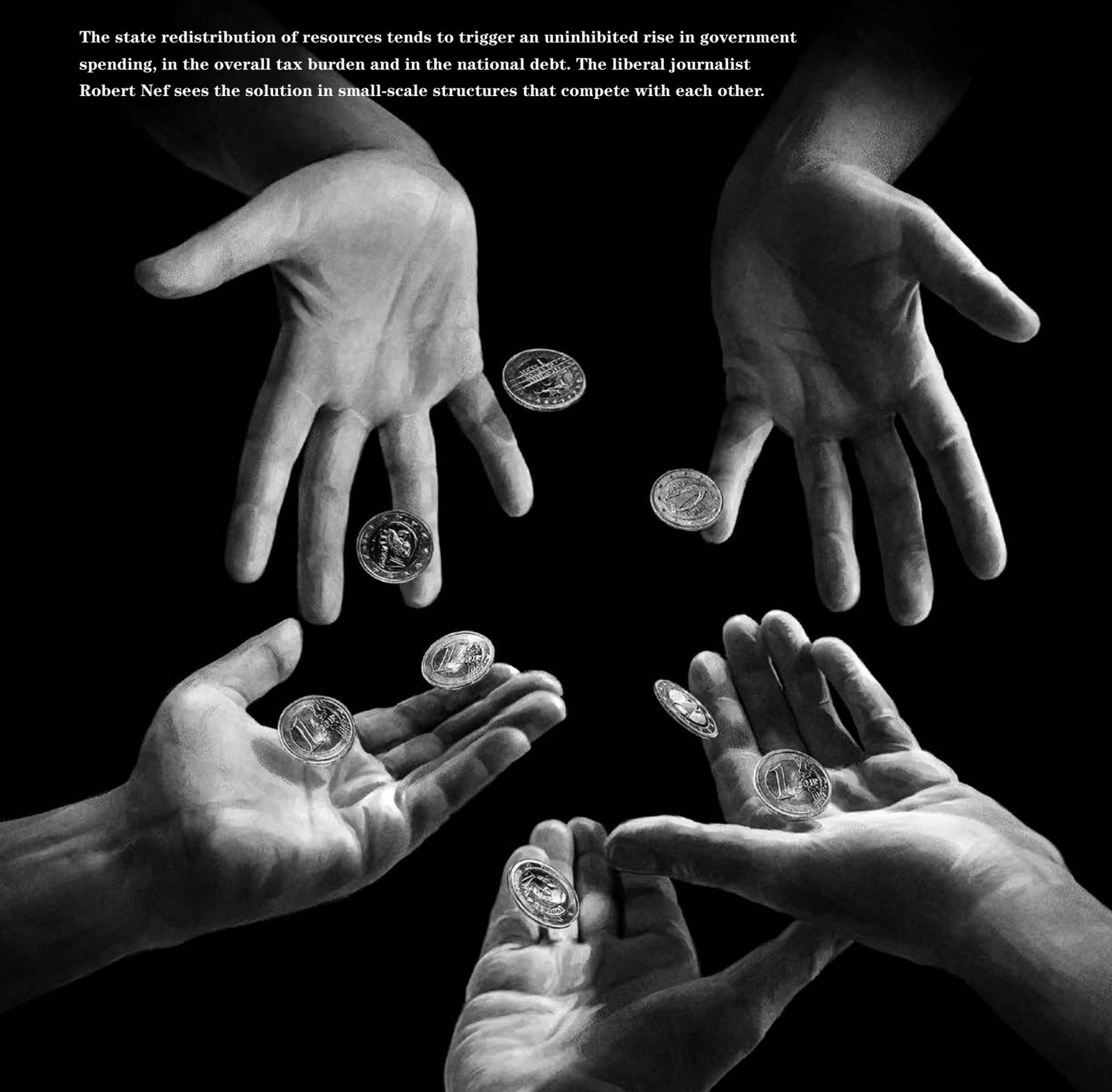
I don't agree with that. I do understand why the idea seems to make sense. In order to be creative you need imagination and invention, but you also need concentration. Creative work involves emotions, but self-control too. You can't paint an oil painting if you're not concentrating and let some sections dry out. And you can't play a Bach sonata if you don't practice, just as you won't write the novel of the century if you don't have the patience to sit down and work on it. Writers often tell me that they sit at their desk at the same time every day, as if they were accountants. Otherwise, it wouldn't work. Even a genius like Albert Einstein didn't get his inspiration while drunk. He had to work hard for his eureka moments. ♦

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Escaping the national debt trap

Text: **Robert Nef** | Illustration: **Markus Roost**

The state redistribution of resources tends to trigger an uninhibited rise in government spending, in the overall tax burden and in the national debt. The liberal journalist Robert Nef sees the solution in small-scale structures that compete with each other.



“If we delegate all social matters to the state, then we are also accepting a decline in the spontaneous solidarity of smaller groups. We are initiating a process that makes compulsory solidarity ever more indispensable.”

The principle of redistribution with a view to achieving a social balance between poor and rich is as old as politics itself. In the first instance, it is founded on the idea of solidarity when distributing common costs and benefits. Whoever earns more should contribute more to financing public services. As long as the recipient majority doesn't keep raising its demands indefinitely, then a moderate degree of redistribution will endanger neither the givers' propensity to solidarity, nor the public purse itself. In a democracy, however, the majority will often be inclined to live at the cost of the productive minorities, and will try to impose what it wants by means of the majority principle. The result is that productivity sinks, because redistribution is less productive than investing in technological and economic progress – and progress is in any case always founded on private venture capital. When productivity sinks, so does competitiveness, and this in turn brings about a tangible, general decline in prosperity. Greed rears its head, and the monies available for redistribution stagnate or are depleted.

Increasingly, state redistribution entails spending funds that have not even been earned yet. In other words, we are incurring debts that will have to be paid back by our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. This does not just contradict the rules of a healthy, disciplined national budget, but also contravenes a “primal truth” that we find in all cultures: that our children, i.e. the next generation, ought to be at least as well off as we are. But it is the post-War generation in the Western world, spoiled by its affluence, that has capitulated before this ancient truth.

Competition of the begging bowls

Much is said and written today about the frustrated people who are the “losers” of globalization – those whom the nation state has unjustly forgotten or failed to support properly. This segment of the population offers a breeding ground for political demands (from both left and right) that we should return to an interventionist, protectionist national state. Restoring the redistributory welfare state that politicians know and trust is from their perspective the only possible, majority option. They claim that “there is no alternative” and are keen to design a more consensual system for “giving at the expense of others.” Politics thus becomes a sociopolitical tug of war about how much or little ought to be redistributed to the various “needy” parties, i.e. the beneficiaries. The whole process turns into a competition between different begging bowls.

But what people forget here is that if we delegate all social matters to the state, then we are also accepting a decline in the spontaneous solidarity of smaller groups. We are initiating a process that makes compulsory solidarity ever more indispensable. Unlimited demands on the part of state consumers will sooner or later come into conflict with the taxpayers' limited readiness to pay into the state coffers. In most European countries today, the level of the overall tax burden already exceeds 50 percent. If it increases further, it will unavoidably lead to a drop in productivity.

Exiting defective structures

Redistribution does not just take place within a state, but also between whole regions or countries, from those that are eco-

nomically strong to those that are weak. But on this level, too, such redistribution means punishing those that display fiscal discipline and rewarding those that do not. This is both contrary to healthy competition and contravenes the notion of overcoming crises by means of a political learning process. In other words, it bears the seeds of failure within it. The current EU trend towards a transfer union contradicts the fundamental idea behind an association of economically independent countries. Sooner or later, the EU will reach the limits of solidarity and of affordability.

The consequences are potentially disastrous. People like to believe in the unlimited solvency of the state because of its seemingly endless ability to print money. But if that belief begins to crumble, then state bankruptcy becomes inevitable. We won't venture any predictions here, but we can at least express the hope that there will not be a single, massive collapse, but several rather localized crises that will allow us to explore alternatives for exiting defective structures. Those countries that have healthier finances thanks to better fiscal discipline can serve as an example to others – as long as they too don't go off the rails because they're being compelled to make transfer payments by a central authority.

The example of the EU demonstrates clearly that a large-scale, limitless redistribution with the aim of harmonizing and homogenizing a whole continent does not lead to greater budgetary discipline. We urgently need our politicians to return us to more manageable territorial dimensions, where a balance is restored between revenue and expenditure. After all, this is the quintessence of a sustainable budgetary and fiscal policy. Net beneficiaries should communicate directly with net contributors, and they should together bear the consequences of their decisions. In other words, we should aim for non-centralism, localism and municipal autonomy, also in fiscal terms.

Return to a balanced state of affairs

As an example of how this might work we need only look to Switzerland, where in 2001 a large majority voted in favor of a change to the constitution to adopt a debt brake. This provision commits the federal government to keeping revenue and expenditure in balance across the economic cycles. The debt brake has been in force since 2003. In addition to this, there are discussions today about introducing a financial referendum at federal level. This would mean that when parliament decides to engage in a large-scale spending program, it would also have to be approved by a majority of voters if enough signatures were collected to put it to a referendum. It would commit politicians to ensuring transparency in how they finance their expenditure.

If politics is organized on a small scale and according to the laws of competition, and if career politicians are replaced by part-time politicians taken from the ranks of those who are directly involved and affected by their decisions, then the result will be comparative experiments in which people will be able to learn, and can then vote with their feet (i.e. by moving from one region to another). This would be an opportunity for a gradual withdrawal from deficient structures. In this scenario, fiscally autonomous, small-scale regional authorities would supersede hopelessly overindebted, redistributory, large-scale systems.

Ultimately, the goal should be to limit the ratio of government expenditure to gross domestic product. From this perspective, tax cuts for everyone – including the rich – and a reduction in redistribution would not primarily be intended to counter tax flight. Most of all, these measures would protect our social system from collapse, as we cannot indulge in its open-ended expansion. Our aim would be to return to a balanced state of affairs in which people engage in an intrinsic, people-based system of mutual cooperation and consideration. This path would lead us out of the pernicious, vicious circle of state-prescribed compulsory solidarity. ♦

Robert Nef (1942), lic. iur. University of Zurich, ran the Liberal Institute in Zurich from 1979 to 2007 and is a member of its Foundation Board today. From 2002 to 2016 he was the chairman of the Zurich Foundation for Western Ethics and Culture, and from 1991 to 2008 he was the co-publisher and editor of the journal "Schweizer Monatshefte." For his consistent dedication to liberal values, the Friedrich August von Hayek Society awarded him the Hayek Medal in 2008.



Keeping green in check

Text: **Michael Neubauer** | Photos: **Raphael Zubler**

The chateau and gardens of Vaux-le-Vicomte served as a model for the magnificence of Versailles. For three hundred years they have survived wars and revolutions, remaining almost unchanged. But how do they fare today? A small team of gardeners is trying to halt the encroachments of nature, while the lords of the chateau are endeavoring to secure the future of their private cultural heritage.



A last critical inspection before the visitors come: Patrick Borgeot the gardener on his morning rounds in front of the chateau.





At the end of the main axis, the golden statue of Hercules stands on a small hill. The French garden laid out by Le Nôtre lies between the statue and the chateau.

They were rummaging next to “Winter.” The wild boars had come in the night, and dug up chunks of hitherto neat lawn next to the garden statue – a figure dating from the 17th century with a piece of wood in his hand symbolizing the coldest season. Now the bright green sward is riven with dark, earthy wounds.

Patrick Borgeot slows down his electric car to examine the damage. He’s the head gardener at Vaux-le-Vicomte. He tells us that especially in fall the wild boars come out of the forest at night. His team will have to step in to fix this turfy carnage. “It’s demoralizing,” he says. Because he knows that the boars will return, even though one of the castle owners goes out hunting them now and then.

Borgeot rides on, past decorative, cone-shaped boxwood shrubs and past the fountain that lies on the garden’s central axis. His Club Car buzzes, and its broad tires crunch the gravel paths. It’s just after eight a.m., and the 50-year-old, gray-haired Borgeot is kitted out in a hazel outdoor jacket, jeans, black sneakers, and sunglasses as he makes his morning rounds to check on the castle gardens. He puffs on an e-cigarette as he works. Next stop: the flower beds.

In just two hours, the first visitors and school classes will arrive at Vaux-le-Vicomte, this famous castle some 30 miles southeast of Paris. By the time they get here, Borgeot has to be sure that everything in this Baroque garden is in line with the strict rules that govern it. The day before was stormy and wet. Borgeot stops, and hurries across to the plants. Dahlias, cosmos flowers, meadow sage, hibiscus, busy Lizzie – they’re all standing proud, exactly in their appointed rows and diagonals. But they’re not all perfect – some of them have been bent by the wind.

The seven gardeners of Vaux-le-Vicomte order 10 000 plants every year. But they don’t have much creative freedom in their job. “We have strict guidelines,” says Borgeot. “In a French garden, our task tends to be just grooming it.” But here in the flower beds, his team is allowed to add their own personal touch with regard to the color and height of the plants. This year, blue, pink and white blossoms dominate. Borgeot thrusts his hand into the soil to test whether he’ll have to turn on the irrigation system. He cleans it by wiping it on the grass that’s still wet from the morning dew. He then jumps back in his car and dictates a verbal note into his smartphone: “Cosmoses have snapped, we have to replace them.”



Strict forms and clear lines: the box tree is perfect for a French garden.



"We love our work, but we are always aware that we are too few people," says head gardener Patrick Borgeot.

A completely new order

As a young man, Borgeot attended an agricultural school near Paris. His father was already a gardener, and after finishing his training, the younger Borgeot worked in the elder's landscaping business. Later, he ran such a company himself for 20 years until the number of orders dwindled, so he gave it up and took up his present job in 2007. Working for Vaux-le-Vicomte fills him with pride, he says. After all, this garden signified an important stage in the history of garden art.

Nicolas Fouquet (1615–1680) was the Superintendent of Finances under the young King Louis XIV, and Vaux-le-Vicomte was the magnificent fulfillment of his dreams. He gathered together the great artists of his time in order to create his estate from 1656 to 1661: the architect Louis Le Vau, the painter and decorator Charles Le Brun and the gardener-cum-landscape architect André Le Nôtre.

This trio of men had what architects today can only dream of: a patron who simply gave them carte blanche for everything they did. They created a harmonious, magnificent ensemble of chateau and garden – something that the mighty and powerful

across Europe would later take as a model. The three artists sculpted the approach, the chateau, the outbuildings and garden along an axis according to a system so rigorous that its like had never been seen before. To be sure, all its individual elements were already long in existence elsewhere – terraces, avenues, fountains, parterres, perspectives, vantage points, grottos and water features. But Le Nôtre assembled them all at Vaux-le-Vicomte to create a splendid overall composition.

The opulent opening party of August 17, 1661, is shrouded in legend. Fouquet's guest, King Louis XIV, was so enthusiastic that he engaged the same three artists to build his chateau and gardens in Versailles. But first he conspired to have Fouquet sentenced to life imprisonment. "Without Vaux-le-Vicomte, Versailles wouldn't be what it is," says Patrick Borgeot.

Of course, he knows that the gardens of Versailles are in a different league altogether. Whereas some 80 gardeners work there, Borgeot and his six men are barely enough to keep nature in check at Vaux. This morning, Borgeot assigned his colleagues their tasks at a meeting in the hangar where tools and equipment are kept. Since then, a team of four has been

busy deadheading the Granville roses that are blooming in the inner courtyard of the visitors' center. His other two colleagues are at the parterre de broderie in front of the southern façade of the chateau. One of them is cropping the edges with a lawn trimmer to make sure they're straight, while the other is pulling out weeds by hand. "We love our work, but we are always aware that we are too few people," complains the head gardener.

Fine-tuning and radical measures

Whether field bindweeds, sow thistles, dandelions or daisies: weeds sprout up through the gravel paths, nestling up along the pedestals of the statues, and they make the borders of the lawns look frazzled. Luckily, help is on the way today for Borgeot and his team. He greets three women carrying green buckets who are walking to the broderies at the foot of the chateau. Their jackets state: "Volunteers": it's ladies from the "Friends of Vaux-le-Vicomte" association who've come to lend a hand to the weeding taskforce.

Together they all embark on their day-to-day battle to discipline nature in this Baroque garden: setting boundaries to its growth, putting a damper on its proliferation, and compelling it to take specific forms. "We're like the little ants who tirelessly do their daily tasks with a long-term focus," says Borgeot. In a French garden, you're always busy with groundwork and fine-tuning.

But sometimes more radical measures have to be taken, too. On the western side of the garden, by the hedges, machine noise is drowning out the morning birdsong. A man is standing on a lifting platform and is using a power hedge trimmer to cut the top of the shrubbery precisely. A tractor drives along the hedges and trims the foliage with a hedge-clipping arm to make it straight as a die; it's got a laser to guide it accurately. The chateau owners outsourced these large-scale trimming and mowing jobs to an external company years ago. The men look focused as they work – no doubt because leaving an uneven trim or an unsightly gap in a hedge is taboo in a Baroque garden.



“Together they all embark on their day-to-day battle to discipline nature in this Baroque garden: setting boundaries to its growth, putting a damper on its proliferation, and compelling it to take specific forms.”

Borgeot puffs on his e-cigarette and looks out over the main axis towards the golden statue of Hercules at the other end of the garden, all 80 acres of it. He feels a sense of pride in where he works, though it causes him just as much stress. The garden might be determined by rigor, symmetry and hierarchies, but the master gardener Le Nôtre still managed to avoid any hint of monotony, and that hasn't changed today. “He surprises us, tricking our senses time and again, depending on where we stand in the garden,” says Borgeot, who is fascinated by it. Because of the height difference of the terraces, some transverse channels and side axes only become visible to visitors the further they venture into the garden. He is speaking of the “perspective raltie,” the illusion of perspective in which Le Nôtre counteracted the optical diminution of distant garden elements by making the water areas behind them bigger than those in front.

Family matters

It's a minor miracle that this garden has remained as it was initially conceived by Le Nôtre (with just a few small changes). For decades, the estate was given over to decay. But in 1875 the wealthy sugar manufacturer Alfred Sommier bought the chateau and its garden at auction. He was an art lover and invested large sums to renovate Vaux-le-Vicomte and save its overgrown garden. Sommier's son Edme and his wife Germaine Casimir-Perier kept the estate in the family.

Today, this “patrimoine,” as the French reverently call their cultural heritage and national monuments, is owned by the de Vogüés – an aristocratic French family with a lineage dating back almost 1000 years. The great-grandson of Alfred Sommier, Patrice de Vogüé, was given the estate as a wedding gift in 1967. He realized that the upkeep of it would devour huge sums. So in May 1968 he opened up the chateau and the garden to visitors. Later he added a souvenir boutique and a restaurant. What used to be a private family chateau, screened off from the public, was now turned into a business. At the latest count it had some 70 employees.

Patrice's son Alexandre de Vogüé (49) is standing in the King's antechamber, dressed in sneakers and a T-shirt with a mountain design on it. He's looking out through a window onto the garden. Behind him, chateau visitors wander past, admiring the magnificence of the rooms and the antiques on display. Five years ago, he and his twin brother Jean-Charles took over the running of the place from their father Patrice, and a little later they were joined by their younger brother Ascanio. They are now the fifth generation of their family to see to the upkeep of the estate.

The three brothers grew up in the chateau. Back then, the King's antechamber was still in use as the family living room. The TV used to stand here. “We always had to hide it during opening hours, and also tidy away our toys,” recalls Alexandre de Vogüé. Today, their parents live in the outbuilding on the eastern side of the chateau – and sometimes Alexandre lives there too.

Duties replace rights

Vaux-le-Vicomte welcomes 300 000 visitors each year. Versailles gets seven and a half million. For Alexandre de Vogüé this is no reason to be envious – on the contrary. He speaks of the intimate, cozy, manageable dimensions of Vaux-le-Vicomte. The visitors appreciate this, he says. “Vaux has a soul,” he explains.

But Vaux also carries a steep price tag. It is the biggest private estate in France that is classified as a historical monument, and it requires huge sums to keep it going. It has an annual budget of eight million euros. Restoration work on the chateau and the gardens costs no less than 1.3 million euros a year, and looking after the garden takes another 500 000 euros.

Alexandre de Vogüé and his brothers need to make long-term renovation plans, hunt for patrons, apply for subsidies and lure in visitors. The lords of the chateau are currently having a status report drawn up for the whole estate, in order to know when this or that roof, fountain or water pipe will have to be



From the dome of the chateau, visitors have the best view of the magnificent garden of Vaux-le-Vicomte – the broderies, the water basins, and the fountains that are still supplied with water along 19th-century pipes, without any modern technology. The adjoining forest also belongs to the chateau.

renovated. All this demands a lot of discipline, says de Vogüé. But his parents taught him that being an aristocrat brought you duties, not rights.

There is a host of other cultural and touristic attractions on offer around Paris, so the de Vogüé brothers have to come up with all sorts of schemes to attract their visitors. These include costume days, summer evenings lit by 2000 candles, adventure tours for kids, Easter egg hunts, Christmas events, seminars and formal dinners in the chateau. Now and again, the estate is rented out for weddings and film shoots. The Indian steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal booked Vaux-le-Vicomte for the wedding of his daughter Vanisha in 2004. And scenes have been shot there for films such as “Moonraker” (the eleventh James Bond movie), “The Man in the Iron Mask” with Leonardo DiCaprio, and for the TV series “Versailles.”

What the future holds

The three brothers are not always of one opinion about how the estate should look in the future. But Vaux-le-Vicomte has played a major role in the history of France, and all three are determined to maintain it, says Alexandre de Vogüé. He himself studied at a management school in Paris and used to work as a mountain guide in Chamonix – so doesn't he feel that his

inheritance is in fact a burden on his shoulders? No, he replies – he's found his own way forward in dealing with it. And he does it by planning and working on it day after day, year after year. “Our generation alone won't be able to renovate and repair everything. But we can pass on Vaux-le-Vicomte to the next generation in good condition.”

Outside in the garden, head gardener Borgeot is worried about the state of the artfully curved boxwood ornaments on the south side of the chateau. These broderies should be the most magnificent element in any French garden. But instead of being a luscious green, they are in many places brown, dry and completely defoliated. These carefully trimmed boxwood hedges are not just suffering from old age. For a long time now they've also been ravaged by a harmful fungus and by the caterpillars of the box tree moth, which eat away at the leaves and bark. Back at the beginning of the year, the hedges were also damaged by frost. “When I see them like this, it makes me sad,” laments Patrick Borgeot.

There are 260 000 boxwood trees that grow in the garden of Vaux-le-Vicomte. They are trimmed carefully once a year. To replace the box trees with new ones would cost more than two million euros, just for the two parterres de broderie alone.



"Vaux has a soul," says Alexandre de Vogüé. He and his two brothers feel a sense of duty to maintain the estate.

So instead they're trying to keep the parasites in check with pheromone traps, and they're waiting in hopes that scientists will develop more resistant plants or better means of treating the existing ones.

A few times a year, whenever Patrick Borgeot needs to take a step back and get away from the weeds and the insect pests, then he goes up to the dome of the chateau. When he's at the top, he looks out over the ensemble and sees its beauty – for at a distance, everything that is imperfect becomes too small to see.

It's absurd to think you could ever constrain nature, says Borgeot. "We gardeners can discipline her a little, but if we take even a short break, she's soon back to reconquer her space." He looks out over the garden of Vaux towards the adjoining forest – it did not even exist in Fouquet's time. On the distant horizon you can see the waste incineration plant of the little town of Melun. Life goes on beyond the bounds of a French garden, says Borgeot. Over there, the rigor and order of the garden gives way to the everyday disorder of the 21st century. And that reassures him a little. ♦

Michael Neubauer is a freelance journalist, resident in Paris, and a member of the correspondents' network weltreporter.net.

Dr. Johann Kräftner:
The gardener's art and Vaux-le-Vicomte

Italian, French and English gardens: What's the difference between them?

The Italian garden is a mirror of the Italian palazzo of the Renaissance, which was characterized by small, sumptuously furnished rooms. So the gardens, too, had these independent areas with different motives, water basins and grottos. By contrast, great importance in the French garden of the 17th century was assigned to the visual axes that ran through the whole garden. There are also smaller-scale "staged" effects – just think of the fountains or bosquets in Versailles. But all this has to be subordinate to the prime axis.

In the early 18th century, people became acquainted with Chinese gardens thanks to sketches brought back to Europe by missionaries. The English landscape garden was the result. The visual axes disappeared, as did all the other straight lines, which were replaced by winding paths and streams. The garden pretends to allow nature a free hand to proliferate, though of course this was also merely an enactment.

What is the French garden meant to symbolize?

The rigor of the garden is a reflection of the power of absolutism. The sovereign ruler leaves his mark on the landscape and chateau through the force of order – symbolizing his mastery of both the world and nature. These gardens were also the perfect backdrop for staging Baroque demonstrations of power in the form of garden festivals, firework displays and water features.

Would it be an exaggeration to describe Vaux-le-Vicomte as the founding moment of the French garden?

Vaux-le-Vicomte was indeed the first, large-scale, ideal manifestation of this idea of the garden. Strangely enough, it wasn't intended for the King – and that in itself was an affront. Nicolas Fouquet, the Superintendent of Finances, wanted to show the King that he possessed good taste and power. But in this he overreached himself, and Louis XIV reacted swiftly: he built Versailles and used it to stage demonstrations of his own power instead.

Dr. Johann Kräftner is the director of the Princely Collections of the House of Liechtenstein and is author of "The Elegant Garden: Architecture and Landscape of the World's Finest Gardens."

Faithful unto death



Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), "Decius Mus preparing for death," c. 1616/1617. © LIECHTENSTEIN. The Princely Collections, Vaduz–Vienna

The “Decius Mus Cycle” by Peter Paul Rubens is unquestionably one of the greatest treasures in the collections of the Princes of Liechtenstein. Prince Johann Adam Andreas I of Liechtenstein began acquiring this large-scale Cycle of eight paintings in 1692, and today it remains a centerpiece of the gallery in the Liechtenstein Garden Palace in the Rossau district of Vienna.

The history of the Cycle is still hotly debated today. Opinions vary between those who are convinced that it was the sole work of Rubens himself, and those who believe that Anthony van Dyck and Frans Snyders were more than just Rubens’s assistants and should in fact be considered co-creators of the Cycle. Nor has the function of these paintings ever been resolved conclusively. They are described by some as cartoons – models from which tapestries were made – though it has also been suggested that they are in fact copies or *ricordi* of such models, with the original cartoons long since lost.

The Cycle’s content tells the story of the Roman war against the Latins (340–338 B.C.), as recounted by the Roman historian Livy (59 B.C.–17 A.D.) in the eighth book of his *History of Rome, Ab urbe condita*. The inhabitants of the plains of Latium rose up against Roman rule and went to war. The two commanders of the Roman army, the consuls Titus Manlius Torquatus and Decius Mus, had the same dream in their camp near Capua: victory against the Latins would belong to the army whose commander fell in battle, and their opponents would be crushed.

In the first picture of the Cycle, Decius Mus relates his dream to his standard-bearers. The second picture depicts the scene in which the haruspex – a diviner who inspected the entrails of sacrificed animals to read the future – is asked to name which of the Roman commanders would have to sacrifice himself to guarantee victory. The liver of the bull sacrificed by Decius Mus indicates that he has been chosen. With the self-discipline one expects of a military leader, he accepts sole responsibility for the survival of Rome.

In the third picture of the Cycle, which is reproduced here, Decius Mus commits himself to this act of self-sacrifice for his people. Livy relates how Decius Mus underwent a solemn rite, the *devotio*, affirming his devout acceptance of his imminent death. Before the high priest, he had to recite the following oath: “Janus, Jupiter, Father Mars, ye household gods, ye newly adopted gods, ye gods of Rome, ye heavenly ones under whose power we and the enemy stand, and ye gods of the dead, I beg

and implore ye: give the people of the city of Rome superior might and victory, but unleash fear, havoc and death on their enemies. As I have expressly promised here, on behalf of the state of Rome, the army and its legions, I now commend the legions of the enemy and myself to the gods of death and to the earth, as a sacrifice.”

Composed, and sustained by the utmost discipline that can be demanded of a man, Decius Mus stands on an arrow and bows his covered head before the high priest. He has laid aside his weapons for this solemn ceremony – they lie neatly at the right in the foreground of the picture. His simple, blood-red cloak contrasts vividly with the elaborate regalia of the high priest; this is one way in which the painter affords the appropriate visual significance to Decius Mus’s act of sacrifice. All the other figures in the painting are mere extras – the second priest, clad in gray on the left margin of the painting, and the two adjutants of the commander who are leading his horse. The horse itself stands at the right border of the picture, only partly in view. It is not intended to distract us from the two main participants in the center of the painting, but it nevertheless seems conscious of the tragic import of this decisive moment, for it lowers its head in unison with Decius Mus, as if in contemplation.

Regardless of all the discussions about who carried out the painting and its functional relevance, there is no doubt that Rubens was responsible for the concept – the *concetto* – of the Cycle; and however much this painting transports us into antiquity, it is also evident that Rubens here stands firmly in the camp of the Counter-Reformation, for which he was a notable propagandist. At the center of this picture we see a Christian discipline and willingness to self-sacrifice, with the classical setting here assuming allegorical significance. Rubens is celebrating the death of a heroic martyr, but far removed from all the horrors usually associated with depictions of such sacrifice. Where other painters tended to portray bloodthirsty rituals with a boundless imagination bordering on perversity, we here see the incontestable elegance of the great painter, illustrating discipline and readiness to martyrdom, but appareled in classical grandeur. ♦

Dr. Johann Kräftner is the director of the Princely Collections of the House of Liechtenstein and from 2002 to 2011 was director of the LIECHTENSTEIN MUSEUM, Vienna. He is the author of numerous monographs on the history and theory of architecture.



An education in tyranny

The “Seminary at W.” is a boarding school that puts the finishing touches on the future ruling class of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Here, the elite is taught and trained in seclusion, in a world characterized by discipline and military hierarchy. Right at the beginning of Robert Musil’s novel “The Confusions of Young Törless,” Törless bids farewell to his parents at the station of W. He has to remain here, in the desolate provinces, while his parents return to the pulsating capital. Törless is really already a little too old to be so affectionately attached to his parents. But he’s been used to the loving tenderness of an upper-middle-class home, whereas at boarding school you have to fight to get a place as near as possible to the top of the pecking order.

Törless and his parents are accompanied to the station by some of his friends from school, including Beineberg and Reiting. “Well, my dear Beineberg, so you’ll keep an eye on this lad of mine for me, won’t you?” asks Törless’s father, a privy counselor, as the train arrives. His wife presses her veil against her face so that no one can see her tears. But Törless himself doesn’t quite

trust these friends. They are rough and domineering in temperament, whereas he has a more gentle disposition. Beineberg’s father worked as a diplomat in India for many years, and his son has been highly influenced by Far Eastern spirituality and mysticism. He unabashedly combines this with notions of his own innate superiority, and wallows in fantasies of omnipotence. Reiting, on the other hand, has a less exalted background, and for him a military career is the only realistic means of climbing the social ladder. This is why he’s already practicing being irascible and ordering others around. But Törless has the sensibility of a nascent intellectual, analyzing all his own emotions and marveling at the impact on his being of every new experience in the world. Yet while he feels an inherent reserve towards his friends, when things get tough he stands by them – after all, this means he too belongs among the students who call the shots in their boarding school.

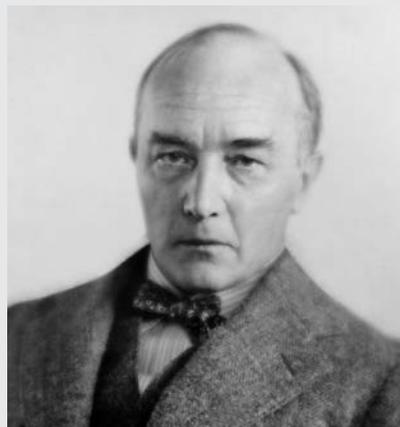
At this point, something surprising and unsettling occurs in Musil’s book. As the reader gets to know the “Seminary at W.” better, he begins to comprehend that the hierarchies, discipline,

control and punishment that dominate in it are more the product of the students themselves than of their teachers. The latter allow their pupils a lot of freedom, and they in turn exploit this by erecting their own disciplinary system – for they have long ago already internalized the ethos of their institution. The curriculum that the teachers roll off is dry, barren and devoid of any connection to the real forces that drive the world and whose goal is to exert power over others. The teachers are so caught up in their routines that they are in no position to cope with their pupils' will to power. It's as if the teachers have already subordinated themselves to the selfsame social status that is the destiny of their pupils.

All power must set an example in order to be aware of itself and perceptible to others; here in this boarding school its object is the pupil Basini. He comes from a poor background and wants to make friends. To keep up with the others, he borrows money from them, and when he cannot pay it back he resorts to theft. Beineberg, Reiting and Törless find this out, and Beineberg immediately sees the opportunity that it offers. They won't report Basini to the school authorities, but punish him themselves instead. Basini is now at their mercy because he's made himself open to blackmail. In a secret room in the attic of the school, they organize a tribunal to prosecute him. They tell him he no longer merits belonging to respectable society, let alone their honorable school, but they've decided to give him a second chance if he agrees to be their slave.

Like cruel zoologists conducting an animal experiment, they want to see how far they can go. Night after night Basini is taken to the attic where he has to undress and submit to Beineberg, Reiting and Törless. It's not even really sexual desire that drives them on, but a fascination for the mechanisms of power, obedience and humiliation: this is what man is, this is how low he is willing to stoop. Even Törless, to whom emotional refinement is so important, seems transformed: "He no longer knew himself; and out of this very fact his urge grew into a wild, contemptuous debauchery, as when at some fete galante the lights are suddenly put out and nobody knows who it is he pulls down to the ground and covers with kisses."

The boarding school is a bastion of discipline that brings out the very worst in its young charges. Musil's book, which is situated between a novella and a novel, was first published in 1906. He saw very clearly how schooling the young in discipline also always trains them to violence. Later generations would be unable to read "Törless" without seeing in it a presentiment of doom: its cadet academy is an education in tyranny. ♦



Robert Musil

There have been many doctors and lawyers who've also been writers. But engineer-novelists are a rare breed – perhaps because engineers have to deal with base matter, whereas writers investigate the subtlest impulses of the human soul. An exception to the rule is the Austrian writer Robert Musil, who is undoubtedly one of the most significant novelists of the 20th century – even if his unfinished, fragmentary novel "The Man Without Qualities" never brought him the fame to rival Thomas Mann, whom he both envied and detested.

Musil was born in Carinthia in 1880 and died in exile in Geneva in 1942. From 1894 to 1897 he attended the Military High School of Mährisch-Weiskirchen, which was the real-life model for the boarding school depicted in his novel "Törless." Initially, Musil aspired to become an army officer, but then opted for mechanical engineering instead.

As it turned out, his engineering studies were well suited to his overall view of the world, for he wanted to grasp the spirit of his time in all its modernity. Things technical to him were not simply a matter of external convenience, but something that also molds our very consciousness. The individual and the collective psyche ultimately have more in common with mechanics, hydraulics and causality than with any pure, ethereal intellect. Later, Stalin would declare writers to be "engineers of the soul"; and while no writer would take delight in accepting an epithet from him, in this case, Stalin's description is remarkably apt, for that is precisely what Musil was: an engineer of the human soul.

Ijoma Mangold is in charge of literature in the arts section of the weekly newspaper "Die Zeit" and has won the Berlin Prize for Literary Criticism. He has co-hosted the literary program "Die Vorleser" with Amelie Fried on ZDF (the second German TV channel) and is a member of the quartet of critics featured in the TV program "lesenswert quartett" on SWR TV in Germany. In August 2017, Mangold's debut novel was published, "Das deutsche Krokodil. Meine Geschichte" ("The German crocodile. My story").

“Passion is everything”

Recorded by : **Sidi Staub** | Foto: **Keystone/Alessandro Della Bella**

Massimo Busacca is a former soccer referee who has been in charge of matches at the World Cup and in the Champions League. Today, he is passing on his immense experience by coaching others.

“Ultimately it’s not the rules, the referees or the red cards that create order on the pitch. What’s more important is values like discipline and fairness. If the players have the wrong values, then even the best referee can’t stop a match getting out of hand.

A good referee has to have played soccer himself so he can feel the game and understand it properly. Why has this defender committed this foul right now? What player should you keep your eye on in the next few minutes? Often there are times when the referee can’t see things properly, but he still has to make a decision. For example, if a defender is suddenly lying prostrate on the pitch, it’s not something that has simply happened. There’s a reason for it. The referee has to know why and put two and two together. If FIFA asks me to observe a referee today, then I can usually see after ten minutes whether he’s a top referee or not. It’s simply a matter of whether he’s got this kind of understanding.

A referee also has to have a strong personality. He’s got to be intelligent and has to act with authority. All the same, he shouldn’t exert his authority against the players, but for the game. And he has to stay faithful to his principles, even in difficult situations.

As a young man, I played soccer in the second league. A friend then suggested to me that I should try being a referee.

I quickly realized that it was the right path for me. I would never have been nearly as successful as a soccer player myself. As a referee I was able to participate in World Cups and European Championships. I was able to experience great players close up like Messi and Ronaldo, and teams such as Barcelona and Liverpool.

What I didn’t like so much during my career was the arrogance and aggression of a small minority of spectators. Regrettably, it only seems to have got worse since then. In 2009 I was refereeing a relatively insignificant game in the Swiss Cup. Already while we were just walking out onto the pitch, some spectators were engaged in extreme verbal abuse towards me and trying to provoke me. At some point I just flipped out and gave them the finger. That was human nature, but of course it was wrong. As the referee you should be a role model on the pitch. What was interesting was that the fans went quiet afterwards and stopped trying to provoke me.

On the other hand, I never had major problems with players. I also always had a good relationship with the top stars. As it happens, the best players and teams are generally the fairest, too. The weaker, less disciplined players were often more difficult. But since I’d once played at their level, I was able to understand them better, and I could deal with them relatively well.

At the beginning of my career, whenever a player was loud or crude because he thought I’d made a wrong decision, I also used to raise my voice. Later, I realized that such a reaction is wrong. In such cases you have to stay calm and communicate with the player. Sometimes I’d ask him directly: “Maybe I didn’t

see properly what you did. So what? I'm just human too. Aren't I allowed to make mistakes? Don't you ever make any?" And if I really made a wrong decision on occasion, then I apologized. That usually relieved a lot of the pressure. It can also be useful in everyday life. Sadly, many people today find it difficult to admit having made a mistake and apologizing.

As a referee, it was my ambition to give my best every time, and to make decisions that were always correct and fair. For me, a game went well when even the side that lost was satisfied with my decisions. At the Champions League Final in 2009, Ronaldo was playing for Manchester United. After the match, he came over to my locker room and gave me his T-shirt, even though his team had just lost 2:0. I really appreciated that.

The referee is the loneliest guy on the pitch. You have to make a lot of decisions all on your own, under pressure of time. If you're in a stadium with 100 000 fans and a majority of them protest loudly against a decision you've made, it's difficult not to let yourself be influenced by them. But I was never afraid of making a decision. In such situations, it helps to know that you've acted correctly, that you've given all you can, and that you've prepared yourself properly.

Technology can be a big help to referees – like goal-line cameras. But only if the issue is clear-cut, such as deciding whether a ball went across the line or not. Actually, referees' decisions are mostly about interpreting a situation or a rule. In such cases, technology is no help at all. Again, what counts is your understanding of soccer.

As a coach, I always tell referees how important it is to prepare yourself as well as possible for a game. What's the tactical arrangement of each team? Who are the key players? What is the pitch like – and what is the mood of the fans in the stadium? Will it rain, or will there be fog? Once the game's begun you've got no more time to catch up on what you've missed. Then you're under constant pressure for 90 minutes.

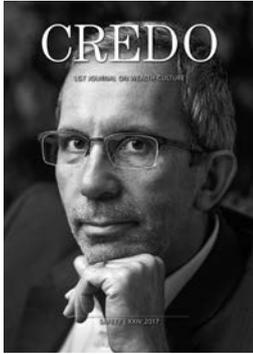
The pressure in soccer has become much greater these days, also on the referees, because there's much more money at stake. But I'm convinced that even the big players don't think about money during the game itself. They love playing and want to win. Football is about passion. If there's no passion, neither the players nor the referees will be able to achieve big things." ♦



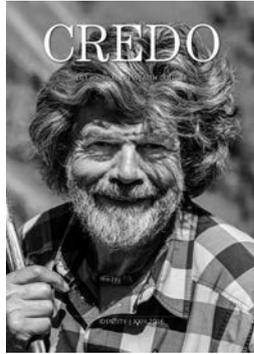
Massimo Busacca (47) was a referee in the top Swiss soccer league. Between 1998 and 2011 he was responsible for many matches at World Cups, European Championships and in the Champions League. Career highlights for him were the Champions League Final between FC Barcelona and Manchester United in 2009 and being named "Best referee in the world" by FIFA that same year. After retiring in 2011, Massimo Busacca was appointed head of the FIFA Refereeing Department and is thus responsible for training and coaching FIFA referees.

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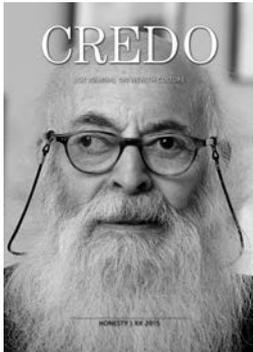
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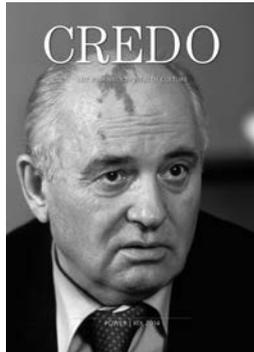
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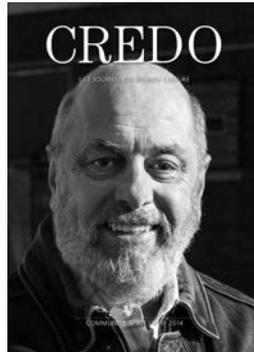
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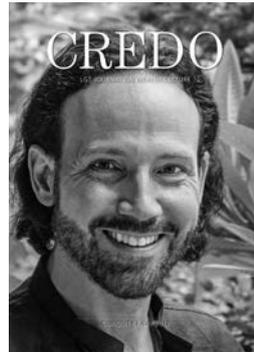
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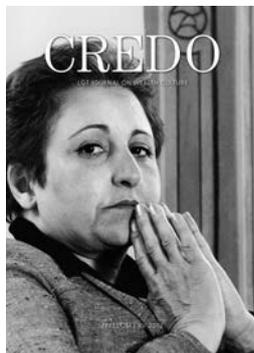
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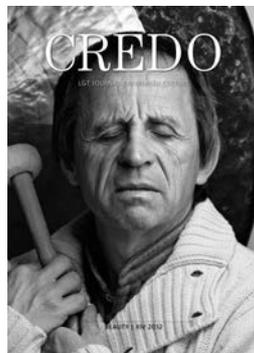
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