Chapter 1: Sexual Abuse in the Church and the Violation of Vulnerable Agency

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The causes of sexual abuse in the church are manifold. The perpetrator is responsible. There are systemic and structural causes that favor sexualized violence and prevent its reprocessing. There is also a theology that conceals or even justifies some of the favoring factors. Much could be said about each of these personal, structural, and theological dimensions.[1]

This paper focuses on one of the causes of sexual abuse: disregard for the dignity of the person and especially for his or her self-determination. Abusers disregard the self-determination of the person. Furthermore, the moral-theological tradition has often ignored this aspect of dignity. While respect for the relational and vulnerable autonomy of the human person has become a nucleus of theological ethics more recently, it is still given too little consideration in the church's debate about sexual violence. To address this issue, this article proceeds in four steps. First, drawing on a concept shaped by Hille Haker, this essay outlines vulnerable agency that links autonomy with relationality and vulnerability.[2] Second, the essay argues that the central moral problem of sexual violence is that it violates this vulnerable agency—in contrast with a view that would see this primarily as a violation of the vow of chastity. In the third step, the essay focuses on a culture of safety that, to protect vulnerable agency, requires a changed understanding of power as well as clear control structures. The essay ends with warnings against instrumentalizing people and actionism when developing structures to protect vulnerable agency.

[1] A large number of recent publications, which cannot be presented here, illustrate this. The situations vary from region to region. The perspective of this article is a European one, especially a German one.

[2] Hille Haker, *Towards a Critical Political Ethics. Catholic Ethics and Social Challenges* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2020).

Autonomy, Vulnerability, Vulnerable Agency

The basic assumption of every theological ethics is the human being as a responsible subject. As rational beings, we are able to make decisions and to act accordingly. In this capacity, every human being is to be respected by others on the one hand and responsible for their actions on the other. These ideas are firmly rooted in moral theology and social ethics, for example, in the principle of personality. It is this fundamental principle of Catholic social teaching which implies basic anthropological assumptions. It reaches far back into the theological tradition, and at the same time, it is very current in its interweaving of individuality and sociality. The human being is an individual and, as such, special, unique, and gifted with reason. At the same time, the human being, also in the sense of the tradition that goes back to Aristotle in particular, is considered to be a *social* being. The human being is an individual *and* referred to others. As such, sociality is not subordinated to the individuality, as if one were first a self, to which somehow another is added, but individuality and sociality are of equal origin, because without one or the other there is no self.

These ideas can be connected to contemporary concepts of autonomy and dignity (especially through the influence of feminist theories, alterity philosophy, and intersubjectivity theories, as well as special education concepts and more), which no longer construct autonomy and relationality as opposites but rather view them as intertwined. In these approaches, there remains the assumption of the moral subject who is self-determined and responsible, but this capacity is relativized. We are always also conditioned by structures and by others. Hille Haker coins the term *vulnerable agency* in this context.[3] The concept is of particular importance because it expresses that autonomy and agency, on the one hand, and vulnerability and relationality, on the other hand, cannot be separated. They belong together. This link gives the concept of human dignity clearer contours, insofar as it becomes evident what exactly is to be respected and protected.

[3] Haker, *Critical Political Ethics*, 135–168.

Strongly influenced by Kant, in contemporary philosophical and theological ethics the concept of human dignity is closely related to self-determination.[4] Because every human being is fundamentally able to make decisions and act according to them and is thus a subject of responsibility, everyone is to be respected as such. Therefore, corresponding to the categorial imperative, we have to treat each other not as a means to an end but always at the same time as an end. Unconditional respect is the attitude that corresponds to dignity. Instrumentalization, which turns the other into an object, is a disrespect and a violation of dignity. Moreover, Kant emphasizes that human dignity cannot be assigned a particular, comparable value such as a price, for "what has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; what on the other hand is above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity."[5] Human beings are not interchangeable; dignity demands that "human beings be respected in their uniqueness. Human beings are comparable only in their incomparability, that is, in their unjustifiable particularity, which, however, is to be respected in each and every one."[6] These two insights have been an integral part of the concept of human dignity up to the present day, and they also characterize theological ethics.

The idea of self-determination would be excessively overstretched, however, if one thought that in the name of autonomy one could defend oneself against any claims of others. This misinterpretation must be countered by the insight that one's own freedom always ends at the freedom of others because these others also have a claim to be respected. Moreover, as we all experience, our autonomy is limited. Against this background, the idea of human autonomy, and thus the basic assumption of a responsible subject, must be both defended and modified today.

A contemporary autonomy-based concept of dignity is aware of the limitations of autonomy. It includes relationality and vulnerability. This is

[4] I am referring here mainly to German-language discourses, but it also applies beyond that.

[5] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, ed., trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 42–43.

[6] Heiner Bielefeldt, *Auslaufmodell Menschenwürde?* (Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 71.

important because it overcomes the constructed opposition between those who are autonomous (e.g., healthy, young, etc.) and those who are supposedly not (e.g., sick, old, etc.). All people are autonomous, all can shape—larger and smaller—spaces of agency. This can be quite different in different phases and situations of life, and for some groups of people, the restrictions are greater than for others. Complete autonomy, however, is just as illusory as complete dependence. These approaches are often constructed as mutually exclusive, such as autonomy-based concepts of dignity on the one hand and care ethics that emphasize dependency on the other. However, they are not opposites. Even if the capacity for autonomy is limited, spaces of agency remain, and the human being remains a responsible subject who is entitled to dignity. Under conditions of great dependency though, it becomes a special challenge to recognize, to open up, and to enlarge the small spaces of agency. Every autonomy is to be respected, even and especially if it seems to be small.

Judith Butler helps to understand this basic assumption in a deeper way (although she herself does not speak of autonomy or human dignity).[7] Butler points out that the Other is indispensable for my own history and thus for my self-constitution. I am dependent on him or her because I have to be recognized by others for being a subject. On this dependence, vulnerability is based. My expectation can be disappointed, trust can be abused, and the dependence cannot be met. Consequently, if we want to speak of autonomy, we do so under the condition of this vulnerability. Vulnerability pervades all autonomy. As the subject is only through and with others, we are enmeshed in relationality. Relationality and vulnerability are thus inscribed in the concept of human dignity just as autonomy is. And because the human being is particularly vulnerable, his or her integrity is to be protected. These assumptions lead to the term *vulnerable agency*.[8]

[7] Judith Butler, *Kritik der ethischen Gewalt* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003), 34–45.
[8] Haker, *Critical Political Ethics*, 136–167.

Vulnerability, in Haker's concept, comprises three dimensions. First, ontological vulnerability refers to the anthropological affectability of human beings, namely to be touchable by others and open to the world (in a thoroughly positive sense). It is significant and characterizes every human being. Through it, we are receptive and responsive to others. Second, moral vulnerability refers to susceptibility to harm inflicted by others. "As ontological vulnerability is first and foremost the susceptibility to any pain and suffering, moral vulnerability is first and foremost the susceptibility to be harmed by someone else."[9] These harms are profound because they affect the complexity of self-constitution in which we depend on others. This, in turn, also compromises agency. The subject is at the same time a free agent *and* vulnerable. Because the self-determination and agency that constitutes the human being is always at risk, it requires special protection. The dignity of this subject combines both dimensions: "Normatively speaking, dignity therefore points not only to the status of the human subject as free and/or autonomous agent but also acknowledges the fragility of this status in the world of human interactions, social structures, and institutions which often cement privileges rather than securing equal rights."[10] Continuing in this line the third dimension, which is structural vulnerability, addresses structures that create an environment or social codes that foster violations. "Structural vulnerability refers to particular states of vulnerability."[11] This is what Butler calls "precarity": situations and structures in which people lack security and social freedom other groups have.[12] It is a major obstacle to people developing any sense of their own agency. People no longer feel like subjects who can be heard; they are silenced. Or they lose any openness to the world and thus the ability to trust. The protection of human dignity, understood as vulnerable agency, on the other hand, aims to ensure that receptivity to suffering and harm

[9] Haker, *Critical Political Ethics*, 139.
[10] Haker, *Critical Political Ethics*, 144.
[11] Haker, *Critical Political Ethics*, 145.
[12] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London/New York: Verso, 2004).

does not destroy freedom and the ability to interact. "Receptivity is not the opposite of agency—it is an essential dimension of it."[13]

Theological Categorizations of Sexual Abuse

With respect to sexual abuse of children and adults, these basic considerations are relevant in several ways. The term sexual *abuse* does not mean to suggest that there could be something like a *proper use* of other people. Of course, there isn't. This difficult term refers to the fact that in the various forms of sexualized violence, a fundamentally wrong attitude towards another person is expressed, namely that a person is not respected as a person but is *used* and therefore *abused* for the satisfaction of one's own needs. In an abuse of one's own position of power, the other person is turned into an object.

Abuse contradicts basic ethical convictions, and yet, at the same time, there are threads of tradition and argumentation in theology in which respect for the autonomy of others has not prevailed. They favor abusive relationships: "From the beginning, official ecclesiastical commentaries and statements on the cases of abuse frequently spoke of sins against the Sixth Commandment or, again based on the view of current canon law, of misconduct by priests against chastity or the promise of celibacy."[14] Like *Codes Iuris Canonici* (CIC) c. 1395 § 2, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nos. 2351-2359) also conceives of sexual abuse and rape as violations of the vow of chastity. The *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists in a series—under the heading of principal sins against chastity and without further differentiation—"adultery, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution, rape, homosexual acts." (no. 492) Understanding sexual violence as an individual sin against the Sixth Commandment prevents understanding the core of the problem

[13] Haker, *Critical Political Ethics*, 158.

[14] Konrad Hilpert, "Die Diskussion um den Missbrauch in der Theologie von 2010 bis 2020," in *Ohnmacht, Macht, Missbrauch: Theologische Analysen eines systemischen Problems*, ed. Jochen Sautermeister and Andreas Odenthal, trans. M.B. (Freiburg: Herder, 2021), 177.

that people disregard other people's self-determination and dignity—a disregard that culminates in violence.

To some extent, the one-sidedness of canon law can be explained by the fact that it is characterized by the principle of not considering such offenses as are already punishable under secular law. However, this explanation has to be critically evaluated, as Stephan Ernst points out, since it does not apply, for example, to homicide.[15] Besides, the consequences of the imbalance of canon law are far-reaching and must not be ignored. For in the case of sexual abuse, this principle led to "a purely internal remedy of the 'nuisance' decided according to one's own, often exclusively subjective discretion."[16] Ernst highlights that even in moral theology it has taken a very long time to state clearly what exactly the injustice of rape and sexual abuse actually consists of. Even in the important *Handbook of Christian Ethics* of 1978 (edited by Hertz, Korff et al.), child abuse does not appear at all. With regard to the related offense of rape, Ernst diagnoses a "strange and frightening taciturnity"[17] because it hardly addressed what harm is actually done to the victim. Here, too, rape is considered primarily an act of unchastity. With the Second Vatican Council, some basic assumptions of the Church's sexual doctrine changed, insofar as sexuality is considered responsibly consummated when it is embedded in a relationship of personal love (*Gaudium et Spes,* no. 49). Sexuality is understood as a medium of expression of the person, even though the norms of prohibition (premarital sexual intercourse, homosexual acts, contraception, etc.) remain in place and set very narrow limits to this expression. Yet, there is an important shift: "That sexuality

[15] Stephan Ernst, "'Ein Kleriker, der sich auf andere Weise gegen das sechste Gebot des Dekalogs verfehlt...' Anmerkungen aus moraltheologischer Sicht," in *Der Strafanspruch der Kirche in Fällen von sexuellem Missbrauch,* ed. H. Hallermann, Th. Meckel, S. Pfannkuche and M. Pulte (Würzburg: Echter, 2012), 188.

[16] Sabine Demel, "Moral ohne Recht—Recht ohne Moral? Über die Freiheitsordnung in Staat und Kirche," in *Zukunftshorizonte kirchlicher Sexuallehre: Bausteine zu einer Antwort auf die Missbrauchsdiskussion*, ed. K. Hilpert (Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 257.

[17] Ernst, "Ein Kleriker," 193.

must be integrated into the framework of personal love means, in fact, conversely, that all action is ethically unacceptable in which the other is selfishly used as an object or opportunity for the satisfaction of one's own sexual needs."[18] If this is taken seriously, rape and sexual abuse are objectionable not because of the violation of the commandment of chastity but because a person is made an object against his or her will. To implement this conclusion consistently in practice (but also in magisterial proclamation and canon law) is yet to be done.

The violation of basic norms of Christian ethics is obvious. By disregarding the will of the "victim"[19] (or not even considering that this person might exist and play a role), he or she is not respected as a person but downgraded and instrumentalized. This is a violation of the right to self-determination, especially the right to sexual self-determination and an exploitation of vulnerability.

It must be taken into account that, in highly asymmetrical relationships, terms such as "voluntariness" and "against one's will" become blurred. In particular, children and adolescents who may feel particularly attached to an authority figure, through affection or admiration, are often unable to classify an assault by the latter. From (initial) affection and being flattered to confusion and fear to shock, disgust and self-hatred, a variety of reactions are possible. Generally, the young victim cannot prevent the assault on her own or do anything to counter it, but this is not synonymous with consent or voluntariness! As such, the reference of perpetrators to a lack of resistance (possibly interpreted as consent) cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Because the personality of children and

[18] Ernst, "Ein Kleriker," 197, with reference to *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 24.

[19] To not re-victimize the affected, the concept of *victim* has been avoided in this paper so far. In addition, the concept of victim has been theologically charged. Neither discourse can be addressed here. The fact that I nevertheless speak of "victims" at this point is intended to point out that these difficult contexts must not be ignored either. Perpetrators turn others into victims, that is, into people who feel powerless. Those affected must be strengthened so that they can expand their scope of action—however small it may be—and become empowered again.

adolescents is particularly vulnerable, there can be no consent—with regard to age and position of power—in strongly asymmetrical relationships. They are morally unacceptable. Moreover, the wounds inflicted on children and adolescents generally have more profound effects.[20] The disregard of the existing (but still developing and thus particularly vulnerable) agency of children and adolescents endangers the further development of the same, the personality development as a whole, and their ability to build trust in others. The damage done to young people is immense. Moral theology and moral teaching of the Church must clearly name this as an evil and not trivialize it by assigning it to the Sixth Commandment. Until respect for and protection of the vulnerable agency becomes the linchpin of sexual morality, Church teaching cannot adequately grasp sexual abuse or analyze it adequately.

It requires very close attention to the point at which pastoral relationships tip over and become structural vulnerability. In relationships of trust, to which pastoral relationships can belong, because speaking about faith and doubt is deeply personal, one is particularly vulnerable. One opens oneself, firmly trusting in a safe space. The pastor has to maintain this safety, which at the same time gives him power. If this position of power is abused, it is a structural violation that causes lasting damage to agency. "But if this intimacy is shamelessly abused, where should I turn, seeking God?"[21] This is one of the questions that victims of sexual abuse ask. It is a fundamental theological question that leads far beyond what can be discussed here. At the same time, it directs our gaze to the structures and ways of dealing with power.

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[20] Children are more vulnerable physically and psychologically than adults. Sexualized violence therefore has serious consequences for personality development. See Jörg Fegert, "Sexueller Missbrauch an Kindern und Jugendlichen," *Bundesgesundheitsblatt—Gesundheitsforschung—Gesundheitsschutz* 50 (2007): 78–89.

[21] Kai Christian Moritz, "Theologie—es geht weder mit ihr noch ohne sie," in *Nicht ausweichen: Theologie angesichts der Missbrauchskrise*, ed. Matthias Remenyi and Thomas Schärtl (Regensburg: Pustet, 2019), 36.

Structures of Power Favoring Abuse

Sexualized violence in the church cannot be separated from the responsibility and guilt of individuals, namely the perpetrators and those who covered up the acts. However, these are not isolated cases. There are systemic causes and favoring structures. There is a responsibility of the institution and of those in leading positions to prevent future abuse and deal with past abuse. This was usually not done in the past. In the cover-up of sexual abuse, the affected were and are once again disregarded. The good or reputation of the institution is placed above respect for the person. Respect for the vulnerable agency is not only incumbent on individuals, it requires structures that enable and support this respect. It requires a responsible handling of power because sexualized violence by priests is always an abuse of a position of power.[22] Preventing future abuse, as well as disclosing and dealing with existing abuse, therefore requires a reflective, responsible, and controlled approach to power.

Human relationships are always characterized by power. Power refers to the influence on the actions of others in the personal sphere and at the societal level. In Max Weber's sense, it can be understood as the opportunity to assert one's own will even in the face of opposition[23] or, in Arendt's sense, as the ability to join forces with others and act together with them.[24] Regardless of whether power is defined in this way or quite differently, it shapes human interaction. It is therefore not a question of its existence but of how it is exercised. Power is shaped in very different ways. In relationships of unequal positions, such as those between priest and the child, but also priest and lay persons in general, the distribution of power is asymmetrical. Power can be exercised by one over the other in different

[22] This point can be dealt with here only briefly. See Jochen Sautermeister and Andreas Odenthal, ed., *Ohnmacht, Macht, Missbrauch: Theologische Analysen eines systemischen Problems* (Freiburg: Herder, 2021); Stefan Kopp, ed., *Macht und Ohnmacht in der Kirche: Wege aus der Krise* (Freiburg: Herder, 2020).

[23] Hannah Arendt, *Macht und Gewalt* (München: Piper, 1970).

[24] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

ways: "beneficial, acceptable, or abusive."[25] Not every use of power is an abuse. In asymmetrical relationships, the more powerful can also help to increase agency of the less powerful through empowerment.

However, in pastoral relationships the power imbalance is simultaneously reinforced and disguised in various ways. Frequent reference is made in this context to Foucault's notion of pastoral power. This power is exercised not through direct coercion but through powerful narratives such as shepherd and flock, practices such as confession, and the fostering of a willingness to be led.[26] Closeness and distance, as well as heteronomy and autonomy, become blurred. In the lifelong guidance to salvation, a lifelong control is inherent. Even if this pastoral power, whose beginnings Foucault locates in the Middle Ages, has changed and decreased, there remains in part that special relationship of soul guidance characterized by trust, dependence, and obedience. It is one of those situations in which the special openness goes hand in hand with increased vulnerability. It is a vulnerability that has to be dealt with in a particularly sensitive way because it is a vulnerability in which the danger of abuse is particularly high. The power imbalance that is not reflected favors abuse. It also favors systemic silence and concealment: a multitude of reports of survivors testify to how difficult it is to speak, because many psychological obstacles stand in the way and then to be heard and believed by others.[27]

Given the complexity of these contexts, a few lines of action can only be pointed out. The first concerns ecclesiastical (and theological) speech. The factual power in Church is still concealed by a certain use of language, talking of *serving* instead of exercising power represents an idealization that

[25] Hans Zollner, "Macht und Ohnmacht aus psychologischer und theologischer Sicht," in *Macht und Ohnmacht in der Kirche: Wege aus der Krise*, ed. Stefan Kopp (Freiburg: Herder, 2020), 31.

[26] Michel Foucault, *Ästhetik der Existenz* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2007), 81–104. See also Rainer Bucher, "Body of Power and Body Power: The Situation of the Church and God's Defeat," *Concilium* 40 (2004): 120–129.

[27] Moritz, "Theologie," 32–37.

threatens to hide the existing asymmetrical power structures.[28] This facilitates the abuse of power. For where there *is* no power, it cannot be abused, not an issue at all. Instead, it would be necessary to perceive and reflect on structures of power and personal power. Just as in other professions where the interaction with people in asymmetrical relationships is important (such as social work), one's own position would have to be the object of critical reflection as part of a professional ethic. Self-reflection is part of professionalism. At the same time, secondly, the power asymmetry itself must be questioned and dismantled. This is a far-reaching ecclesiological question, especially of the theology of ministry. From the point of view of social ethics, there is a further demand of the division of powers. If the church no longer ignores the effects of existing power structures, the next step has to be the appropriate control of that power. The principle of division of powers must also be applied in the church. If power is not distributed and thus made controllable, misuse and abuse cannot be contained. If those who can exercise more power are at the same time those who control that power, while lay people are largely excluded from both, systemic silence and concealment of sexual abuse is encouraged.[29] Thus, even though critical self-reflection on one's position of power is an important aspect of professionalism, power control must at the same time be institutionalized through division of powers, lay participation, transparency, and institutionalized control bodies.

Even beyond power control, structures play an important role in dealing with sexualized violence. Avishai Margalit's concept of the "Decent Society" can provide important clues in this regard.[30] For him, the absence of humiliation is the minimum of a decent society. Humiliation—

[28] Hilpert points out that there are several terms that can disguise power differentials, including talk of "brothers and sisters." See Hilpert, "Die Diskussion um den Missbrauch," 185.

[29] Hilpert, "Die Diskussion um den Missbrauch,"184–185.

[30] Avishai Margalit, *Politik der Würde. Über Achtung und Verachtung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012). See also Jochen Sautermeister, "Theologie unter dem Vorzeichen von Missbrauch in der Krise," in *Ohnmacht, Macht, Missbrauch: Theologische Analysen eines systemischen Problems,* ed. Jochen Sautermeister and Andreas Odenthal (Freiburg: Herder 2021), 25.

the complete and conscious disregard of the person—is a strong form of instrumentalization. Margalit is not only concerned that people should not humiliate one another, but he highlights that social practices and structures can themselves be humiliating, as in certain forms of penal systems. A humane society must not have humiliating structures; more than that, its structures must prevent humiliation. Sexualized violence is an abyss. It is about practices that leave broken people, that leave *survivors.* It is a form of humiliation, a form of instrumentalization and violation of dignity. So where is the vulnerable agency disregarded and violated? What structures protect it? What structures and practices contribute to its violation? How can humiliation be prevented? These must be the guiding questions to create a culture of safety. That is the test criterion for institutions and everyday practices. Because: "No, there is nothing more important than the human being. He is at the center and must be."[31]

Consequences for Prevention and Consideration of Those Affected

If self-determination is to be taken seriously then the voices of those affected must firstly be given space and secondly be involved in the development of guidelines and concrete measures for prevention. These are important issues, but they are complex. There are pitfalls in dealing with them. I would like to point out two of them. Participation and prevention are too important to allow those affected to be instrumentalized (again) and for prevention to become actionism.

The persons concerned speak for themselves; there are many examples of this in the German-speaking area.[32] These voices must be heard, but the way there is long for many of them. They have been silenced many times. Some have lost their speech. It is therefore necessary to consider when and

[31] Moritz, "Theologie," 36.

[32] See: Barbara Haslbeck, Regina Heyder, Ute Leimgruber, and Dorothee Sandherr-Klemp, *Erzählen als Widerstand: Berichte über spirituellen und sexuellen Missbauch an erwachsenen Frauen in der katholischen Kirche* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2020).

how survivors can and cannot speak. In a very different context, but quite comparable, Gayatri Spivak tells the story of Khan, a Bengali farmer who, to illustrate his difficult circumstances, was asked to speak at the UN.[33] He did so, but he could not make himself understood because the framework into which he was forced was too narrow. The speaking time was short, his language was not that of the delegates, which was not only a translation problem, and his world was too different to make himself understood. At the same time, the organizers supposedly did their duty. After all, they were listening to someone who was affected. More is needed to hear and understand. Just as the farmer cannot be pressed into a scheme that otherwise remains unchanged, victims of abuse in the church cannot be heard *en passant*. It takes a break in the routine, it takes time, and it takes tolerance for different forms of language. Also, some things may remain incomprehensible to people who have not had similar experiences. It is an ongoing task, not one that can be quickly checked off.

Preventing future sexualized violence requires work on guidelines and concrete prevention measures. In German dioceses, there are now different prevention training programs. It is important that this exists, and many of these measures are good. However, there sometimes emerges a feeling of unease. When young group leaders in youth camps don't take a homesick child in their arms, fearing they could be considered intrusive, then measures have overshot the mark. When in care institutions (for children, for the elderly, for people with disabilities, etc.) the difficult balancing of closeness and distance leads to the avoidance of any closeness, important goods are lost. Sometimes we have to ask if the measures target those who are more likely to become perpetrators. Prevention measures must not become blind actionism intended to show "we are doing something" but doing nothing to change the causes. It is difficult to design guidelines and prevention measures wisely. It succeeds more easily if different groups of people are involved in drawing them up.

[33] Gayatri Spivak, "Responsibility," *Boundary* 21, no. 3 (1994): 19–64.

In addition, a distinction must be made between target group-specific prevention measures and prevention in a more general sense. The latter aims to raise awareness in dealing with issues of closeness and distance and for the vulnerability of the person. The other is to be respected in his/her autonomy, and the same applies to myself, as well as to every person, including every child. Everyone is to be respected as an end in themselves and must not be instrumentalized, and special vulnerability requires special protection. It is the basis of a culture of safety. One of the many challenges here is to minimize the risk of being hurt by others, but at the same time to maintain openness and receptivity. The goal of general prevention, then, is respect for and protection of the vulnerable agency of myself and of the others.

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