Spotlight on Gender, Identity and Social Change

Abstract:

Across politics, technology, and personal relationships, today's "identity debates" are, at their core, contests over who shapes discourse. This Spotlight brings together six German-language essays and interviews from newspapers exploring how the mechanisms of truth and belief are evolving: from Enlightenment-era ideas of intelligence to algorithmic text production; from changing patterns of male friendship to competing scripts of masculinity; from far-right "crisis of manhood" narratives to the quieter work of rethinking the categories we live by. Together, these pieces show how gender is never only "private" or "cultural," but tightly linked to institutions, media ecosystems, and power. JOSHA's editorial curation places these texts in dialogue to map a single question from multiple angles: what new forms of responsibility, literacy, and solidarity are needed when our old concepts of truth, masculinity, and even reality no longer hold?

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Spotlight on Gender, Identity and Social Change

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Abstract

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Keywords: AI Ethics; Misinformation; Algorithmic Authority; Male Loneliness; Identity Crisis; Quantum Computing.

1. Jagd nach dem verbogenen Sinn - In search of the distorted truth

By Thomas Thiel

The anthropocentric conception of intelligence, which was especially reinforced after the Enlightenment, has deeply influenced how we define the concept. The narrative we constructed around it excludes other living beings, organisms, or technological systems. However, with the rise of artificial intelligence, where more and more humans entrust computer programs with what were once exclusively human intellectual tasks, we are faced with a crucial question: should we redefine the concept of intelligence in this new intellectual climate? Katherine Hayles argues that intelligence should not be linked solely to self-consciousness, but rather understood as an intersectional space shared by animals, humans, and technology. She equates intelligence with cognition, defined as the ability to communicate and apply information contextually. Even though the concept of intelligence may need to be redefined, we must still ask: What are the consequences if machines take over text production and decision-making? According to Hayles's approach, machines may qualify as intelligent, but they lack moral reasoning, something that could have dire consequences in fields such as justice or medicine.

This article was previously published in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on May 16, 2025.

[Read the full article here](#)

2. Alles falsch - Everything is wrong

By Jan Wiele

The article highlights some of the main issues surrounding the increasingly widespread everyday use of AI. Certain AI software tools, such as ChatGPT or Google Gemini, can become dangerous because people tend to trust the information they provide, even though these programs rely on algorithms that select from vast amounts of data, some of which may be inaccurate or taken out of context. In reality, AI lacks the ability to discern what is true and what is false, which

means the answers it generates can be genuinely incorrect. This can have serious consequences, especially when we consider how AI influences the political opinions of internet users or is applied in sensitive areas such as the military and healthcare. The author emphasizes the need for curated AI systems, where there is oversight over both the content being generated and the sources from which it is drawn. Another crucial point is the importance of education around AI. People must learn to approach AI-generated results critically and understand that such outputs should be taken with caution, rather than accepted at face value.

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[Read the full article here](#)

3. Mythos und Wirklichkeit der Männerfreundschaft - What is myth and what is reality when it comes to friendships among men?

By Tobias Rüther

The article notes that men are currently forming friendships less frequently than in the past, despite the fact that friends can assist them in overcoming crises. The concept of male friendship is a historical myth, typically featuring two men who maintain lifelong loyalty. Yet, moving from myth to reality, studies show that men tend to speak little with each other, and the average man's number of friends decreases over generations. A close friend acts as a buffer against the negative consequences of problems or conflict situations. Conversely, men who lack this protective factor, those without good friends or other close relationships, live with a higher risk for their psychological health. Furthermore, long-term studies have shown that living without friendships can impact physical health in both men and women. Some observers now speak of a "male loneliness epidemic," social science, however, suggests the answer lies in encouraging young men to disregard heteronormative ideas and instead decide for themselves who and how they want to be, a process friends can assist with.

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[Read the full article here](#)

4. Hat der „moderne Mann" ausgedient? - Is the "New Man" outdated?

By Thomas Lindemann

This article begins by summarizing a new perspective on gender and masculinity within certain academic and political circles. Although the idea that gender is a social construct, and that masculinity is more an image than a reality, is becoming increasingly accepted, there are also strong social and political forces emerging in opposition to these views. As an opposition to this crisis of the traditional man, the political right and some religious groups are reinforcing traditional ideals of masculinity among young men, often creating very violent narratives that position women as an opposing force. Old ideals of the strong, muscular man are returning powerfully as a place of comfort for men whose identities are being questioned and reshaped.

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[Read the full article here](#)

5. „Es riecht nach ungelüftetem Teenager-Zimmer" - "It smells like a stuffy teenage boy's room."

By Julia Encke

The article is an interview with Volker Weiß about the masculine ideals of the New Right and other neo-Nazi groups. According to Weiß, this movement presents a supposed "crisis of masculinity" to justify authoritarian, heroic, and aggressive models of manhood. These ideals are neither natural nor new, but recycled clichés

used to create identity and obedience. The central narrative portrays the white man as a victim of equality, feminism, and modern education, allowing the far-right to present itself as a savior. Masculinity, xenophobia, and rejection of democracy mutually reinforce each other within this political strategy. Although the discourse promotes rigid gender roles, the internal reality of the movement is contradictory and opportunistic. The cult of the "strong man" is now embedded in an infantilized digital culture, amplified by social media and m[edia personalities. Overall, the text shows how masculinity is used as a tool to erode democratic values and advance authoritarian agendas.

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[Read the full article here](#)

6. „Wir müssen die Wirklichkeit neu denken lernen'' - "We need to rethink our reality"

By Andrian Kreye

This article is an interview with the philosopher Tobias Rees, who explores the relationship between new quantum computers and philosophy. According to Rees, our understanding of reality has been shaped by the mechanistic worldview that emerged in the sixteenth century, when technological developments led to the idea of reality as a predetermined and well-functioning machine governed by natural laws. However, as Rees argues, nature is not a machine but a phenomenon that does not always operate according to the systems and categories we have created. Quantum computers, which are able to model such non-mechanistic systems, offer a way to rethink and reshape our concept of reality beyond mechanical modes of thought. This shift could lead to one of the major breakthroughs in the history of ideas. Rees maintains that philosophers and physicists must work together to understand and develop the new categories upon which a new conception of the world can emerge.

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[Read the full article here](#)

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