

## I Receive, I Give

### An interdisciplinary research project on human flourishing

#### Paper 1: “I Receive, I Give” (intersection between ethics and political philosophy)

How do we flourish (as human persons)? This is an ancient question, to which I propose an ancient answer: human flourishing is dependent on gift exchanges (gifts in the form of time, effort, attention, etc.). I argue that ‘the theory of the gift’ follows naturally from a single assumption: dignity is a primary attribute of the person.

Having made this argument, I explain how the theory of the gift elegantly and compellingly resolves the paradox of the *privus-communis*: the desire to emerge as distinct person (the *privus*-desire) and to merge together in unity with other persons (the *communis*-desire) are both basic desires, even though these desires appear to be impossible to satisfy at the same time.

The paper’s novelty lies in (1) developing the theory of the gift, and (2) identifying and resolving the paradox of the *privus-communis*.

#### Paper 2: “The Song as Political Myth” (intersection between political philosophy and philosophical theology)

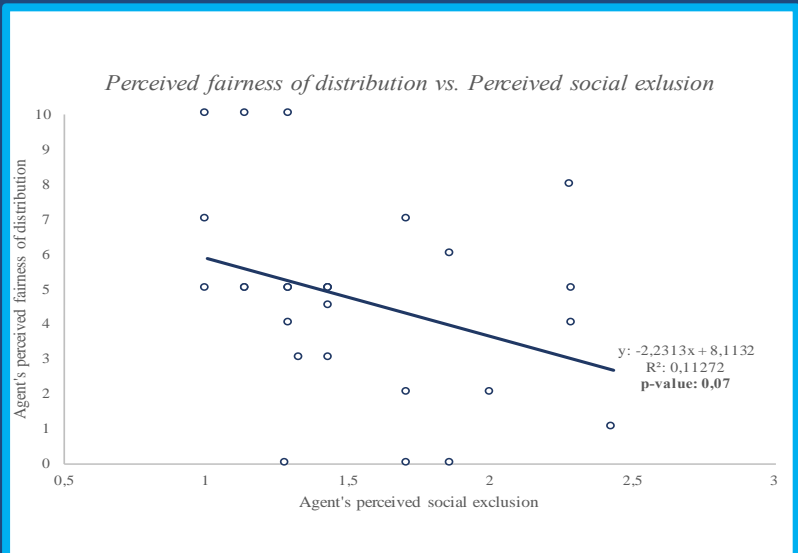
The human has always perceived itself as *homo communis* (i.e. as social being), but not as *homo privus* (i.e. as individual being). In ancient Israel, however, the human began perceiving itself as *homo communis* as well as *homo privus*. How did the *privus-communis* arise? I argue that that the Song of Songs can be read as a political myth of ancient Israel. And the political myth of the Song is permeated by a normative anthropology of receiving and giving (ref. theory of the gift, paper 1), which answers, I argue, how the *privus-communis* arose.

The paper’s novelty lies in (1) approaching the Song as political myth, and (2) the application of the theory of the gift (ref. paper 1) to ancient literature and historical developments.

#### Pilot Experiment (behavioural economics and -psychology)

In this pilot experiment, I explore how the feeling of social exclusion (a frustration of the *communis*-desire, ref. paper 1 & 2) affects the way in which we experience economic inequality.

The findings are quite in line with the theory of the gift (ref. paper 1): the more socially excluded the agent feels, the more likely the agent is to perceive a given (unequal) distribution as unfair (see graph). Interestingly, the provisional conclusion suggest that inequality does not pose a socio-political problem in itself, but becomes such a problem when there is social exclusion. NB: Note that this is a *correlation*—more experiments are required in order to establish a causal relation.



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