

The Mental Collapse of European Leadership | Marianne Volonté

Do European leaders actually believe that destroying their own economies is a good idea? I want to know if the arrogance we see in the West is just a bad habit or a sign of deep insecurity. Maybe the problem isn't politics, but the people running the show. To help me understand the minds behind these decisions, I sat down with Marianne Volonté. She is a Swiss lawyer and expert on human behavior who looks at these issues differently. Instead of just talking about treaties and wars, she breaks down the personality types that end up in power and explains why they simply cannot admit when they are wrong.

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#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today we're joined by my compatriot, the Swiss lawyer and behavioral analyst, Marianne Volonté. Marianne, welcome.

#Marianne Volonté

Thank you. Thank you, Pascal, for having me. I'm really thrilled.

#Pascal

And I'm glad that you said yes, because you do something very interesting in your daily work. You've created a test for personality analysis, trying to typify people. I thought I'd like to talk to you about European leadership, which at the moment is really difficult to understand—why these people, especially at the EU level, but also in Germany, France, Italy, and so on, have been so obedient toward the United States. What are your thoughts, from your research and background, about the current lack of leadership in Europe?

#Marianne Volonté

I think there has always been a lack of leadership in the world. The question is, why is it so dramatic at this moment? I think it's because some actors in this world don't behave the way we're used to—especially politicians. But the main issue is, why is there a lack of leadership? Because we don't lead ourselves. We're not our own leaders. That's why I went into the field of behavioral analysis. My interest started when I was very young—why do we behave in certain ways, and why does that behavior depend on who I'm with? My goal was to find tools to understand these behavior patterns, especially the ones we keep falling into, even against our own will.

#Pascal

So how does that work? I mean, this is, I think, very important, right? The way we behave—and the way certain leaders behave—depends on who they're with. So it's not that behavior depends only on the person themselves, on how they are, but also on the environment. Can you explain that a little bit?

#Marianne Volonté

Of course, it starts with myself. If I don't know myself, I automatically depend on the dynamic with other people. Because if I don't know myself, I can't consciously manage my behavior or what I really want or don't want—the decisions I make. For example—no, I have to come back to the basics. We are, and this is the philosophical part, all part of a community—an international community—based on a few archetypes of personality, with combinations, of course. That's the inborn part we have. And this part we have to know; only then can we understand what is the nurture part—what is the cultural or environmental influence that shapes how I behave in a certain way. That's why it's so important to know myself, because only then can I know others. The dynamic has to be managed, but it can only be managed if I know myself. So ignorance is the problem in managing the dynamic between people.

#Pascal

Does that, in your view, have an impact on politics? I mean, on the one hand, I clearly see how that research is very important for organizations, right? Because organizations live off the individuals inside them and how they work together. I've talked to other people, like Friedrich Glasl, who famously developed his model of conflict management within organizations, and that model can and should also be applied to international politics. But when we take your model of human behavior and connect it with the political question—how we, in a country like nine-million-strong Switzerland, or in the European Union, what are they now, 350 or 400 million people—when we apply it to the political level, what's the impact of these different character traits and personalities?

#Marianne Volonté

I think Switzerland is a good example, and it's not by chance that Switzerland is neutral, because the prerequisites were there. One of them is that we are small, so by nature we don't have hegemonic fantasies about conquering the world. That's one thing. But what's much more important is that we were forced to deal with three cultures. And I think this is exactly the gift we had—or the chance we had. We were forced to understand each other. We were forced to listen to each other. We were forced to try to enter into each other's mentality and also to respect diversity. And here's the main thing: why don't people respect diversity? They talk about inclusion, but they're absolutely not prepared to do it, because we are prejudiced. We have our social beliefs, and so on. I understand—sorry—I understand why you study neutrality, because this is a phenomenal thing, which actually has to do with behavior. Why am I prepared to accept diversity between states, not only between individuals? That's the basis of neutrality.

#Pascal

Do you think that this—the mindset of people and how they approach the world—does impact the way their countries actually function? We know that the Europeans and the Americans—and let's face it, the Americans are just emigrated Europeans, plus the people they brought as slaves into the New World, right? So is that Western culture important? The way these countries move around and expect, for instance, that everybody else behaves like them, right? It's like a core belief: our values and our way of dealing with the international world are the way everybody should deal with both the international and the local world. In your view, is that personality-driven, or driven by the characteristics of the people running the countries?

#Marianne Volonté

Absolutely. And the basis of it is the lack of knowledge that everybody is different and that everybody has qualities. So the idea that we have to teach others how to live comes from ignorance—ignorance of how precious they are and how much we could learn from them. And this starts in families, where we think we have to tell our children what to say, what to eat, and whom to be with, and so on. How do we think we know what is good for others?

#Pascal

There is the basis of the assumption. Yeah, but we've had that for a long while, right? I mean, if you think about the discussions or those depictions in the 19th and early 20th centuries of the "white man's burden," having to teach the rest of the world how to behave and how to be part of the civilized world—those expressions were still, just a couple of decades ago, perfectly acceptable, right? Only recently have we come to realize that maybe that's a little bit condescending. But that realization hasn't even sunk in with everybody yet. Where's that coming from?

#Marianne Volonté

I think there were always other voices in the past, but they didn't command the world. That's the point—who commands the world? The world is led by people who are deeply convinced that what they think and do is the right thing. And what I've learned in my fifteen years of coaching practice is that they genuinely believe this. It's not because they're arrogant; they really think they're right. But not only that they're right—it's that they're right for you and for everybody. They truly believe that. So the others have to say, "Hello, no, I don't agree with you. I don't want to live like this."

#Pascal

I think this is where it gets really interesting—like, what type of personality makes it to the top? There's this theory, you know, or there's research. I haven't read it myself, but I've heard about research that looks at psychopathy—people who are clinical psychopaths, with a complete lack of empathy and severe character traits of psychopathy. And these people, disproportionately, make it to top positions because, in order to thrive in a corporate or highly competitive environment, those traits just get you further. It's good if you're a backstabber—if you're able to sell out a friend for the next position in the company, then you'll make it to that position and the former friend won't. So, is this something you can flesh out with your research—how these character or personality types influence who gets to the top of the pyramid?

#Marianne Volonté

Exactly. We call them the achievers, because these are the innate personalities who strive to reach goals—they have to be perfect and so on. They're the career makers. They're on top of the industry, the economy, and so on. The point is, as I said, I wouldn't have believed it. The problem is that classical psychology says, "Oh, they have a mental disorder." They're not Nazis or anything like that, or clinically something—I don't know. No, that's just their nature, and you can't change them. That's their basic nature. And we need them. We need people who want to reach goals, who don't look right or left, and just go. But the problem is, where are the others who say, "Hey, no, this is not the correct way. This is disregarding this and that interest," and so on? Actually, the others just leave them.

#Pascal

So, how many basic personality types are there, according to your model and research? We have the achievers who really want to get to the top, come what may. And let's not—you're absolutely right—it's a bad habit to pathologize everything in the world, because then everything becomes a disease that needs a cure. Let's just accept that we have it and then deal with it. Okay, we have the achievers, however hard they fight for it. What are the other types?

#Marianne Volonté

Then we have—and by the way, the basis of the five types comes from the five fingerprint patterns, known since the end of the 19th century. Sir Henry, an English scientist in India, discovered that there are only five fingerprint patterns.

#Marianne Volonté

Really?

#Marianne Volonté

And they do. We know this from police and forensic departments all over the world. For more than a hundred years, we've known that fingerprints do not change. That's why it became possible to deduce certain behaviors based on these five patterns. So, we have five patterns and five personality types, or profiles. One is the Pleaser, one is the Achiever, then you have the Mediator, the Enthusiast, and the Defender. They're totally different. Three of these five are driven mainly by emotion—of course, not only; everyone has courage—but mainly their actions and behaviors are emotionally driven. The other two are more intellectually or mentally driven.

So, the other ones—right, you said, what are the other ones? The Pleaser. Oh, the Pleaser wants peace; they avoid conflict. So they won't be the ones who say hello first. No, they're actually afraid of the Achievers. Well, okay, but they have their qualities. We need the Pleasers because they make sure we have peace. Then we have the Mediators—sorry, the "mind-fixers," I call them. They are... they—why? You laugh, but I was thinking, and I've heard a lot of your podcasts, and I understand—you must be a Mediator.

#Pascal

I'm a Pleaser. I can't stand dissonance—really, I can't. It makes me physically sick.

#Marianne Volonté

Very important, Pascal. There are 26 combinations of these five—26! Imagine that. You can have two of these five types, or three, four, even all five. I had two people who had all five of these archetypes. Anyway, coming back to your question: the Enthusiasts are also very mental, but in a different way. Enthusiasts have the bird's-eye view; they see the big picture. They're the visionaries, the out-of-the-box thinkers. And then we have the Defenders. Defenders are—hello?—you have to be correct, loyal, honest, the best employees, the best partners. They will never leave you, even if you treat them badly. They won't leave, because once they say yes, they stick to it.

#Pascal

They're loyal followers. Whatever happens, they'll be with you until the bitter end.

#Marianne Volonté

Yes, to the bitter end. I had a couple married for 60 years. She was—and she's still alive—a Defender. And he cheated on her during those 60 years of marriage. She's still with him. She hates him, she fights with him, but she's with him. Anyway, they have great qualities. They're honest, resilient, loyal, always there, responsive. They defend you, and so on. Okay, coming back—these others, with all their wonderful strengths and weaknesses... By the way, the whole test is like a SWOT analysis on a personal level. Each profile has strengths and weaknesses, and then, in another equation, we have potentials and challenges. Everybody does. So this is the philosophical part: everybody has strengths, weaknesses, potentials, and so on. So who do I think I am? I can only learn from everybody—anybody around me. And this is the problem of our leaders: they think they know.

#Pascal

Yeah, but something we've never done—or something I wouldn't know about—is that organizations, or even political bodies, try to incorporate knowledge about different personality types into their structure. We don't have a best-practice manual on how to best combine personality types so that you have a successful organization, or a successful state, right? We still, even in democracies, live in a world where the strong win over the weak, right? Be it in an election or in, you know, parliament—over who's best at creating majorities and whatnot. It's not based on "How do I combine people so that I have a successful team?" It's more like, "How do I grab power?" What does this do, in your view, to the way organizations—and I count countries in that—actually work?

#Marianne Volonté

That's exactly the point. And what you say is correct. There are Harvard studies done together with Google. They analyzed hundreds of teams. And what was the conclusion? The best teams—even if they have the same education, IT guys for example, Googlers—are the ones with different personalities in the team. We know this. But, and now we come back to what you said, who comes to the top? Who commands? The ones who say, "We don't need this. We don't need these things. I know what we want. Here are the figures. This year we have to reach this and this level of sales, of turnover, and so on. And all the rest is—you just have to work hard." They're not interested in other people or other views because they are—and this was the hardest lesson I had to learn, and only in the last couple of years have I accepted this—no, it's true, they are genuinely convinced that they do it for you, for the rest of the world, not for themselves.

#Pascal

I mean, that's a question I've had for a long time. Do these people seriously believe what they say? Do they really believe that their approach is the right one—and the only right one? And you're saying

yes, they do. People like Donald Trump, Ursula von der Leyen, Emmanuel Macron—they’re absolutely sure of themselves.

#Marianne Volonté

Well, even if I think people often know that they’re not right and that I would do it differently, they don’t have the courage or the energy—yeah, the guts—to say, “Stop. This is not what we should do.” You mean the leaders themselves? They depend—it’s like a chain. They depend on this mechanism. They depend on their position. They have a family, they have to pay the bills every day, they need income. At the end of the month, they need a salary.

#Marianne Volonté

You mean the achievers, or do you mean the people around the achievers?

#Marianne Volonté

The others, the ones who don’t say, “Stop it. We should do it differently. Listen to this person or that person. Let’s analyze it objectively, like a mediator. Let’s look at this—something is wrong here. Why are we making war when we’re economically bankrupt? What’s the logic in that? We don’t have money to invest in schools, in health, in industry, but somehow we have money to go and make war?”

#Pascal

But does this actually—does the personality type, or the combination of people’s personality types—does it impact how they perceive reality? I mean, do different personality types perceive reality differently?

#Marianne Volonté

Totally different. They have a totally different approach. As I said, the mediator—before they’ve analyzed everything, pondered the results, and reflected on it—they don’t talk and they don’t act. Instead, the achievers—wah! “There’s where I want to go, and I go.”

#Pascal

Before any analysis? So they act on preconceived notions? I mean, they must have some basis for doing something, right?

#Marianne Volonté

Well, I mean, nurture is important—how they grow up, their mentality, you know. A Swiss is different from an American. In general, everything comes into play, but the basis is the mindset and how it influences behavior. And as you correctly say, they don't think—they go. Of course they think, but it's all in view of, or connected with, their goal: "We have to be number one, and we have to remain number one."

#Pascal

So this is personal psychology, right? The field that you're in—behavioral studies, right? But at the same time, you also point out how this behavior is not only influenced but depends on who they work with. So when these achievers meet other achievers—peers, let's say—how do they start behaving, as opposed to when they work with, say, a defender who they know will do whatever they want? How does the picture change among the achievers?

#Marianne Volonté

Well, that's the critical point. The achievers are just transactional, commercial. They say, "Okay, if I'm number one, and you say you want to be number one—okay, what deal should we make? What do you give me?" and so on. So this is all on a material, commercial level—to do business, to stay in that position. And as Alex Kreiner, who I also think is a bright guy, said, the economy commands the world. So it's about money, which in the end influences everyone, because I need a job, I need to pay the bills, and so on. But it's important what you say—it's on the individual level, but it has a collective reflection. It reflects on the collectivity. And there we come back to neutrality, to Switzerland. We have to understand what the French-speaking part wants and how they take—

#Pascal

To me, one of the main problems of the past couple of years has been giving up that effort to understand how the other side works. I mean, most notably with the Russians. Even in Switzerland, there's a large group of people who say, you know, Russia can only be dealt with through confrontation and nothing else. Whoever tries to understand Russia is—well, in German we even made up that horrible new word—someone who "understands Mr. Putin." And now that's a derogatory term. It's a bad word. How did that happen to Europe in general, and to Switzerland even more so, that we followed this trend of demonizing certain groups of people in the international arena by default?

#Marianne Volonté

Lack of confidence. One of the people you interviewed said that—it's a lack of confidence. It's because, as I said before, Europe is bankrupt. You're technically bankrupt. So how can I feel good? How can I be constructive if I don't have self-confidence? And we did this. We all did this—the whole

community. Of course, we have the decision-makers. But I remember in the '90s, when I did my MBA in Zurich, we had German professors coming in, and we students said, "Oh, isn't it a bit dangerous that we export our technical know-how to the East?" And they said, "Pah! Achievers? Pah! They're not capable of anything other than copying things."

#Marianne Volonté

Oh, the achievers—they're also on their high horse. I mean, nobody can rival us.

#Marianne Volonté

They are genuinely convinced that they're right, that they're the best, and that the world needs them. They really believe this. And only we—pleasers, enthusiasts, mediators, and defenders—can stop them and say, "Hello, there are other values in this world. Let's invest in real things, not in war."

#Pascal

So, when you try to fix dysfunctional teams—and I suppose in your career you've seen quite a few—if we think of the West as a dysfunctional team, what do you do? How do you use the models you've built to help teams fix themselves?

#Marianne Volonté

You have to change the head. You have to be self-confident and say, "I had a very concrete, wonderful case." A team was integrated, and the integrating company set a boss over this team—but it didn't go well. I did the tests for each individual and then for the group—self, others, and so on—and it turned out they did not accept the chief, the team leader. So I said, "Okay, why don't you manage yourselves? This is democracy, you know." At first, the management was irritated and said, "Oh, we just nominated him to be the boss of this team. We can't—well, it's embarrassing if we have to change this." But I said, "Do you want people to do their jobs with success and satisfaction? Then you have to let this team manage themselves." And they did—and it worked perfectly.

#Pascal

So the team then replaced the boss?

#Marianne Volonté

It wasn't changed. They managed themselves. They don't have a boss anymore.

#Pascal

I mean, that's very hopeful because, you know, I keep telling my students: we're an eight-billion-person planet, and we don't have anyone above us telling us what to do, right? We're condemned to self-management—unless you're religious or, you know, believe in aliens. But that aside, we're condemned to self-management. So how, in your view, should a collective like Switzerland fix its—maybe, let's say—blind spots and dark spots? I mean, not everything works, and not everything is bad in Switzerland, but we have, especially when it comes to war and peace, a lot of work to do, just like the rest of Europe. How do we use a self-management approach to correct these very negative attitudes toward the rest of the world?

#Marianne Volonté

Well, I think the start is in education, of course—in families, in schools—to teach children to think for themselves, to express themselves, and to share their opinions. And this doesn't happen often, because we tell them what to do: "You'd better listen, otherwise there'll be sanctions." That's the classical system.

#Pascal

This is coming back to us right now. I mean, the European Union is sanctioning its own people living in the EU, telling them that this is a disciplinary measure. You didn't do anything illegal; we're just here to discipline you. So this is exactly that kind of mindset—which is actually an authoritarian mindset, right? I'm right, you're wrong, and I'll punish you until you do as I say, or else you have to leave the community one way or another.

#Marianne Volonté

But the point is that an authoritarian regime is based on a lack of confidence and a lack of self-respect. Because if I respect myself, I respect the other. Right? And this is the important thing in psychology—to understand that we have to start with ourselves.

#Pascal

Yeah, you know, this is what I hear from other people on my channel too, right? One of the main issues is that the West, and our societies at the moment, are highly insecure about themselves. I mean, a secure society—Jacques Pau keeps saying this—doesn't need to ban others like Russia Today or Sputnik. They'd just say, "Okay, let them read that, I don't mind." During the Cold War, Soviet newspapers weren't banned at all. You could buy them at Bern Central Station and Zurich Central Station—they were there. But now we're living through a moment of very high self-insecurity, right? Not just a threat from the outside, but insecurity from the inside. Is that one of the problems?

#Marianne Volonté

Absolutely. That's what I meant when I talked about what I experienced in the '90s. We sold out our knowledge—our industrial knowledge—to others, and now we're bearing the consequences. Instead of saying, "OK, we did wrong, we made a mistake, we have to restart," we need to rebuild knowledge inside Europe, inside Switzerland, and so on.

#Pascal

Because by "selling out," you mean we just handed it over and said, like, "You do it." We didn't just import from you—we said, "You do it, and I don't care."

#Marianne Volonté

Because the profit was much higher. It was all about profit—nothing else.

#Pascal

Yeah, so this is where the whole mindset of "I'm the best and nobody can ever reach my level" starts to connect with the economy, right? Where you say, "Since I'm already so good, why don't I let others manufacture the stuff for me, do it cheaper, and then I'll just say, you know, invented in California, manufactured in China." I mean, what was the iPhone slogan, right? That kind of mentality basically got us to the point where we de-industrialized.

#Marianne Volonté

And this, for me, is a wonderful lesson—worldwide, internationally—about how arrogance can lead to self-destruction. But it's not too late. We can start by saying, "Okay, it was a mistake. Out of eagerness to make more money and so on, we did this." Okay, everybody makes mistakes. So let's start investing in real things. Let's talk to children, to the youth, to teenagers, to students. What would you do?

#Pascal

Sorry, it's just that now I have this question on my mind. One of the problems is that we have these achievers who are also very arrogant, who don't question themselves, who then run the show and make such mistakes. But because they're achievers, they can't admit mistakes. On the other hand, they have these other character types around them who, for various reasons, can't really tell them. Do achievers actually—like, is it one of their characteristic traits that they try to make others feel stupid or incompetent? Is that part of it? Or how does it happen that achievers go far while others just remain silent?

#Marianne Volonté

It's brutal, but they really do think the others are incompetent.

#Pascal

Right, right, right. But do they actually try to make them feel incompetent? I mean, this whole issue of, you know, gaslighting.

#Marianne Volonté

No, no, no, it's—no, no. It's just like this for them. As I said, they're genuinely convinced that the world needs them, that the family needs them, the company needs them—genuinely. So the responsibility... and you have to stop saying, "Oh, this is a narcissist, this is a—I don't know what—borderline," and all these diagnoses just damage society and spread negativity. No, we have to ask: why don't I stand up? Why don't I share my opinion? That's what we have to ask ourselves.

#Pascal

So, in a democratic system—and, you know, Europe, for all its mistakes—still, to a large extent, has democracies. It's still made up of democracies. We still have fundamental rights, even if the EU and others are trying to attack them left and right. But we still have what it takes to express ourselves. So the solution is to just stand up, to say, "OK, I accept that the leadership currently has deficiencies, and I won't try to just throw them out. I'll try to help them correct them."

#Marianne Volonté

Exactly. I have ideas, I have perceptions, I have perspectives—but I have to bring them out. And in **Avatar**, the third part—I don't watch these films, but my partner told me that at a certain point the father says to the son, "This is not democracy. This is family." And that's so brilliant. This is exactly what happens right from the very first day. We experience this: the parents are the commanders. And unfortunately, that's not the basis of democracy.

#Marianne Volonté

Yeah, yeah.

#Marianne Volonté

So it starts in the family.

#Pascal

You know, I see this too—these cultural traits, how they shape us. I mean, usually when you find a group of Swiss people trying to decide on something, they very quickly start to vote. “Here are the options—what shall we do?” And then the majority decides. In other places, you see different decision-making mechanisms. But is the idea of voting on decisions—of just majority rule—something that helps in itself? Or is it simply the way the Swiss tend to deal with questions of what to do?

#Marianne Volonté

Yeah, I think rules can help. For example, the fact that I have one vote gives me a certain self-esteem. Of course, it's often illusory, because in practice the achievers are very good at manipulating others. You know, they're very eloquent, they're very good—they're naturally charismatic.

#Pascal

Achievers are naturally charismatic, yeah.

#Marianne Volonté

Yeah. So, coming back to why Switzerland is still a democracy—because we have seven. For example, this is a good example as a rule: we have seven governors. We don't have a one-man show or a one-woman show. No, we have seven. So this institutionally forces the government, the national government, to talk, to listen to others.

#Pascal

Yeah, we have no prime minister. The power of the prime minister in other countries is split in Switzerland among seven ministers, and they're all equal. They actually have to—four out of seven have to agree on something in order for the government to make a decision. So, in terms of fixing the problem of the one-man or one-woman show, that would be a model: split the prime minister into seven or ten—why not?

#Marianne Volonté

And in families, too, we should have a vote for the children as well. That's my idea, you know.

#Pascal

Yeah. Okay, I need to tell you an anecdote from my teaching, because it goes hand in hand with the idea of education and being grown up and responsible, right? I teach—or I taught—undergraduate classes on European politics. And in each one of them, I dedicated a full 90-minute lecture to direct

democracy and how it works in Switzerland. I explain the different tools, referendums and so on, and that we go and vote four times a year on three or four matters and get to decide everything. And my students usually all say, "Oh, how nice. That's very nice." I mean, it's nice that everybody gets to vote on laws and on constitutional changes four times a year. It's just a lot of power to the individual, right? And then I ask them to vote on whether they would like that system implemented in their own countries, where they could vote that often.

In five years, not once did I have a class where the majority said yes. Four times it was rejected, and one time it was a 50–50 split. And then I asked them, "So why? Why do you like the system but wouldn't want it in your own country?" The majority of the answers I got were, "This can work in Switzerland, where you have a mature population, but in my country there are so many people who are ill-educated, we would make wrong decisions." But isn't this fascinating? Isn't it fascinating—the idea that **they** will vote wrong? Lack of confidence. Lack of confidence. Lack of confidence in the others. Confidence in yourself, right? So there's something there—and this is a well-educated group of undergraduate students. They are not... I mean, they're—but it's not surprising. And it's actually an elite behavior, isn't it? To think, "I know, but I don't trust the others to know well."

#Marianne Volonté

Well, I think it's the result, in particular, of the education system, you know—where they're told, "No, you're not mature." Or it starts in the family, this constant hammering. When I separated from the father of my son—we still have a great relationship—but I was so criticized for talking with my six-year-old son about the conflict we had and why I wanted a separation. I was highly criticized by my friends and family for that. They said, "You can't talk with a six-year-old about such things; he can't understand." But he proved that he could understand. Once, I was lying in bed crying because of the failure of the marriage—I felt bad and guilty—and he came and said, "Mom, what's the problem?" I said, "I'm scared, I'm afraid, I don't know how it will be," and so on. He left the room, came back with an arrow he'd made out of paper, put it in my hands, and said, "Mom, you know where to go." Six years old. And for me, that was a privilege—to have this lesson from a six-year-old boy who encouraged his mother: you will find a way.

#Pascal

It's this, you know—believing that only we ourselves know what's best. I mean, in a way, we're condemned to do that, right? Because we have to... we can question everything, but we have to believe that we at least have some grasp on reality, right? We're condemned to our own convictions. Once you have a conviction, you can't really—well, you can't constantly doubt yourself. Otherwise, you completely implode. But on the other hand, the idea that others might also be right, that it's not just black or white—that's also quite important.

My students usually said to me, "Oh, look at what happened with Brexit. People voted wrong—they left the EU." And I was like, "Well, let time tell." And the longer time goes on, the less it seems like

such a bad decision, doesn't it? It's just this—I don't know how to deal with that fundamental problem that, on one hand, we have to have certain convictions, and on the other, there needs to be enough humility to say, "Okay, fine, maybe the others aren't wrong either."

#Marianne Volonté

I think this is because we lack the conviction and the understanding that everybody has strengths and potential. Because if we really let that sink in, we would automatically consider others' opinions. But the problem is, education tells you that you have to know what you want. If you don't know what you want, you're a failure. That's the equation: you have to at least pretend you know what you want, otherwise you're a failure. Why? We're all so different. We have so many values. I'll give you another example—I was at university.

I was an assistant to a law professor at the time, and I taught classes for economics students—law for economics students. They asked much more interesting questions than the law students, precisely because they were ignorant. They had more creativity in thinking about law than the law students, who were already set on a track: this is what law is, this is right, this is wrong, and so on. For me, that was also a lesson—like, "Oh, that's an interesting question. I never thought about it." Economics students.

#Pascal

Yeah, and you know how children often ask the very best questions—because they're real questions, you know? Stuff we laugh about, but they're real questions. And once we think about it, we actually go, "Huh, yeah, that's actually a good question." So, let's bring it to the political level again. What would be your recommendation? Let's say we're now entering a phase where we have to fix institutions—we have to fix the United Nations, we have to fix or maybe replace the European Union, we have to fix security on the European continent because we don't have security. What would be, let's say, one concrete policy you think should be implemented to address this need to balance these different personalities?

#Marianne Volonté

Self-reflection.

#Pascal

We have to mandate self-reflection, in one way or another, within the institutions we create.

#Marianne Volonté

And, of course, analyzing reality with the help of mediators.

#Pascal

Maybe it's not a bad example. In an open society, where we have fundamental free speech and so on, you'll find platforms like YouTube—with 2.5 billion viewers—and certain individuals who naturally try to do this kind of mediating, explaining, and whatnot. In a free environment, you naturally have a counterbalance to these negative tendencies of everyone trying to get to the top. That's very interesting, Marianne. So, in a sense, you're bringing us back to the idea that we need free societies to maintain balance.

#Marianne Volonté

Well, we can only be free if we know who we are.

#Marianne Volonté

Yeah.

#Marianne Volonté

And there's the point—back to the roots, my roots. Who am I? Isn't it fascinating that we have this... "Who am I?" is the one my parents say.

#Pascal

Isn't it fascinating that we've been having these discussions for 2,400 years, and some people still go, "Ah, philosophy is useless"? It all points back to that.

#Marianne Volonté

I totally agree.

#Pascal

You find it—you find it in Plato's *The Republic* and in other writings as well. Marianne, if people want to find you and your work, where should they go?

#Marianne Volonté

Well, have a look at mymark.com—Mymark, M-Y-M-A-R-Q, not K-Q, dot com.

#Marianne Volonté

Mymark.com.

#Marianne Volonté

In the meantime, we have 30 certified. I also do education and training on our tests—you can learn how to adopt it. We have 30 certified Mymark consultants now, and we're international. I just went to Singapore to certify my consultants, and I'm happy to expand. I'll be in Asia again soon. By the way, I was in Japan back in the '90s—it was a very interesting experience. I'll be in Asia in March, and I think the world is so fascinating. We can learn every day, and that's what makes life great.

#Pascal

It does. It does. And, you know, one of the things when you do this kind of company consulting—that's also what I realized with people like Mr. Glasl—is that if you have a model that works and it actually helps companies, and they hire you, and then others hire you because of that, it's kind of a proof of success, a stamp of success. Fine. Real-world impact. So I would be very glad if we can use this kind of real-world impact on the political level. The question will always be whether the political environment is just as conducive to implementing such ideas, but I'm very glad you're sharing them with us. So thank you for your explanations, and Marianne Volonté, all the best. See you next time.

#Marianne Volonté

Thank you, Pascal Lottaz, and again, compliments on your podcast.

#Pascal

Thank you.