

How do you motivate young people about topics like politics or humanism?

The adventures of a young man with extraordinary abilities also leads the reader into philosophical and political realms as this inadvertent superhero tries to improve the world. This gives young people a book to hand that not only serves as entertainment, but also conveys important values.



Some questions for the author, Thiù:

What was your motivation for writing this novel?

Having to witness how our society continues to move almost unchecked towards the abyss of a climate catastrophe has been a burden to me for decades. And to this day, very little has changed. The economy and commercial profit still have priority over a future world that's worth living in for our descendants. I basically wrote it out of pure frustration about this current situation. I simply want to bypass the political fighting against windmills and get progress moving faster, which is now an absolute necessity. To achieve this would really require a superpower, such as that which the hero in my book has.

Isn't superhero stuff a little "old hat" by now?

You're probably thinking of movies with super villains and simple-minded action sequences. I'm more interested in the interactions that a superhero would experience in everyday life, in dealing with ordinary people and real-life problems.

What age is *Cogento* suitable for? I had older teenagers in mind while I was writing – maybe myself, too, when I was that age and worried about the environment for the first time. My book is about the state of the world, and philosophy plays an important role in the search for solutions. I use the exciting superhero adventure as a vehicle to introduce readers to topics such as humanism, secularism, world politics and climate change.

But philosophy? That doesn't sound very exciting for young people. The adventure makes up the main part of the book; how the protagonist discovers and experiments with his ability, how he

struggles with difficulty on his own to improve the world. But the story finally leads to an equally exciting point where it becomes essential to think about ethics and human rights. Here I had valuable input from the philosopher Onora O'Neill. The hero discusses these issues with her and with Richard Dawkins regarding what one should or could do as a superhero.

So Professor Richard Dawkins plays a part in the book?

Yes. I also wanted to introduce him to an audience that would not normally know of or choose his books. He was surprised by the idea of putting a real, well-known person in a novel – initially he thought that this had never been done before. Anyway, it's the first time Dawkins has appeared as a literary character in a novel.

But what does philosophy have to do with solving the climate crisis?

Our world is driven by opportunism: Trump, Maduro, Kim Jong-Un, Bolsonaro, etc., – who knows if one would behave less selfishly if one were in these people's shoes? Power corrupts. My protagonist also has to struggle with that. The ideal solution would be a system in which greed and opportunism are superfluous. Philosophical considerations within the framework of such a fictitious story can show what would be necessary for a better society and how man, politics, economy, religion and everything in general is connected with it. The book is actually an experiment in thinking that consistently leads to a sustainable form of society and to globally enforceable human rights.

Thematic orientation:

- Reading age from approx. 16 years
- Capitalism, conservative politics and their negative effects on society and the environment
- Critical of Religion
- Importance of humanism, human rights, women's rights, self-determination (family planning, sexuality, homosexuality)
- Drugs and drug policies

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Cogento author Thiù was the art director of *Macworld* magazine and an illustrator and freelance editor of *Macwelt*.

...or what nasty things would you do with a superpower?