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SPEECH ↔ ACTION

Who and How Produces the Future (*A.A. Fedorov's New Philosophy of Common Cause*)

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Abstract—A reflection of A.A. Fedorov's project on the analysis of the future and the model of its production is considered. This model makes it possible to correlate the factors of agency and sociality in the process of such production. Special attention is paid to Fedorov's idea of the key role of children and childhood in the production of the future, the typology of actors in this process. The proposed concept and model create a fruitful and rewarding field for further interdisciplinary research. Thus, from the positions of social semantics and pragmasemantics, the production of the future appears as a form of meaning making and its institutionalization, revealing itself in the cascade of interfaces of interaction of contexts of sociocultural practices. In this case, agency as a universal interface of such interaction plays a key role. In this regard, the nontrivial potential of the problem is revealed by a comparative analysis of natural and artificial intelligence. Since man has an "advantage" of bodily experience, sexual dimorphism, and other vitality compared to artificial intelligence, the future is largely founded on this vitality, on its result, which is children. Therefore, the question of the possibility of control and the ethos of producing the future, the balance of admissibility/inadmissibility of the means used in this process is also important.

Keywords: future, childhood, pragmasemantics, production of the future, meaning making, agency
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INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This text was conceived as a review of the book by Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Fedorov, dedicated to the production of the future [Fedorov 2023]. However, the range of ideas touched upon in the book, which are not only relevant, requiring not only a response, discussion but also development, and the very scale of this work very quickly exceeded the capabilities of a routine review.

This is a unique book in terms of its subject matter; its content, which reveals this subject matter; and the way it reveals it. The author takes on a topic that has long been ripe in all clusters of modern philosophy—from metaphysics and epistemology to anthropology and further into social and political philosophy. The topic of the future is ultraparadoxical. On the one hand, the past and the present are derivatives of the future, and in this sense, there is nothing but the future. On the other hand, the future will never come as long as it is the future [Fedorov 2023, pp. 7, 8]. At the same time, the future may not become the present, and the present, at the moment when it is perceived, already becomes the past. Then, only the past is the present. At the same time, it has long been well known from political practice that whoever controls the past controls the future, and whoever controls the present controls the past. However, from the standpoint of philosophical anthropology, the main thing is the future since it sets the horizon of motivation and will, aspirations and hope, while the loss of the image of the future nullifies hopes and expectations. Note that the future is not infinite, and not only in an individual sense. Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union, among other things, was connected precisely with the fact that this grandiose project had run out of future.

Time; the future; its status; attitude towards it; and the possibility of its comprehension, prediction, and embodiment constitute a key theme for philosophy and spiritual experience at all times—for Epicurus and Augustine, Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni and Confucius, M. Heidegger and G. Agamben. However, by the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, the theme of the possibility of the future sounds especially acute. While in the first quarter of the 20th century, the key period for modern philosophy, a fountain of ideas gushed about the options for the future, its projects, programs for implementation, our time is characterized by the loss of the image of the future and even fear of it. Sequels, prequels, parodies, and other

forms of nostalgia [Sedashov 2024] and ways of factoring the past and the present dominate in art. Even the place of science fiction has been firmly occupied by the genres of dystopia and fantasy in the Gothic style. All attempts to galvanize science fiction look extremely lifelessly dull [Shikarev, Verkin, Breininger 2023]. This means either the fear on the part of the civilization, which has never lived so comfortably, to lose this comfortable present or the exhaustion of the resource for generating images of the future. Fear of the future inevitably calls into question the present, destroys it, undermines faith in the possibility of rational management of social and personal life.

We can say that A.A. Fedorov not only described an important topical problem in detail, exposed the main nerve of modernity but also took on the solution of this problem, which is impossible without revealing the very mechanism of the emergence of the future, its "production." A person can understand something only if he understands how this something is made and, therefore, reproduced. Nontrivial is also the very desire of the author to develop a project for the philosophy of the future not just as one of the directions of philosophical thought but the future as philosophy, where the very subject of "*philo-*" will be the future and the desire to produce it [Fedorov 2023, p. 9].

Note that despite the generalizing message of A.A. Fedorov's text, it is very personal. It involves, immerses us in the personal experience of the author, his biography, his reading circle, travels, meetings, stages and facts of the biography. This is very much in line with the general trend of modern philosophizing—from the doctrine of entity to the ways of cognizing entity and further to the cultural factors of these methods and the main instrument for implementing these factors, the socialized personality. The book contains excellent cases related to the problem of the future and its production, including the personal experience of the author and well-known historical figures, politicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, and artists. The author often appeals to examples and materials from cinema ("visuals"), literature (especially science fiction), and history—both world and domestic. This text is an excellent example of deep modern philosophical essays.

Therefore, in the proposed article, an attempt is made to understand such large-scale innovative work using an approach that corresponds to the maximum extent to the interdisciplinarity of the problems raised by A.A. Fedorov and his model of practices for solving them. It seems that such an approach can be social semiotics, or rather its expansion in the format of deep semiotics, which emphasizes the role of personal agency as a source, tool, and result of meaning making [Tulchinskii 2019], as well as stereometric semantics [Tulchinskii 2021; Zolyan, Tulchinskii 2024] and pragmasemantics, which considers meaning making as the interaction of a cascade of contexts of comprehension with the role of agency as an integral interface [Zolyan 2016; Zolyan 2021]. It is precisely this approach that seems adequate to understand the study, which contains a scattering of ideas that generate important, relevant, and promising associations, opening new horizons for the development of semiotics, the theory of meaning and understanding, interdisciplinarity, the rapprochement and conjugation of the semiotic and hermeneutic traditions, analytical philosophy and phenomenology, abstract modeling, and the role of agency (self-awareness of selfhood).

TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF THE IMAGE OF THE FUTURE

The future is rooted and manifested at all levels of human individual and social experience. It is in the motivation of individual behavior—both in intentions ("I want" as knowledge of the desired future, "I don't want" as knowledge of the undesirable present) and in the possibilities (abilities, training, availability of resources) of implementing intentions. Therefore, it is also in social behavior as the resultant force of individual wills. Knowledge of the connection between causes and effects also makes it possible to produce the future. The future is also contained in scientific data, their generalization in scientific "laws." Thus, Newtonian mechanics is sufficient to calculate the trajectory of motion of cosmic bodies and vehicles. Astrophysical data serves as the basis for forecasts of the development of stellar systems. Also, without the experience of farming, agronomic and agricultural data, the prospective development of agriculture of various scales is impossible.

Images of the future—desired and undesirable (frightening)—have a great many sources and an equally huge circle of literature dedicated to these sources.

These may be *religious prophecies*, the most striking example of which is the Revelation of John the Theologian, also known as "The Apocalypse of John." Images of the future appear in political *doctrines, manifestos, programs* (*Russian Truth* by P.I. Pestel'; *The Communist Manifesto* by K. Marx and F. Engels; *The Third Program of the CPSU*, adopted at the XXII Congress). Various political movements and ideologies (anarchism, Islamism, communism, liberalism, national socialism, fascism, etc.) offer doctrines of ideas about a perfect society that could embody these doctrines [Sørensen 2014; Utopian Socialism 1982].

Natural scientists (biologists, physicists) [Bernal 1956; Thomson 1958], humanities scholars [Ryurikov 1961], and popular science writers [Medvedev 1975] also discuss the future. There is also a special branch of knowledge, *futurology*, which offers special developments for describing the future. The classics of futurology are the works of H.G. Wells, S. Lem, A. Toffler

[Wells 1902; Lem 1968; Toffler 1977]. Some of their ideas turned out to be surprisingly insightful. For example, Wells predicted two world wars and died a year after the United States used the nuclear weapons that he had predicted and a little over two years before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, inspired by him, was adopted [Volokhova 2023]. However, for the most part, these texts, written at different times and bearing the stamp of that time, now represent typical examples of the *past future*, the property of history [Koselleck, 1985].

Somewhat more relevant are *social forecasting, modeling*, and *scenarios* [Beinhauer, Schmacke 1973; Bestuzhev-Lada 1970; The Future of Soviet Society 1970; Introduction to the Future 2006; Kahn, Brown, Martel 1978; Creveld 2022; Lubke 1929; The World in 100 Years 2016; Pestel' 1988] and large-scale *social design* [Gromyko 2013; Mukhametshina, Ivanov 2023; Potemkin 2018; Strumilin 1964; Fokin 2007]. However, these developments, too, as well as very recent assessments of the prospects of artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and other smart technologies, are rapidly becoming "memories of the future" [Larina, Ovchinskii 2022].

Even more specific are *state and business plans and proje*cts: the famous first Soviet GOELRO plan, five- and seven-year plans, recent national projects, Strategies-2020/2030, regional strategic development plans. However, they too are subject to adjustments almost immediately during their implementation because, as Lem wisely noted, nothing ages as quickly as the future.

Individual specific aspects of the future are represented by environmental planning and design; architecture and design [Montfort 2021; Pyzhov 2929; Bevolo 2021]; and technological developments of digital formats of the economy, business, management, education, and, in fact, the entire way of life in general, which attempt not only to look into the future but also to create, to represent it at industry and world exhibitions. The manifestos and practices of avant-garde art of the beginning of the last century and later times went far beyond the scope of artistic creativity [Paniotova, Romanenko 2019].

Vivid pictures of the future are given by fiction—scientific, pseudoscientific, and parascientific *fiction*; it is probably enough to simply mention a number of well-known Russian authors: K.E. Tsiolkovskii, A. Bogdanov, the Strugatskii brothers, V. Pelevin, A. Stolyarov.... *Utopias* have become independent genres, representing a nonexistent but possible image of a good, fair future (Plato, G. Babeuf, T. More, T. Campanella, G. Winstanley, J. Meslier, G.B. de Mably, E.-G. Morelly, H. de Saint-Simon, C. Fourier, R. Owen, N.G. Chernyshevsky, A. Rand); *dystopias* (*kakotopias*) are a significant symptom of the crisis of the present and fear of the future (F.M. Dostoevsky, E. Zamyatin, A.P. Platonov, H. Martinson, A. Huxley, G. Orwell, R. Bradbury). There are attempts at "scientific utopias" [A-n et al. 1928; Vasil'ev, Gushchev 1958; What Future...1968; In 2017 1968].

All this colossal diversity of approaches, concepts, and developments requires a general understanding. Individual researchers [Kovalev 2019; Tyugashev 2023], teams, special institutes, centers for predictive and strategic developments are trying to do this. Yet their activities are not always effective. For example, in 2024, the Future of Humanity Institute was closed in Oxford. For all 19 years of its work, it was headed by the philosopher N. Bostrom, who in 1998 put forward the idea that we all live in a computer simulation. The result of the institute's work was the idea of the danger of artificial intelligence, the prevention of which requires strict (again, digital) control over every inhabitant of the Earth and the implementation of long-term "effective altruism," i.e. selective support only for those who are most capable of self-sufficiency.

A.A. Fedorov generalizes approaches to the presentation of the future into four of its "packages": utopia (description of the place of the desired future); protopia (description of moderate progress, gradual improvement of the present); dystopia (anti-utopia, description of an undesirable future, "futurophrenia"); and eutopia (description of some completely different world) [Fedorov 2023, pp. 295–301]. However, describing the future is one thing, and producing it is another pair of shoes [Latour 2014]. This can be both the result of natural changes (the disintegration of some entities, the emergence of new ones) and the preservation of the existing entity (for some time). However, the main interest is in the "ascending advanced development" [Fedorov 2023, p. 52], when something that did not previously exist arises. This new can arise combinatorially from the former, genetically, and as creation proper (from "nothing"). It is the latter case that is of interest to A.A. Fedorov as exactly the production of the future, especially regarding who and how is engaged in this production.

Attempts to predict the future are reminiscent of attempts to foresee the development of a chess game in which the opponent suddenly switches to checkers. You shift to checkers, but at some point, the opponent switches to "Chapaev's game" [a board game, a hybrid of checkers (draughts) and gamepiece-impact games like carrom, novuss, and pichenotte, giving it gameplay aspects in common with both billiards and table shuffleboard on a smaller scale, as well as some checkers strategy. It is played throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union—*Tr.*], knocking out your pieces with a flick, or can even sweep away all the pieces and smash the board on your head. The history of digitalization brings us closer to such a situation. Moreover, A.A. Fedorov quite rightly notes the doom of the future in a situation of total digitalization [Fedorov

2023, p. 348]. Digital formats that radically transform business and the economy, public administration, education and science, the entire way of life, even if they use self-learning AI systems, are formed on arrays of Big Data, recording a certain experience. This is self-reproduction of algorithms trained on existing data and in a certain, specified context. A digitalized society consciously deprives itself of the future, which becomes a reproduction of the past. Any failure not only strengthens and confirms modern alarmism before the future but also gives it a technological institutional character of ensuring security from the future. And God help us if GAI starts changing contexts, "starts creating."

In such a situation, it is even more important to understand the mechanism for producing the future.

PRODUCING THE FUTURE: AGENCY IN SOCIAL INTERACTION

In principle, the future is created continuously, by the natural process itself, creating prerequisites, factors, causal sequences of the course of development. However, the "production" of the future is a phenomenon of social existence. The key moments of this phenomenon are: (A) the phenomenon of sociality itself and (B) agency. Note that agency deserves special attention as a product of socialization that arises in the process of mastering sociocultural practices, accompanied by narrative communication, when the actor (personality) is torn out of causal connections, closing the causes on himself: "It was not the cup that fell, it was you who dropped it. You could have dropped it, you could not have dropped it. You dropped it. You did it!"

In fact, this is the meaning of family upbringing, education, mastering a profession, when relatives, teachers, and instructors make the personality *causa sui*. A symptom of the formation of agency (self-awareness, *autobiographical self*) is the child's mastery of first-person narration, which usually occurs by the third year of life [Damasio 2010; Henrich 2018]. From a semiotic point of view, agency is a reflexive system of self-description; its mathematical model was described in detail by D. Hofstadter as a "strange loop" [Hofstadter 2022].

Agency as a "strange loop" in the spirit of a self-closed Möbius strip, being a self-description, according to K. Gödel's theorem and A. Tarski's semantics, is contradictory, which makes it a universal interface for interaction, change, and emergence of various contexts of meaning making, conditioned by sociocultural practices, as well as the generation of new such practices. It is agency as a means of procreative preadaptation, that is, a reaction to circumstances not simply in the linear format of "stimulus–reaction" but a reaction in the format of a fan of possible behavioral scenarios, often going beyond the given circumstances, that has so far ensured the development of human civilization [Asmolov, Shekhter, Chernorizov 2018].

In fact, agency is a concretization (if not operationalization) of the transcendental subject of E. Husserl's phenomenology, the bearer of which is any person with a formed self-awareness. Just as the blind spot in the eye, which, being invisible, provides the possibility of vision, so agency, which as such is an unobservable "nothing," is a condition for the generation of "something." In this regard, not only is there no object without a subject; agency itself generates the object of knowledge as a *subject*, that is, an object of thought and reasoning.

We mean the ontological assumption "Let it be so!", which unites a mother who lights a candle in a church for the salvation of her son and an experimenter who conducts an experiment to confirm his hypothesis [Karpunin 2004]. The same faith in the existence of the sought-after lies even at the basis of school problems on finding and proving, when we admit the existence of "X" to the same extent as data. The interface of the creation of "Let it be so!" is precisely agency, which has a redundancy that allows one to go beyond the given. Its contradictoriness creates the possibility of shifting meaning, to enter the sphere of liminality, into "not-A," into a gap, a break in certainty, which is always there, just as an empty set enters any set and complements it [Badiou 2007]. In this sense, the source of the "future of the future" is "nothing," which generates something at the interface of agency.

Agency takes the first step towards producing the future by creating a "region of the present," acquiring time–place gaps for it, making a double "separation" at the intersection of the axes "past of the past–future of the future" and "philosophy of the future–future as philosophy." A.A. Fedorov denotes such a "separation" with a double colon **::**, thereby showing the present ("the world of the double colon") as acquiring time–place gaps necessary for producing the future [Fedorov 2023, pp. 38, 39].

However, the ontological assumption "Let it be so!", expressing mental involvement in the future, as a manifestation of "participatory thinking" [Bakhtin 1986] and the famous "formula of the will—to believe" by Yu.P. Vlasov are not enough to produce the future. We also need the implementation of the will—an act, a responsible action, and, therefore, taking responsibility for the idea, the action that embodies it and its result, which does not always correspond to the original idea [Tulchinskii 2020]. Here again sociality comes into play. No one has ever produced the future of society alone, using time–place gaps in the flow of life. However, to generate the future, society as such needs agency—not only "outstanding" individuals but also the convergence of their efforts with others.

In this regard, the production of the future is an analogue of the dynamics of meaning making, which proceeds from an idea to a social institution due to the intensity and regularity of communication. An idea that comes to someone's mind may remain just that and even be forgotten. However, communication and exchange of opinions about it can develop into something more, become a topic of regular communication—up to the formation of a certain community, its further organization with the emergence of an organizational structure, funding, legal status [Zolyan, Tulchinskii 2024]. From this point of view, each scientific concept is an intellectual embryo of a research institute or laboratory, and the latter are essentially institutionalized concepts [Tulmin 1984]. Similar stages of institutionalization of ideas are realized in business, politics, religion, and art. In other words, the production of the future as a new understanding presupposes intensive cooperation and communication in a social community.

Here the model proposed by A.A. Fedorov—the author calls it a "metaphysical machine for producing the future" (basic scheme: see [Fedorov 2023, p. 281])—successfully represents the schematism of such a process as the interaction of actors with the distribution of functions. The "machine" consists of several contours. On the first temporal orbit, there is an "absolute innovator"—an actor whose agency generates a new idea. A.A. Fedorov counts nine effectors of such creation, calling them *apothegms* and giving them vivid figurative interpretations.

For the real production of the future, one might say, institutionalization of an idea that occurred to someone, it is necessary to launch the second temporal orbit, in which collective actors are operating, setting two interacting contours. The cognitive–anthropological contour is set by four actor positions of the second temporal orbit: project innovators, the deciding, the preserving, and "mixtures" (performing the previous three, depending on the situation). The contour of the control construct, formed by the functionalities of the emotional–volitional plan, preservation of tradition, interruption (switching), and protection (up to stopping) of work, fits into this contour. Such components, their role and interaction are traced in different eras and on different materials.

Thus, the production of the future depends on the resultant will of the participants in the process of social life. Is it possible to control this process? You can try—every society tries to do this. However, it is not the only one. Therefore, we get a resultant of societies. Then the question arises about the means of implementation. A.A. Fedorov does not touch upon the issue of the ethos of producing the future, about possible evil. However, we have the experience of the 20th century, which teaches us that goals are not subject to jurisdiction: everyone wants good. Yet the means used are subject to jurisdiction. First of all, the deprivation of life, depriving children of life, and, therefore, deprivation of the future. This is fundamentally important not only in reality but also for the concept of A.A. Fedorov, whose main conclusion is: "The future does not belong to us, whoever and whenever this *we* are; *the future always belongs to Children, apart from whom there is no future*" [Fedorov 2023, p. 492].

In general, the issue of the destruction of the future deserves special attention. It could be a civilizational collapse like the fate of the Khmer Empire of Angkor. A project catastrophe also leads to the collapse of the future, an example of which is the project of a communist society proclaimed in the 3rd Program of the CPSU in 1960. The blunder became obvious after 20 years. This led to the collapse of the cognitive–anthropological contour, but a complete catastrophe was avoided thanks to the managerial contour. A generational gap is also possible, when the elders perceive new generations as strange nonentities, while they themselves are perceived by the new generation as an insolvent burden. The aforementioned fear of the future is also possible—not only because of one's own insolvency but also because of the fear of losing the present. Then either there is too much past and too little future [Assmann 2012] or a real futuricide arises—a conscious rejection of the future, a retreat into the depths of the glorious past.

THE FUTURE AS CHILDREN AND VITALITY

The main thing in A.A. Fedorov's concept is the generational factor, especially in relation to innovators ("ascending"). Citing examples of bearers of such agency (S. Jobs, E. Musk, etc.), A.A. Fedorov calls them bearers of an eternally new beginning, "eternal children" [Fedorov 2023, p. 394]. However, he connects not only innovators but also other positions of the cognitive–anthropological contour with four types of childhood, four specific styles of representing the future as a world that must not only be changed but also taken care of, a world that we should learn to preserve, save, and protect. Plato also noted that creativity requires preserving in the soul a child with his ability to be surprised by the familiar, to see something new in it, and to make play with the familiar.

A person changes contexts due to his vital autonomy, bodily experience, sexual dimorphism, and related emotions. The dynamics of meaning making by natural intelligence is determined precisely by the limited life experience, changes in the topology of protein neural networks due to the death of some neurons, and the reduction of telomeres with age.

Just as a person has an "advantage" of bodily experience, sexual dimorphism, and other vitality over artificial intelligence, so the future is most likely rooted and founded by this vitality and its result—which is children. This result of the search for a mechanism to produce the future is surprisingly simple and obvious

in its vital causality! However, this vital nature of producing the future seems obvious and uninteresting to A.A. Fedorov, and he does not pay special attention to it (a pity! V.V. Rozanov would probably have a field day with this topic!). He is interested in the phenomenon of childhood itself, its cognitive–anthropological types, the interaction of which produces the future as a meaningful picture of the world.

In this regard, we can talk about the double vulnerability of A.A. Fedorov's concept. First, it is, perhaps, an excessive role rationalization of childhood, representing children as functional actor options of the metaphysical machine of production of the future. In this regard, second, such actor options can also be grown-up children, adults themselves. In this "mechanism," a considerable share of the ontological message of childhood is lost.

Another pair of shoes is the increasing attention to childhood and its role as the current civilization develops, starting from the modern period. The urban way of life has significantly extended the period of socialization, which has led to an ever-greater isolation of childhood as a separate important period in the life of a social individual, its role not only in socialization, the formation of personality but also in the formation of intensively expanding markets in the economy.

The content of A.A. Fedorov's book leads to a nontrivial, rather unexpected turn in the discussion about the human prospect, about transposthumanism [Ferrando 2022]. Traditional answers to the question "what awaits us with the development of modern technologies"—either a consumer paradise with the prospect of a "new animality," or the transformation of man into an option of the digital metauniverse, or competition with nonanthropomorphic actors, superior to man in the scale and speed of cognitive operations—are reduced, in fact, to two. The first is the prospect of anthropotechnological synthesis, a kind of technohumanism, a protomachine civilization. The second (most likely, not "either or," but "or also") is the cultivation of the key factor in changing reality, a new (literally!) person: either especially talented individuals or a certain microcommunity of such individuals [Fedorov 2023, pp. 223–233].

ERGO

While N.F. Fedorov, who had a serious influence on V.S. Solov'ov, L.N. Tolstoy, Platonov, Tsiolkovskii, proposed the revival of ancestors as a "philosophy of the common cause," his modern namesake A.A. Fedorov sees the main "common cause" in the creation of the only and decisive condition for the production of the future of humanity—the preservation and cultivation of Children, Childhood as a place where, in fact, the future resides.

In the book by A.A. Fedorov, a considerable number of concepts and terms are used and even introduced for the first time, the meaning of which is not immediately revealed and is guessed at after repeated readings of the entire text of the work. In some cases, the author limits himself to vivid metaphors. Thus, the content of one of the key concepts in the work, "apothegm," is revealed as a precise metaphysical maxim between moralizing and warning, as an expulsion from the usual *terroir* of comfort. This text, bursting with a scattering of nontrivial concepts and ideas, is not for quick reading, which is only beneficial to its deep content, but this is precisely why I would like to see before my eyes a system of these terms and concepts with their interrelated interpretation.

We can say that an easy solution to this problem would be to supplement the text with a subject index or glossary, a name index, and, possibly, a summary list of sources. Such additions may seem cumbersome, but they will be more than justified by the possibilities of using the text for scientific and educational purposes. This seems important because the concept proposed by A.A. Fedorov seems to be a fertile and grateful field for future interdisciplinary research. An example is social semiotics and the elaboration of the production of the future as a pragmasemantics of meaning making, opening in a cascade of interfaces of interaction of contexts of sociocultural practices, with the key role of agency as a universal interface of such interaction.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author of this work declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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