

A CRITICAL EXPOSITION OF THE ETHNOCENTRIC WORLDVIEW

IN DIALOGUE WITH KARL JASPERS, HANNAH ARENDT, AND
ZYGMENT BAUMAN ON THE MATTERS OF XENOPHOBIA AND
SOCIAL OSTRACISM

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Abstract

The overall aim of this article is to provide a critical exposition of the ethnocentric worldview. In order to reach this aim, I intend to explore the nature of abusive generalization which belongs to the populist images of national identity. Secondly, the main argument of the article lies in the proposition that what supplements nationalist populism is the psychological component of xenophobia. These crucial aspects of ethnocentrism, as I intend to argue, compose the ethnocentric worldview, which

shapes individual commitment to national identity by omitting the member of a different ethnic identity.

Keywords: nationalism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, worldview, autonomy, tradition, culture, sociopolitical, psychosocial, and social ostracism, normative vacuum.

Kritična obravnava etnocentričnega svetovnega nazora. V razgovoru s Karlom Jaspersom, Hannah Arendt in Zygmuntom Baumanom o zadevah ksenofobije in družbenega ostrakizma

Povzetek

Poglavitni cilj članka je kritična obravnava etnocentričnega svetovnega nazora. Z namenom doseganja zastavljenega cilja nameravam raziskati naravo žaljivega posploševanja, ki opredeljuje populistične podobe nacionalne identitete. Temeljno predpostavko članka, nadalje, tvori trditev, da je psihološka komponenta ksenofobije dopolnjuje nacionalistični populizem. Dokazati želim, da ti ključni vidiki etnocentrizma sestavljajo etnocentrični svetovni nazor, ki individualno predanost nacionalni identiteti oblikuje s pomočjo zavračanja članov drugačne etnične identitete.

Ključne besede: nacionalizem, etnocentrizem, ksenofobija, svetovni nazor, avtonomija, tradicija, kultura, sociopolitični, psihosocialni in socialni ostrakizem, normativni vakuum.

1. Introduction

Due to the recent upsurge of nationalist policies, we are now confronted with a reconsideration of Europe's ethnocentric background and its various manifestations in political and cultural ostracism which converged into the public domain. Whether mediated through political propaganda, protest rallies, or broadcasted through mainstream and social media in various forms of nationalist populism, the tendency of defining non-Europeans as *unwanted visitors, invaders, exploiters*, etc., has slowly but surely traversed the political sphere of the nationalist depictions of foreigners, and embedded itself into the fabric of social existence. Ethnocentrism is most widely described as a universal attitude belonging to social groups which consider themselves distinct, or, as in some cases, even superior to others (Taguieff 2001). For this reason, subscribing to one's *ethnic code* means to foster the need for its preservation. This need encompasses a variety of key social denominators, such as religion, nationality, cultural identity, and political ideology. Moreover, the same attributes adhere to the definition of populism. Similar to the universalistic nature of ethnocentrism, populism is a social phenomenon that oscillates between being a *movement* and being a *doctrine*, a superficial *social motive* and an *ideology*. Indeed, just like ethnocentrism, populism, in its fragmented entirety, is a "spectre haunting the world" (cf. Ionescu and Gellner 1969).

285

Furthermore, even though elusive and multifarious by nature, nationalist populism is nonetheless symptomatic for one's perception of social reality. In this regard, the need to *popularize* ethnic self-preservation yields serious consequences in relation to the question of *social normativity*, seeing that this sort of narrative distorts one's perception of what is considered as a matter of ethnic belonging and civic belonging. On the one hand, this confusion pertains to a wider *sociopolitical* scale, considering the fact that the need for ethnic self-preservation goes hand in hand with reactionary politics, wherein the worldview of ethnocentrism prompts the need for a nationalist revolt against social change. In fact, a nationalist revolt is usually conducted with the aid of an overarching populist referral to a *previous state* of national affairs which is supposed to secure, as it were, an autonomous state of national identity. On the other hand, ethnocentrism yields an underlying *psychosocial* effect on social

normativity. According to this perspective, ethnocentrism gains magnitude by relying on an affective state, such as hate, envy, and xenophobia. In this sense, the exclusion of others comes by way of an affective need to preserve a presupposed purity and cohesion of one group, inasmuch as a foreign system of belief is seen as too distant to include into the *inner circle* of national identity—or, if we concentrate on the aspect of xenophobia, is quite simply *feared*. As an immediate consequence of a collective affective state, the ethnocentric worldview of self-preservation excommunicates the *foreign other* from a world of common social normativity by fostering a pathological form of *self-defense* (Taguieff 2017).

286 With the two accounts of ethnocentrism in full view, the conceptual aim of this paper, however, is not to facilitate a sociopolitical interpretation of ethnocentrism, seeing how this would demand a considerably more extensive investigation. Such an approach would require a critical account of the right-wing political spectrum as well as its influence on the public forum. What is more, a critical assessment can be achieved by attending to the leading precondition for ethnocentrism: *its affective state*. In this regard, the aim of this contribution is to expound the psychosocial nature of ethnocentrism by focusing on the danger of individual exposure to the universal affective state of xenophobia. It is possible to argue that xenophobia, in relation to the psychosocial and populist narrative of ethnocentrism, undoubtedly represents an underlying occasion for social ostracism which is concealed in plain sight. In order to defend this argument, however, the sociopolitical aspect of national homogeneity will serve as a prerequisite for a phenomenological investigation of ethnocentrism. Hence, the first part of this paper will serve as an introduction to the second part. The same applies to its frame of reference. In the first part, I intend to present some important research done on the topic of sociopolitical exclusion, alongside an interpretative reading of Hannah Arendt's and Zygmunt Bauman's conceptual insights; whereas the second part will consist of a phenomenological investigation of the ethnocentric worldview which I intend to derive from Karl Jaspers' existential phenomenology. So, in order to contribute to the contemporary discussion on social normativity, both parts are in need of a thorough reconsideration within a contemporary setting of nationalist populism. Put in another way, in order to better understand

the phenomenon of contemporary ethnocentrism as a worldview, especially its disruptive psychosocial dimension of *presupposing*, and, subsequently, *preserving* an autonomous sense of belonging, a common denominator has to be addressed. To my mind, the individual state of affectivity undoubtedly plays this role, in view of the fact that affectivity, to some extent, binds the various strands of European ethnocentrism together or at least brings them into closer proximity to each other. In the following, I will present a brief introductory outline of the proposed theoretical background.

Hannah Arendt defined nationalist populism as an illusionary attempt at conceptualizing social reality under the veil of tradition. This worldview applies to reactionism in particular, seeing that it outlines the characteristics of a *reactionary*. A reactionary is by definition an individual whose conservative political and religious views oppose social change and sway in favor of the right-wing political spectrum which subscribes to traditional values. According to Arendt's insights from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *Between Past and Future*, and *Essays in Understanding*, the overarching need of reactionary politics is intrinsically prone to retrieving a sense of tradition, inasmuch as tradition, observed from a reactionist point of view, denotes an unbroken historical succession of national identity. This sort of political movement is most appealing in times of war, immigration, and considerable upheaval of social distrust, given that its primary goal is to restore "the good old days" (Arendt 1976, 97). However, as Arendt argues in her meditations on nationalism, tradition becomes essentially disrupted when absorbed in popular opinion, inasmuch as it leads to the "identification of means and ends" (Arendt 1994, 210), that is, a *movement*, and not actual political action. According to Berkowitz's account of Arendt's political thought, individuals who find themselves under the spell of populism are put in a state of crisis, meaning that they are exposed to a sense of homelessness or, more precisely, a *sense of loss*. Because of this, the collective starts to yearn "for nothing so much as a home" (Berkowitz 2010, 238). This represents the crucial reason why Arendt defined the need to retrieve one's national identity, that is, a sense of belonging to a homogenous state, as a populist attempt at excavating "a lost treasure" (Arendt 1961, 5). What is more, the choice to define the condition of retrieving national identity as an overall reaction to a *sense of loss* reflects Arendt's critique of the limits belonging to

the human mind, which, in times of crisis, seems incapable of adequately retaining a sense of tradition. In this way, tradition becomes the means for *popularizing* a superfluous sense of belonging—again, *a movement*. Because of this, the possibility for genuine political action, as Arendt argues, has to be separated from its various *simulacra* within the public domain, in order to come to fruition (Villa 1996). The same view adheres to Arendt’s definition of critical judgment and, above all, political judgment (Gines 2007). Both have to be distinguished from a generalistic conception of collectivity which turns the notion of tradition into something “altogether unconnected” (6). If this distinction is not properly addressed, the possibility of proper judgment can become the means for social discrimination.

288

In relation to Arendt’s critique of the entwined relation between tradition and populism, the Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman proposes a similar argument, although with a slightly different emphasis. According to Bauman, the modern genealogy of conservative traditionalism is not merely a consequence of nationalist populism, but is also aligned to the transhistorical narrative of globalization. According to Bauman, globalization represents the main culprit in the gradual corroding of “the sovereignty of nation-states [...] the bulwarks of territorial independence which have offered shelter to national identity and a guarantee of its safety over the last two hundred years” (Bauman 2011, 71). Globalization, as the story goes, was supposed to create a fissure within the old nationalist narrative of the “naturalness of belonging” (81), and, in turn, open the possibility of a new narrative of identity and normativity such as cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. However, it is also in Bauman’s belief that the need to separate and defend one’s sense of autonomy stems from the “normative vacuum of globalization” (81). If we consider the fact that the movement of globalization carries no normative security itself, it becomes possible to argue, that it is also because of its normative vacuum that a lurking sense of contingency was able to resurface in the West. Indeed, this has made the recent normative consolidation of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism difficult, if not impossible to achieve. What is more, the shortcomings of globalization become the very means for enlarging a sense of an immediate national crisis.

Similar points, as I intend to show in my paper, can also be extracted from Karl Jaspers’ critique of the 20th century modernity. Before Arendt and

Bauman, the renowned German philosopher and psychiatrist understood the notion of crisis both as the normative vacuum, caused by a downfall of general ideals of human interaction, as well as a productive social dissolution, that can bring forth the possibility of social bonds “out of which a new and trustworthy objectivity can be constructed” (Jaspers 1957, 26). However, Jaspers was extremely cautious when exploring this normative possibility. His main concern lied in the mystifying line of political and populist argumentation which appeals to national unity by relying on an “irrational emotional drive” (79). This brings us to the implicit *psychosocial* dimension of ethnocentrism, most adequately characterized as the coupling between the universalistic tendency of ethnocentric nationalism and its recurring affective state of xenophobia which serves as a *reaction to*, as well as a *shield from* the sense of uncertainty that surrounds one’s encounter with someone outside the presupposed frame of ethnic kinship. Although perhaps using a slightly different set of terms than the ones which will be presented throughout this contribution, during his time, Jaspers expressed his concern by making the critical account of dubious populist phrases such as “‘the majesty of the people,’ ‘the will of the people is the will of God,’ ‘service to the people,’ etc.” (ib.), which either tend to sway in favor of a new identity narrative, or, conversely, can lead to social differentiation and exclusion. Moreover, Jaspers ascribed the phenomenon of irrational identity justification to the contingent populist “language of mystification and revolt” conducted by the representatives of what he understood as *modern sophistry*, i.e., those who “give themselves out to be reasonable and practical” when dealing with national affairs, whereas in reality are “utterly perplexed” (ib.). Notwithstanding that the populist narrative of nationalism nowadays rarely abides by such encompassing phrases, it does, however, project the terms *culture*, *religion*, *nation*, *ethnicity*, *the immigrant* in an arguably irrational and ethnocentric manner when reaching out to the public. Jaspers’ point thus lies in the warning that when nothing humanely convincing is added to the discussion of identity, that is, when no genuine normative judgment takes place, crisis is awoken and because of it: “recourse is had to some colorful emotional phrase introduced for the express purpose of prejudging” (ib.). In this regard, I choose to attribute the prejudging role Jaspers speaks of in his critique to the resurfaced collective emotion of *fear*

which projects various negative images of cultural otherness, prompts social ostracism, and aids the gradual development of the ethnocentric worldview.

2. The crisis of autonomy: defense and self-preservation as forms of coping with normative contingency

Not so long ago, Viktor Orban's contribution in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* revealed a stunning claim that national identity serves nothing more than a general reminder that one "must not forget that those who are coming in have been brought up under a different religion and represent a profoundly different culture" (quoted in: Longinović 2018, 8). Although an account of cultural differences undoubtedly demands careful consideration when dealing with social integration, it was not by chance that the wave of thousands of refugees in 2015 ran into walls and barriers comprised of barbed wire while attempting to cross the borders of Hungary. Nevertheless, Orban's radical policies of cultural difference, tradition, and national identity resonated with many EU member state governments such as the one in Denmark and the Czech Republic, particularly their right-wing political parties. If not as a call for fortifying border crossings, it most certainly served as a symbolic occasion for a reactionary response to the plight of immigration, as it rested on a populist narrative which, in most cases, could arguably be regarded as xenophobic and, in other cases, outright fascist, even though it operated under the veil of gradual social integration (Longinović 2018). Some would even argue that the transmission of nationalist policies into the social sphere generally caused a damaging confusion within the definition of *culture* as well, seeing how the term "culture" suddenly began to overlap with the term *race* (Taras 2009; Auestad 2014). This confusion, however, is not an innocent exchange of terms, but the consequence of a historical sense of cultural superiority which used to advance the role of race "in the field of racism and discrimination" (Taras 2009, 84)—although nowadays it tends to abide by cultural *sameness* that comes in the form of a historically coded national identity (Auestad 2014). Instead of implying one's cultural heritage, the use of the term "culture" has mutated into a catchphrase used to fortify one's ethnic and national heritage, and is thus referred to in matters which call for a stark demarcation of the difference between who we

are and who *they are not*—in a narrower sense, not European, not Caucasian, or religiously not Christian.

Indeed, recent political developments in Europe indicate a rise in the use of various ethnic and racial presuppositions when revolting against foreign cultural identities. The identity narrative of ethnocentric nationalism or *ethnonationalism*, according to Habermas' poignant commentary, underlines "the unconditional relation to the past, whether in the physical sense of common descent or in the broader sense of a shared cultural inheritance" (Habermas 1998, 130). However, it is rather questionable whether or not such a state ever really existed in European history outside a pre-established frame of reference. According to Arendt, the arbitrariness of defining human groups as "peoples, or races or nations" alongside the loose talk which "uses terms such as nationalism, patriotism, and imperialism as equivalents" (Arendt 1994, 206) tends to produce a spurious sense of belonging. It is thereby fair to argue that the act of presupposing a previous state of indigenous ethnic identity means to justify a utopian historical image of a homogenous nationalist state. Moreover, the traditionalistic perception of social reality impinges a universalistic attitude upon the individual. This attitude, observed from Arendt's point of view, contains more social imagery than it does a normative substance, due to the fact that it draws its unifying force from a populist narrative and not from tradition in the strictest sense. Arendt's critical points suggest that much can be learned from the ethnocentric tendency of conservative populism to *presuppose a previous state* of national affairs. As mentioned, this inclination points to a crossing within the public sphere, located between popular opinion and genuine political action. The more important aspect, however, is that the very same crossing provides the sociopolitical preconditions for social exclusion in times of crisis. As Berkowitz points out:

291

Arendt recognized that throughout most of modern history, traditions are absorbed into a common sense that contributes to the building of a shared and public world, the worlds of law and politics. She also saw that the retreat of traditional standards leads common sense and politics to atrophy as well. Since traditions are what root us in a common world, the decay of tradition is the factual basis of our political crisis. (Berkowitz, 2010: 238)

Along this line, Jaspers in his time defined the ambiguous concept of crisis and its effect on social reality as a matter of the lost distinction between the *real* and the *imagined* sense of tradition. According to Jaspers' introductory words from *The Man in the Modern Age*, crisis first and foremost signifies one's historical situatedness in "groups, States, mankind" (Jaspers 1957, 23), meaning that one grasps the critical situation he or she is in by adopting a general attitude "toward an appeal to the tribunal of action" which primarily belongs to the domain of "economic, sociological, and political situations" (24). As mentioned, these situations also provide a glimpse into the founding traditional elements of social reality, perhaps even to the extent, as Jaspers adds, that "it is only through the reality of these situations that everything else becomes real" (ib.). Individual reality is thereby "determined by coordinates" of her situation in the social sphere, insofar as the individual is but a "modification, or a consequence, or a link in the chain" (27). However, one's social reality cannot be presupposed as an absolute and homogenous ethical substance for all human existence, meaning that mass social reality, generally conceived in populism, contains a *contingent rift*. To put it in another way, what ensues is a parting of ways between what one appropriates as a general image of reality that belongs to what Jaspers considered as *the mind of the masses*, and reality belonging to a sincere sense of tradition. Hence, the individual situation falls victim to the universal act of "regarding as absolute what is no more than contingent" (30). Departing from Jaspers' and Arendt's insights and with the critique of ethnocentrism in mind, one could argue that what seems as an unbroken historical inheritance of national identity is in truth a concealed ethnocentric sentiment given "without testament" or rather "without tradition which selects and names, which hands down and preserves, which indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is" (Arendt 1961, 5). Arendt's comments coincide with Jaspers' important emphasis that the succession of populist outlooks on national autonomy and self-identity, particularly the ones presented under the banner of historically inherited conservative and reactionist policies, do not exist "as a simple datum" (Jaspers 1957, 118). Instead of providing "a homogenous situation," that is, "a sort of unified substance" (26), they give rise to social imagery. A similar point of critique can be extracted from Bauman's commentary:

Conservatism (a “return to roots”) and exclusivism (“they” together are a threat to all of “us”) are indispensable for the word to become flesh, that is, for the imagined community to give birth to a network of dependencies which will make it and its might real; in other words, they are indispensable for W. I. Thomas’s famous rule to come true, the rule which says that “when people define situations as real, they become real in their consequences.” (Bauman 2011, 83)

Still, it is important to add that the historical preconditions for ethnocentrism differ from nation to nation. These differences point to the obvious reason that they cannot be summarized to one single strand or norm. Kedouri, for instance, speaks of a considerable difference between Western nationalism, wherein the ethnocentric component, given the dominating liberal orientation of the West, has not really taken full force, and Eastern and Southeastern nationalism, which is predominately ethnic in nature, and thereby more prone to hatred based on national belonging (Kedouri 1961). However, this does not mean that countries belonging to these regions held no democratic values in the past. Quite to the contrary, these values existed in various political programs aimed at civic integration (Matić 2007). It is due to the turbulent recuperating stages after the 1st and 2nd World Wars, and the more recent disintegration of ex-communist federal states, such as the tragic case of Yugoslavia, that ethnic hatred is more frequent than in Western European countries. On top of that, one also has to consider the fact that liberal and democratic values take considerable time to develop and uphold, much less a multicultural narrative. Another important issue that was brought to attention by Kedouri, Bauman, and subsequently further researched by the likes of Taras, Ignatieff, and Taguieff, is the difference between *civic nationalism* and *ethnocentric nationalism*. Unlike ethnocentric nationalism, the aspect of civic nationalism adheres to a nation-building process where national integrity coincides with individual liberty and a rationally based multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. It is according to this sense of comradeship, as Bauman argues, the reality “of living in close proximity with strangers” demands “skills in daily coexistence with ways of life other than our own” (Bauman 2011, 37). Civic nationalism pertains to a worldview of coexistence which “must be worked

out or acquired” (ib.). Furthermore, it promotes a community of “equal, right-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values” (Ignatieff 1993, 13), according to which individuals can obtain their right to difference by contributing to a cohesive outlook on social co-existence. Observed in this way, differences would prove “not only bearable but mutually beneficial” (Bauman 2011, 37) in the common struggle for reaching social belonging, wherein the sense of autonomy and community follow a system of equality governed by democratic views.

294 On the opposite end, however, lies the choice to define the culturally different other as radically different from the domestic culture. As mentioned, this populist comprehension of collectivity reveals that the term “culture” overlaps with a sense of *we-consciousness*, based on “an imagined blood relation” (Habermas 1998, 130), and not traditional cultural identity. Furthermore, since it is believed that the core of national formation relates to ethnicity rather than shared democratic values, this view can only lead to a spurious image of ethnocentric nationalism, since it impinges upon the individual a frenetic need to defend her ethnic membership, i.e., her *ethnos*, against another (Taras 2009). What is more, a conservative and ethnocentric political ideology, as indicated above, fosters the creation of social imagery which helps supplement a sense of national crisis. As an immediate consequence of this imagery, “the art of living with difference” (Bauman 2011, 37), as Bauman argues, becomes lost to the idea of “territorially determined rights” (ib.), and, in practice, a superficial sense of collective belonging which is territorially limited to civic fright best defined as *official fear* (Bauman 2004) or *cultural fear* (Taguieff 2017). Unlike the sincere civic and lawful type of engagement with the cultural other, the legitimacy of crisis rests on the promise “to mitigate the extent of the already existing vulnerability and uncertainty of its citizens” by demanding individual “discipline and law observance” (Bauman 2004, 48) in one’s interaction with foreigners. Consequently, the ethnocentric nation-building process only further entangles one’s conception of self-autonomy into the illusion of a sovereign nation-state which is supposed to rely on the strength of its “self-sufficient, self-reproducing and self-balancing system” (Bauman 2011, 33). This sort of comprehension obfuscates the fact that ethnocentrism, in reality, draws its power from the “strategy of exclusion and/or of elimination” of those,

who are deemed “too foreign, too deeply attached to their own customs” (75). As to elaborate his point, Bauman turns to Weeks:

The strongest sense of community is, in fact, likely to come from those groups who find the premises of their collective existence threatened and who construct out of this a community of identity which provides a strong sense of resistance and empowerment. Seeming unable to control the social relations in which they find themselves, people shrink the world to the size of their communities and act politically on that basis. The result, too often, is an obsessive particularism as a way of embracing or coping with contingency. (Quoted in: Bauman 2011, 82.)

As mentioned in the introductory account of Bauman’s reflections on this matter, the gradual emergence of xenophobia corresponds to the declining of cosmopolitanism into a normative vacuum. It is somewhat remarkable that because of the process of globalization the “homeostatic vision of culture” first had to be abandoned, only to give rise to “a flimsy, indistinct, fragile and ultimately fictitious nature of system boundaries” (Bauman 2011, 33) which delimit a ethnocentric apprehension of culture to “the defence of local or ethnic autonomy” (74). In this way, culture is turned into a barricade which is supposed to shelter one’s self-identity from the glooming fear of losing ethnic purity. According to Bauman’s insightful illustration, culture, in this somewhat convoluted sense:

295

[...] becomes a synonym for a fortress under siege, and the inhabitants of fortresses under siege are expected to manifest daily loyalty and give up, or at least radically curtail, any contacts with the outside world. [...] Communities functioning on this basis become the means, first and foremost, of the greater reproduction of divisions and a deepening of separation, isolation, and alienation. (68)

The core of Bauman’s argument can be expounded in the overarching proposition of this section that it is necessary to fabricate a common enemy as the contradistinct other means to foster the ethnocentric *image* of national

identity which does not provide, as it were, an autonomous European identity nor does it reveal the difference of identity in the cultural other.¹ On the other hand, what it certainly does do is expose individual identity to the contingent, the *unforeseeable*, or rather: the *unforeseen other*. Moreover, the normative vacuum of crisis amplifies the *circulus vitiosus* of xenophobia which resolves social fear within a nation exactly by invoking more fear amongst its citizens (Bauman 2011). The lurking presence of xenophobia in the current political and social dynamic is thereby akin to the notion of national crisis. In other words, xenophobia is nothing more than an *inverted affective state* of a desperate attempt to border the remnants of national and cultural identity by opposing the wave of foreign cultural identities. As Bauman argues, to turn “quite real” individual weaknesses into “the illusory might of a community” can only lead to “conservative ideology and the pragmatics of exclusivity” (Bauman 2011, 83). It is for this very same reason that even a naïve populist notion of a homogenous national state can easily turn into an occasion for political and social extremism.

296 The latter can also be traced to the policies of the Trump administration conducted overseas. It would be entirely reasonable to argue, that the nationalist orientation of Trump’s political narrative was charted alongside the border between the U.S. territory and Mexico. One could even speak of a symbolic nationalistic gesture, seeing how the strengthening of the border walls and fences between the two countries was conveyed to the American public as the strengthening of their national identity. Interestingly enough, the contemporary political inclination toward fencing and bordering of Europe and the U.S.A reflects Hannah Arendt’s criticism of nationalism

1 This type of narrative, according to Derrida, serves as nothing more than a populist *idiom* that strikes the right note in the moment “when the limits, outlines, the final goals, conclusions and the infinitude of Europe are indicated” (Derrida 1990, 13). What is more, regarding the globalist narrative, crisis indicates the normative boundary of globalization itself. Hence, when the reserves of “infinitude and universality find themselves at risk, everyone declares the crisis of Europe as the crisis of spirit” (ib.) on the universal scale. Consequently, the crisis of autonomous identity can be revealed as an inverted global “yearning for universality” (Mall, 2005: 101), that which, in a multicultural setting, causes difficulty in determining “who understands whom, when, how, and why?” (Mall 2005, 87)

from more than six decades ago. In 1954, Arendt argued in her lecture titled “Dream and Nightmare” that “each nationalism [...] begins with a real or fabricated common enemy,” leading to an “image of America in Europe” as the “beginning of a new pan-European nationalism” (Arendt 1994, 416) which echoed the horrifying narrative of the Nazi regime. If we again consider the aforementioned convolution between the terms which constitute one’s image of national identity, namely: *religion*, *race*, and *culture*, arguing for the semblance between the Nazi populist narrative and current geopolitical occurrences becomes rather plausible. In fact, the argument relates to what Arendt defined as *race-thinking* which, unlike clear-cut racism, is utilized for sinister political purposes that seem benign when coated with populist terms (Gines 2007). Consequently, just like during the advancement of the Nazi race doctrine, it becomes rather hard to discern between “mere nationalism and clear-cut racism,” since, as Arendt points out in regard to the American political climate at the time, “harmless national sentiments expressed themselves in what we know today to be racial terms” (Arendt 1976, 165).

In addition to what was presented so far, the aspect of ethnocentrism gives rise to *inner* ethnic exclusion as well. Namely, it is also directed to the ethnic minorities that have resided within the borders of Europe for generations. The novelty of the 21st century nationalism and its rhetoric, if one follows Taguieff’s line of argumentation, is best described as a “linking between the internal enemy with the new forms of the external enemy” (2017, 61), meaning that the fear of a newcomer coincides with the fear of the *inner neighbor*. In this view, the uncertainty of identity not only thwarts the affirmative reception of a newcomer but also renders the domestic settler with a different ethnic and cultural background to be a *far-away local* (Taras 2009)—hence, someone viewed as not really belonging, regardless of his or her status, or length of residence within the borders of the hosting country. Both views of ostracism are expressed through “the attribution of the cultural alienness of a subject or the felt sense that the subject does not rightly belong to the nation” (Kim and Sundstrom 2014, 25). This inverted form of social exclusion resembles Arendt’s famous example from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, where she claims that even a criminal retains more civil rights than a refugee, inasmuch as the criminal belongs to a nation-state, whereas the refugee, or in this case, also

the far-away local, is virtually considered to be *stateless*. The point that can be extracted from Arendt's argument is that xenophobia represents the propelling force behind social ostracism, as it applies to both aspects of how one conceives of *the foreigner*, *external* as well as *internal*. What is more, it would also be more adequate to say that the form of ethnocentrism found in the recent history of Western countries, such as England, France, and Denmark resembles inner ethnic hatred more than it does mere ostracism, even though hate comes in different shapes and forms. As indicated in the beginning of this passage, the ethnocentric rhetoric makes possible to construe an enveloping sense of fear, where losing or contorting one's historical and cultural identity inverts the perception of another, only to enhance the "growing suspicion of a foreign plot and resentment of 'strangers'" (Bauman 2004, 99). Bauman accurately defines this state of tension with the following words:

298 The greater the sense of threat and the more pronounced the feeling of uncertainty it causes, the more tightly will the defenders close ranks and keep their positions, at least for the foreseeable future. (Bauman 2011, 68)

3. The fundamental error of the ethnocentric worldview: resorting to Jaspers' existential diagnosis of collective fear, revolt, and prejudgment

The notion of coping with contingency, i.e., the sense of crisis, brings us a step closer in understanding the resurfaced collective emotion of xenophobia which literally denotes *fear of foreigners*, and can adequately be delimited both through the psychological aspect of *fear (phobia)* and the social aspect of *the foreigner (xenos)*. I am by no means implying, however, that xenophobia ought to be reduced exclusively to the emotion of fear. Xenophobia undoubtedly encompasses a variety of emotional reactions such as resentment, envy, and an overall sense of affective incongruity (Kim and Sundstrom 2014), and can, for this very same reason, contain more ways of coping with the sense of loss of identity, some of which remain outside of the discrimination spectrum. Indeed, if the aim is to determine how impoverished an image of society really is, it would certainly be wiser to include a variety of emotional outbursts

when attempting to delimit the origins of social exclusion. However, although a taxonomic account of xenophobia can only aid social critique, the fact remains that the emotion of fear is undoubtedly the most central, insofar as it creates space for uncertainty to unravel in its upscaled populist form. In other words, by focusing on fear, it becomes possible to unveil the ambiguous nature of how a so-called autonomous individual relates to the presence of an ethnically remote other. Namely, since it is based on existential distress, xenophobia first and foremost signifies a fearful response to the other by instilling an ambiguous sense of distinction between domestic and foreign ethnicity. Moreover, the consequences of this state of distress are twofold. On the one hand, xenophobia instills a negative civic attitude toward foreigners, giving rise to cultural intolerance, revolt and close-mindedness (Taras 2009; Taguieff 2001), whereas, on the other hand, it also tends to crumble under the weight of its own affective state. The latter inevitably causes confusion in the very act of claiming one's national identity and all of its constituent components. In other words, since the sense of existential security responds primarily to one's recurring fear of the other, the normative potential of the ethnocentric worldview is itself unwarranted, as it points to a crossroads between discrimination and the loss of clear self-perception. Consequently, this convolutes all of the aforementioned universal criteria belonging to tradition and national identity.

299

Jaspers' innovative phenomenological approach can undoubtedly serve as an aid in diagnosing the symptoms of ethnocentric nationalism, seeing that his central aim was to delineate the way collective affectivity is present both in the individual sphere of political revolt as well as in what he defined as the general revolt belonging to a *mass life-order*. Furthermore, the inclination of abiding by a universalistic depiction of national unity is the reason why Jaspers' phenomenological disposition of collective existence reflects the precautionary measure of an indirect approach, most characteristic for Socrates, Kant, and Kierkegaard. By relying on this measure, one can argue that the existential exposition of ethnocentrism can provide an insightful representation of one of many worldviews that adhere to Jaspers' phenomenologically construed *typology of worldviews* of the human condition. For example, Jaspers' indirect exposition of collective groups, such as religious devotees, nationalists,

the bourgeoisie, etc., serves as a method of delineating the underlying phenomenological horizon of contingency which functions as the mediating force behind the formation of these various types of collective existence. Moreover, it also serves as an indication of the opposition between the individual and the hierarchical life-order of “values, life-forms, destinies” (Jaspers 1925, 1) contained in “historic ideas of national spirit, race” (170). Both aspects revolve mainly around the opposition between the interiority of individual life and the “reality of the outside world” (52) which impinges upon the individual a cluster of images about sociality, normativity, and collective bonding. Hence, defining ethnocentrism as a worldview signifies the possibility of exposing its phantasmagoric characteristic within a phenomenological horizon and not a conceptually determined attempt at defining it. As indicated, this is because the term worldview (*Weltanschauung*) itself oscillates between the matters of human existence in the strictest possible sense and an innovative phenomenological inspection which remains conceptually unbound to historical concepts and events pertaining to a wider sociopolitical frame.²

300 Furthermore, the technical terms Jaspers used to delineate social existence, namely, *worldview* and *typology*, are set at a distance from a generalistic comprehension, also because these terms, according to their historical

² Jaspers’ phenomenological account of collective existence is in this sense quite different from Scheler’s and Heidegger’s, namely, Scheler’s meditations on shared emotions, or “immediate co-feeling” or “feeling-together” (*unmittelbares Miteinanderfühlen*) (Scheler 2008; Schmid 2015), and Heidegger’s hermeneutic conception of the relation between anxiety and authentic collective struggle. Regarding Scheler, apart from the fact that he acknowledged the possibility of a genuine emotional bond between individuals, one that is distinguished from “emotional contagion and emotional identification” which pertain to mechanisms of “collective emotions” and “mass psychology” (Schmid 2015, 109), his account of collective emotion also succumbed to the German nationalist war-propaganda from the times of the 1st World War—historically known as the August Madness (Schmid 2015). A similar string of consequences awaited Heidegger’s concept of authentic collectivity. However, Heidegger’s conception was, in a specific hermeneutical sense, more ambitious as it rested on the proposition of a *heroic Dasein* whose primordial ontological groundedness in supra-historical temporality had to be salvaged from the traditional political concept of society, one which, at that particular point in time, belonged to the social foundations of the Weimar Republic. For Heidegger, the temporal moment of authentic collectivity presents itself in the individual affective state of anxiety, in which “Dasein first has its own history made

placement, reflect Jaspers' relation to the atrocities caused by the mass movement of National Socialism—one which he was nevertheless a victim of (Krell 1978). According to Jaspers' fecund insights from *The Question of German Guilt*, stating that if “something fits in with the typological conception [it] must not mislead us to believe that we have covered every individual through such general characterization,” as this mentality “has fostered hatred among nations and communities” (Jaspers 2000, 35) for generations. Furthermore, a general typology was referred to as something “natural to a majority of people” and was for this very same reason “viciously applied and drilled into the heads with propaganda by the National-Socialists to the point where there were no longer human beings, just those collective groups” (ib.). Jaspers' account of the nationalist social apparatus is in this regard quite clear: “There are no such things as a people as a whole.” (ib.). The term *nation*, as Jaspers argues, “is nothing more than the existence of a common speech in conjunction with a levelling type” (Jaspers 1957, 118),³ whereas forms of nationalism, such as fascism, as Jaspers argues, present themselves to the individual as *easier possibilities* of social existence, i.e., a *false normativity*, because they provide immediate justification of one's exterior image of self-identity and, to the same effect, an immediate justification of revolt against

301

manifest” (Heidegger 2001, 438). Hence, on the one hand, anxiety is seen as *fleeing* from one's predetermined potentiality for authentic being-with-another, whereas, on the other hand, it can also be interpreted as existential *revolt* or *rebellion* against the established social order. As a succeeding consequence of both, the anxious leap out of a historically bound collectivity as well as the possibility to appropriate an authentic stance in relation to collective existence enables Dasein and its generation to become “free for the struggle” (476), that is, “to make up the full authentic historizing” (436). Sadly, Heidegger's complex hermeneutical conception of collectivity is nowadays widely avoided due to his political association with the National Socialist movement. Even though one cannot ascribe this bond directly to Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology and phenomenology, but rather to his political naïvete (Krell 1978; Safranski 2010), his thoughts on *individualization*, *destiny*, and *struggle* from *Being and Time* acquired some unfortunate political connotations nonetheless (Critchley 1999). Neither directions, as I intend to show in the following segment, can be ascribed to Jaspers, whose innovative phenomenological scope remained in medias res.

3 The term *levelling* is a Kierkegaardian concept Jaspers used in defining one's external social bondage, achieved at the cost of “renouncing, on the part of all of us, the right to be ourselves” (Jaspers 1957, 98).

another. Consequently, what is only conceived as a homogenous type of unity leads to isolated revolt wherein *nationalized* individuals become “blind to the others” (79) and, in turn, blind to themselves. In what can be described as a state of tension between what Jaspers calls *the universal-life apparatus* and a *truly human world*, an understanding between different worldviews is lost to the imaginary claim of self-assertion and prejudgment of the other which, in turn, altogether distort one’s perception of self. Jaspers formulates this state of tension and its effect on sociality with the following words:

Each is endowed with its reality only in virtue of the other; and were one to effect a definitive conquest of the other, it would thereby instantly destroy itself. [...] Mutual misunderstanding is unavoidable because of the conflict between the self-preservative impulse as a vital urge and existence [...]. (44)

302 The question remains, however, what enlarges the process of revolting against the other? To put it in another way, what mediates the *vital urge* to defend one’s autonomy from another, both in the exterior as well as in the interior sense? In order to provide a more detailed answer to the question concerning the relation between contingency and revolt, we should again consider the component of *phobia*. According to Jaspers, fear entangles self-perception into the imaginary sense of crisis, and thus, only adds to the incongruity between collective emotion and the presence of a *foreigner*. In fact, apart from adhering to the social imaginary, the uncertainty of normative consolidation also correlates to the temporal aspect of emotion which comes in the form of an *unforeseeable future*—one that fills the individual with *overwhelming fear*. Jaspers’ thoughts on this matter are quite insightful. According to his reflections from *Man in the Modern Age*, the prospect of a disastrous future such as losing national homogeneity “inspires the individual with dread” (1957, 62), seeing that the individual cannot cope with the prospect of uncertainty. In other words, the individual is simply not satisfied with the role of a mediating vessel which, as it were, is detached from its origin and thrown into an uncertain affective state. That is why fear from an unforeseen future becomes “man’s sinister companion” (ib.) which turns solidarity with another into prejudgment, due

to the presumed likelihood that man “will in the near future become unable to obtain the vital necessities” (ib). What Jaspers alludes to is the habitual situatedness of the existing individual, whose economic, social, and political reality is set adrift from genuine interhuman connection with the other.

More importantly, the same effect obfuscates the distinguishing mark between critical judgment and prejudgment, i.e., *discrimination*. Interestingly enough, the very term *crisis*, which stems from the Greek word *krinein*, signifies both, judgment as well as discrimination. *Krinein* indicates the process of *separation* between the universal outlook on human interaction and an individual one, both in its positive, i.e., cohesive, as well as its negative, i.e., discriminatory or pre-judgmental sense. This junction is by no means conceivable as a mutually inclusive one, due to the obvious fact that critical judgment and prejudgment stand on opposite ends. However, this paradoxical state of opposition should not be understood as unsolvable either, considering the fact that it can also provide *the avenue* for understanding how judgment and prejudgment can be conceptually divided by virtue of the projectible (Helm 2007). Namely, the aspect of projection touches upon the crucial component of ethnocentrism: the psychological need to *retrieve* an image of ethnic purity from an unforeseeable state of being *with* the other into a projected state of ethnic homogeneity *without* the other. As indicated, the interesting fact about the psychological worldview of retrieving an image of ethnic purity, i.e., an *original state*, is to be found in the very form of conceiving *national crisis* since it is projected by a conservative outlook on social existence and propelled by the affective state of xenophobia. Fear is in this very sense projected unto the projection of self as well as one’s projection of the other, and hence, only adds to a growing sense of insecurity which prompts the development of a false *evaluative horizon* of normativity. As an immediate consequence of this, the contingent nature of fear also gives rise to an equally false “objective point for support” (Jaspers 1957, 63). The use of derogatory terms pertaining to foreigners such as *exploiter* or *invader* undoubtedly mediate this convoluted comprehension of social normativity. Moreover, they reveal the fact that collective emotion is what undoubtedly holds it together, that is, keeps it intact both as the means for social ostracism as well as the medium for an essentially flawed identity narrative of ethnocentric nationalism.

The arch of projecting a sense of ethnic belonging is thereby bound to the proximity between normativity, affectivity, and ethnic kinship. The latter represents the crucial reason, as Jaspers would argue, why the ethnocentric individual becomes satisfied with becoming no more “than the extremity of leveling co-operation on the part of all” (81), since fear makes individuals “merge themselves in the co-operative body, pretending that therein each member is supplemented and enlarged by all the others” (ib.). Just like the presupposition of universal cultural values, the prejudging effect of emotion, such as the one adhering to xenophobia, is in this sense mirrored through a collective grasp of the individual affective state. That is why emotion *in general*, according to Jaspers’ important claim in *The Question of German Guilt*, is *ipso facto* extremely contingent. To plead collective emotion means to “evade naively the objectivity of what we can know and think” (Jaspers 2000, 23). It is only after one has thought something through and “visualized it from all sides,” only then can one “arrive at a true feeling that in its time can be trusted to support our life” (ib.). On the other hand, resorting to a collective type of support only adds to the confusion, as it abides by a general rule of conduct. Such is undoubtedly the case with the ethnocentric worldview, given the fact that it intoxicates one’s perception of social life and turns into an *idée fixe*: in order to overcome a given social crisis, one needs to *exalt his personality* to a common cause (Jaspers 1925). Consequently, one begins to fear, as Jaspers points out in *Psychology of Worldviews*, everything that remains “outside the fixed sphere” (1925, 138). This leads to an almost fanatic revolt against anyone that does not fit one’s perception of communal existence. Arguably, one can attribute this state of fixation to the *evaluative perspective* (Helm 2004; Habermas 1998) of emotion, given that an affective sense of crisis not only shapes our mutual concerns in relation to *who we are*, but thoroughly affects our need to exclude those whom *we are not*. Rather than providing the possibility of internal normative integration, as it were, into a homogenous society, this false sense of distinction serves only as means of defending the state of national integrity within the public domain. According to Habermas, it is in this sense that the positive “self-understanding of one’s own nation” becomes “an efficient mechanism for repudiating everything regarded as foreign, for devaluing other nations, and for excluding national, ethnic, and religious minorities” (Habermas 1998, 111).

In conclusion, one's abiding to a common cause arises in the form of a double entendre, i.e., in the form of a juncture between exterior cohesion as well as interior exclusion. In regard to its exterior side, the aspect of self-exaltation first pertains to the view of a homogenous community, such as the presupposed community of *pure* Hungarians or *pure* Americans; whereas the second pertains to the affective state of fear, that is, a xenophobic outlook on community, wherein a distinct social group, such as the Arabs or the Jews, are to be feared, prejudged, and inevitably so, excluded or ostracized from the homogenous social frame. Both views point to the universal position of the ethnocentric worldview that represents the projected static-homogenous image of a community. As Jaspers writes, no man can "contemplate his image in the mirror without some perplexity or dismay," meaning that "the more vigorously he aspires, the more sensitive will he be to the presence of other than aspiring elements in himself" (Jaspers 2000, 197). The presence of *something other* than the clear view of self-autonomy applies to the question of ethnocentrism in particular, inasmuch as it reveals the need to exclude the foreign other by referring to, as Habermas would argue, "a prepolitical concept of the nation as an index of descent and origin" (Habermas 1998, 111). Conversely, the same need for exclusion unveils the fundamental error of presupposing a homogenous social frame. This is the core reason why Jaspers would render this presupposition to be a self-assertive and imaginary representation of selfhood which abides by the *rule of the masses*—i.e., a "fleeting unity" governed by "impulsiveness, suggestibility, intolerance and mutability" (Jaspers 1957, 38), all of which endow the multitude of externally tied individuals "with the power to uplift or to destroy" (ib.). In other words, the universalization of the life-order as well as one's aspiration toward it, inevitably leads to *the paradox* which lies in the fact that through universalization individual life becomes "dependent upon the apparatus which proves ruinous to mankind at one and the same time by its perfectionment and by its breakdown" (62).

305

4. Conclusion

The overarching aim of this contribution alludes to three central claims. Firstly, individual reality is ambiguously exposed to imaginary representations

of an autonomous national and ethnic identity which can lead to various manifestations of social ostracism. Secondly, it was shown that the notion of self-preservation and defense, as the primary example of social ostracism, adheres to the act of discrimination. And, thirdly, if we consider the fact that ostracism points back to the uncertainty of self-autonomy, by revolting against the general image pertaining to a foreign identity, one is inevitably confronted with the very imaginary conditions that made the revolt possible. In this regard, Jaspers', Arendt's, and Bauman's accounts of cultural opposition, emotion, and prejudgement adhere to the proposed critique of the ethnocentric worldview, insofar as they provide insights into the various preconditions for the development of a generalistic misperception of communal existence—in this case: *populism*, *ethnocentric nationalism*, *globalism*, *xenophobia*. The same applies to the claim that in order to reach genuine political action and corresponding critical judgment, various affective states of ethnocentrism need to be thoroughly reconsidered. If not, the evaluative ethical horizon is lost to collective fear and the overall need to defend the presupposed state of homogeneity. Moreover, additional conceptual clarification of modern phenomena, such as immigration, ethnocentrism, and racism is in need of further philosophical contemplation, seeing that these various phenomena expose the situatedness of modern man within the essential polemic, or, put more precisely, the central polemic our times have to offer. In sum, ethnocentrism thoroughly affects our understanding of the normative status of ethics, considering that it puts the possibility of normative consolidation between different individuals into question.

306

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307

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