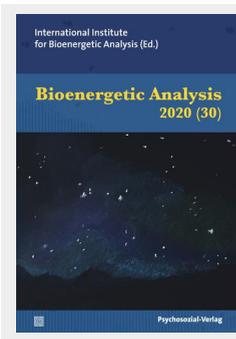


Luigi Zoja

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The Other as Potential Enemy¹

Luigi Zoja

Madness is a rare thing in individuals, but in groups, parties, peoples and ages it is the rule

Friedrich Nietzsche,
Jenseits von Gut und Böse

Abstracts

In this paper Professor Zoja describes the archetypal, universal roots of paranoia, showing how it is a collective problem, with a projective relationship with evil at its core. He highlights paranoia's socially contagious nature with reference to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and the potential for paranoia across all societies. In expanding on the human need for enemies, Professor Zoja identifies how advances in mass media can affect mass psychology through *soft* and *hard* paranoia, allowing collective paranoia to take hold, resulting in racism, nationalism and genocide. The need for enemies is illustrated by contemporary fears relating to Islamic migration and terrorism. His paper ends with an illustration of how self-consciousness can be a defence against paranoid infections.

Key words: paranoia, archetypal, collective paranoia, socially contagious, mass media

L'Autre comme Ennemi potentiel (French)

Dans cet article, le professeur Zoja décrit les racines archétypales et universelles de la paranoïa. Il montre qu'il s'agit d'un problème collectif, avec une relation projective mettant le mal au centre du processus. Il souligne la nature socialement contagieuse de la paranoïa en faisant référence à *Mein Kampf* d'Hitler et au potentiel de paranoïa dans toutes les sociétés. En développant le besoin humain d'ennemis, le professeur Zoja explique comment les progrès des médias de masse peuvent influencer sur la psychologie de masse par le biais d'une paranoïa douce et dure, permettant ainsi à la paranoïa collective de s'enraciner, entraînant de fait le racisme, le nationalisme et le génocide. Le besoin d'ennemis est illustré par les peurs contemporaines liées à la migration islamique et au terrorisme. Son article se termine par une illustration de la façon dont la conscience de soi peut constituer un moyen de défense contre les infections paranoïaques.

1 Keynote Address delivered to the 25th IIBA Conference in Portugal, May 23rd, 2019.

El Otro como potencial enemigo (Spanish)

En este artículo, el profesor Zoja describe las raíces arquetípicas y universales de la paranoia, mostrando cómo es un problema colectivo, con una relación proyectiva con el mal en su núcleo. Destaca la naturaleza socialmente contagiosa de la paranoia con referencia al *Mein Kampf* de Hitler y el potencial de paranoia en todas las sociedades. Al ampliar la necesidad humana de enemigos, el profesor Zoja identifica cómo los avances en los medios de comunicación pueden afectar la psicología de masas a través de la paranoia suave y dura, permitiendo que la paranoia colectiva se arraigue, lo que resulta en racismo, nacionalismo y genocidio. La necesidad de enemigos queda ilustrada por los temores contemporáneos relacionados con la migración islámica y el terrorismo. Su artículo termina con una ilustración de cómo la autoconciencia puede ser una defensa contra las infecciones paranoides.

L'altro come potenziale nemico (Italian)

In questo articolo il professor Zoja descrive le radici archetipiche e universali della paranoia, mostrando come sia un problema collettivo, con una relazione proiettiva con il male al suo centro. Sottolinea la natura socialmente contagiosa della paranoia con riferimento al *Mein Kampf* di Hitler e al potenziale di paranoia in tutte le società. Espandendo il bisogno umano di nemici, il professor Zoja identifica in che modo i progressi nei mass media possono influenzare la psicologia di massa attraverso forme di paranoia morbida e dura, consentendo alla paranoia collettiva di prendere piede, dando luogo a razzismo, nazionalismo e genocidio. La necessità di nemici è illustrata dalle paure contemporanee relative alla migrazione islamica e al terrorismo. Il suo saggio termina con un'illustrazione di come la consapevolezza di sé può essere una difesa contro le infezioni paranoiche.

O Outro como Inimigo Potencial (Portuguese)

Neste artigo, o professor Zoja descreve as raízes arquetípicas e universais da paranóia, demonstrando como é um problema coletivo, com uma relação projetiva com o mal em sua essência. Ele destaca a natureza socialmente contagiosa da paranóia, fazendo referência ao *Mein Kampf* (Minha Luta) de Hitler e o potencial de paranóia em todas as sociedades. Ao aprofundar o entendimento sobre a necessidade humana de ter inimigos, o professor Zoja identifica como os avanços nos meios de comunicação de massa podem afetar a psicologia de massa através de paranóia suave e firme, permitindo que a paranóia coletiva se instale, resultando em racismo, nacionalismo e genocídio. A necessidade de ter inimigos é ilustrada pelos medos contemporâneos relacionados à migração islâmica e ao terrorismo. Seu artigo termina com uma ilustração de como a autoconsciência pode ser uma defesa contra contaminações paranóicas.

Der Andere als potentieller Feind (German)

In diesem Artikel beschreibt Zoja die archetypischen, universellen Wurzeln von Paranoia, um zu zeigen, dass es ein kollektives Problem ist, mit einer projektiven Be-

ziehung zum Bösen als Kern. Er beleuchtet die sozial ansteckende Natur der Paranoia mit Bezug auf Hitlers *Mein Kampf* und dem Potential von Paranoia über alle Gesellschaften hinweg. In der Ausweitung auf das menschliche Bedürfnis nach Feinden identifiziert Zoja, wie die modernen Massenmedien die Massenpsychologie beeinflussen können durch weiche und harte Paranoia, die der kollektiven Paranoia es erlaubt, sich durchzusetzen und in Rassismus, Nationalismus und Völkermord endet. Das Bedürfnis nach Feinden wird illustriert durch zeitgenössische Ängste, die mit islamischer Migration und Terrorismus verbunden sind. Der Artikel endet mit der Darstellung davon, wie Selbstbewusstsein eine Abwehr sein kann gegen paranoide Ansteckungen.

Другой как потенциальный вра (Луиджи Зойа) (Russian)

В данной статье Профессор Зойа описывает первичные, универсальные корни паранойи, показывая, почему она является коллективной проблемой, с проективными отношениями со злом в своей основе. Он подчеркивает социально-заразную природу паранойи, ссылаясь на книгу Гитлера *Моя борьба* и возможность развития паранойи в любом обществе. Расширяя тему потребности человечества во враге, Профессор Зойа указывает на то, что технологический прорыв в СМИ может оказать влияние на массовую психологию посредством *мягкой* или *тяжелой* паранойи, позволяя коллективной паранойе завладеть умами, что приведет к расизму, национализму и геноциду. Потребность во враге показана на примере страхов, испытываемых в современном обществе, в связи с исламской миграцией и терроризмом. Статья завершается примером того, как самоосознанность может стать защитой от параноидальных инфекций.

Section I: Paranoia and History

I first began to take an interest in paranoia when I lived in New York, at the beginning of the century. On September 11, 2001, the attack on the Twin Towers took place. That a paranoid Islamic fundamentalism existed, we already knew: the proclamations of Osama Bin Laden could be read on the Internet. I began to feel that I was a citizen of collective paranoia not on September 11, but on September 12. I was struck by the content of the mass media coverage and private conversations over the next few days. Even we psychiatrists didn't trust the "normal" media anymore. We were aware that one of their duties was to avoid spreading panic. At times, we paid more attention to "rumors" than to the official news: a tendency of the collective unconscious which has already been studied (by the French historian Marc Bloch) in the trenches of World War I.

The Necessity of Suspicion

Jungian psychology studies every psychological dynamic as a potential universal. Even psychopathology is not something separate, but a process of the normal mind, that has lost its way. The same is true of paranoia: in origin it corresponds to a necessary function. By instinct, man is a social animal. But instinct also tells him that he can't trust everyone. Cooperation is a universal need. But so is suspicion.

From this point of view, paranoia has archetypal, universal roots. It can be found in ancient myth. In Hebraeo-Christian myth it already appears in Cain, who projects his suspicion on to his brother, laying the foundations for his murder. In Greek myth, its most tragic figure is Ajax, who is convinced that Ulysses, Menelaus and Agamemnon are plotting against him. He thinks that killing them all is the only option left to him.

The Ritual of the Scapegoat

Anthropology, too, informs us about the historical dimension of our theme. In pre-modern societies scapegoat rituals are very common. Where magic prevails over science, an epidemic or a scarcity of crops or fish may be blamed on a spell. Someone visible for this invisible presence is sought. In ancient times the carrier of evil, who had to be sacrificed, might be a person, but often an animal was used: typically a goat, which shares some symbolic elements with the devil (horns, hooves, etc). Later, probably, the killing would be replaced by an expulsion. Two aims were achieved by a single act. Anxiety was alleviated, removing the "evil". At the same time, cohesion in the collectivity was reconstructed: an essential step, for with the suspicion that a member was responsible for the evil eye, the mistrust had become *internal* to the group. By his expulsion, the evil was unanimously projected: it became *external* again. There was no need to prove that the negative event had been "caused" by the scapegoat: as happens with rituals, the catharsis can be true even if the explanation is false. That remains true in the modern world. Hitler's theory of a Jewish conspiracy was so false that he didn't even try to prove it; but he used it as a collective scapegoat ritual.

In short, the core of paranoia is a projective relationship with evil: and evil concerns everyone. Long before it is "reduced" to a clinical problem, paranoia is a moral problem. Long before it is "reducible" to an individual problem, paranoia is a collective problem.

Two Preliminary Questions

When does functional mistrust degenerate into pathological suspicion?

Even if real enemies exist in the external world, it is for the most part our inner world which magnifies mistrust: to the point where, instead of being controlled by the ego, it becomes its master. In this way, a function which is useful in nature, ends up making us lose its functional relationship with the world.

Unfortunately, our instincts basically go back to before the Neolithic era. At that time the population was sparse and nomadic. Human beings lived in small groups, often moving from place to place. It was right that meeting strangers should cause curiosity, but also fear. Today, however, reacting with those instincts is very inadequate to the complexity of globalization. In urban life we meet not individual strangers, but large numbers of strangers, every day. Neuroscience tell us that our brain is born with limitations. The number of people whose faces we can memorize and recognize corresponds approximately to 150 (called Dunbar number, after the scientist who theorized it). Beyond this number we start being confused. Not recognizing the persons, we easily become afraid and begin projecting hostility towards them.

In modern urban life, as we daily meet thousands of unknown faces, we repress suspicion and fear, because that is what social convention requires; but they accumulate in the unconscious. In more fragile people the perception of danger can become not relative but absolute. This corresponds to what psychopathology calls paranoia.

Why can paranoia have collective and epochal aspects which other psychological problems do not have?

As I said apropos of September 11, paranoia has a characteristic which distinguishes it from other mental disorders: it is psychically *very* contagious. It can “infect” the collective unconscious even more than the individual unconscious.

Let us make a comparison. Many psychotherapists are convinced that the most serious mental pathology of the 21st century is eating disorders. A change in one’s relationship with the ideal measures of one’s own body can become a veritable delusion: some girls are absolutely convinced that the ideal weight is only 30 kg (60 pounds). An anorexic girl who cultivates this delusion may infect a few friends; but she cannot found a movement which aims to renew society by purifying it with this physical ideal.

The situation is different if the delusion is paranoid, for it is much more contagious. A person can cultivate the delusion that a certain group is conspiring to seize power in the world: and therefore wants to renew society by eliminating

it. Such a person may find a political movement with this as its program. His message can be disseminated. And it can be strengthened by wars, social unrest, unemployment and inflation, forms of insecurity which activate projections. This person has existed: his name was Adolf Hitler.

The Structure of Paranoia

According to psychiatry, paranoia has a para-religious core:

1. Its starting point is a sort of illumination. The subject experiences it as a new truth which is suddenly revealed to him. It will no longer be called into question: it has a “religious” quality, it suddenly gives life meaning. Therefore it is non-negotiable. It becomes, according to descriptions, the “granite foundation” of an existence which formerly rested on a fragile base.
2. The subsequent phases are “consequences” of that premise: arguments and dogmas, policies and rituals. Unlike the “stone foundation”, they are negotiable. Indirectly, this second phase too is dangerous: for it gives the illusion that it is possible to reason with the paranoiac. For this reason, paranoia was one of the first syndromes (19th century) classified by French psychiatry, which called it “Folie lucide”. The *Harvard Guide to Modern Psychiatry* (Nicholi, 1978) refers to “successful paranoiacs”. A typical example might be the rise and fall of Senator McCarthy in American politics (Hofstadter, 1964). This consideration forcefully underlines the difference between paranoia and other disorders. Whereas other serious mental problems, such as depression and schizophrenia, make the subject slide down lower and lower, until he is excluded from society, paranoia, by contrast, can actually function as a multiplier of his abilities; or at least of his manipulations.

Chapter 11 of *Mein Kampf*

In chapter 11 of *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler describes step by step, in febrile tones, what for him was an absolutely new and unexpected “vision”: a poor, religious eastern Jew. At first, he seems almost incredulous. Hitherto he had not been a convinced anti-Semite: he had met only integrated Jews, like the family doctor whom he still trusted, Eduard Bloch. The vision is gradually transformed into a “revelation”: that man is “other”. At that moment what he calls “the granite foundation” (*das granitische Fundament*) of his doctrine is born (Hitler, 1925, p. 238). The wave that will culminate in catastrophe is not born of political conflicts: what is known as “scientific” racism derives from the paranoid imagination (or: illumination) and its consequent projection. According to the historian Norman Cohn:

“The deadliest kind of anti-Semitism [...] has little to do with real conflicts of interest between living people or even with racial prejudice as such. At its heart lies the belief that Jews – all Jews everywhere – form a *conspiratorial* [my italics] body set on ruining and then dominating the rest of mankind”. (Cohn, 1967).

The Slavs too are, for Hitler, constitutionally inferior, unsuited to a modern society. “But what about the Czechs, who are so trustworthy?” The Czechs are in fact the most dangerous of the Slavs. The proof lies in the fact that they behave seriously: they hide their aims behind loyalty (Hamann, 1996).

“Has it not been proved that the Protocols of Zion, on which so much anti-Semitism is based, are a fake? No. ‘It is the liberal press that says that. And that is the most certain proof that they are genuine’” (Hitler, 1925).

Not only the Jews, but also the Slavs and German liberals become containers of Hitler’s projections of evil: not because of real facts but because of a “granite premise”. It exhausts the entire horizon of meaning from the outset and includes all arguments from the beginning. Even counter-arguments become confirmations, in a circular process: they foster a paranoid “absurd consistency” or “inversion of causes”.

The Wolf and the Lamb

It is easy to trace this archetypal model back to the fable of the wolf and the lamb. The wolf “knows” (whether consciously or not) that he will devour the lamb. Both drink from the same stream, but the wolf is higher up. “Why do you dirty my water?” he asks menacingly. (We note that paranoid people too often have contamination phobias: racism is obsessed with the fantasy that racial interbreeding can produce genetic monstrosities). The lamb replies: “Mr Wolf, that’s not possible: I’m drinking lower down, and water flows downwards”. The wolf switches argument: “I’ve heard that you spoke ill of me a year ago.” “It can’t have been me: a year ago I hadn’t even been born yet.” “Enough arguing,” shouts the wolf. “If it wasn’t you it must have been your brother.” And he devours him. Thus, he repeats another monstrosity typical of paranoiacs: the fusing of personal and collective responsibility. The only true aim is to release destructive tension by absolute projection of evil.

Of course, one question would remain open: in formulating the rationalizations whereby he will attack the victim come what may, does the paranoid-wolf know he is lying, or does he lie to himself as well and convince himself (a process called fantastic pseudology *pseudologia phantastica*) (Delbrück, 1891)? Even studies of the most egregious paranoid people always leave some uncertainty.

The Universality of Paranoid Potential

Hitler is an easy example, but any tyrant and even any politician can become a “successful paranoid person”. Napoleon stated: “The prince must be suspicious of everything” (Honoré de Balzac, 1838, maxim no. 276).

Many historians (Bullock, 1991) have stressed the parallels between Hitler and Stalin, and the fact that they copied each other. Other historians have noted how Stalinism applies the exterminationist principles of racism to the “class struggle”. Incidentally, “class”, like race, is very hard to define: so it is a useful potential container in any circumstance for projecting evils from which demagogy wants to “liberate” the masses.

In particular conditions, even in mature democracies the collective paranoid element can silence reason. John W. Dower (Dower, 1986) has analyzed how, in some respects, the War in the Pacific was a continuation of the “war between races” practised during the nineteenth century in the West. Thus, among Americans and Japanese it became “normal” to remove parts of the body, as had happened in the past with the practice of “scalping”. This photograph (Fig. 1), in which a white middle-class woman thanks her marine fiancé for sending her the skull of a Japanese, was published in *Life*, a staid bourgeois weekly.



Figure 1: Photo from *Life* magazine

In theory, contemplating a skull on a desk might seem to resemble the meditations on human transience, characteristic of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In reality it is the exact opposite. Those old thoughts helped people to introject death, to achieve awareness of the fact that it concerns all of us, and that the polarities life and death should never be separated too much. Here, by contrast, warlike,

racist rage tries to project it as far away as possible. Compared to the woman who observes it, death is “other”; in particular, the dead man is other, and it is obvious that he deserved to die. Compassion is replaced by splitting and projection.

Section II: The Need for Enemies

The Mass Media

The collective projection of evil has always existed. However, the modernization of the media of communication brings immense changes in mass psychology. In a positive sense, because it spreads knowledge; but also, in a negative sense, because it lends itself to manipulation. The king was a king from birth: he didn't have to justify his power. But more modern regimes have to convince the population: so they are more tempted to find scapegoats. Today this simplification is often called *populism*.

Since the time of Gutenberg, information has been constantly progressing. When the media of communication become *mass media* there is a quantum leap. On the one hand, at last most of the population can be informed. On the other hand, those who control the media have a strong temptation. How can one reach an increasingly large audience? By replacing complex debates about complex phenomena with simple analyses. And which is the simplest analysis? The one that clearly indicates someone who is to blame for problems. This scapegoat, however, must be different from the people who use the mass medium: the consumer public wants to feel comforted, not guilty. For this reason the invocation “deliver us from evil” stands at the center of Christianity's most important prayer, the Lord's Prayer. This need of purification can become the main preoccupation of the ordinary man: from the sacrifices of antiquity to the Roman Catholic confession and the ritual self-criticisms in communism. We can tolerate evil existing in us only in exceptional circumstances, and only for brief periods.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, in the United States press, the information-providing daily newspaper is superseded by the sensationalist *yellow press*. In the period between the two World Wars, information-providing radio is superseded by radio that spreads propaganda: first Fascist, then Nazi and Soviet.

In the second half of the twentieth century mass TV gradually replaces other sources of information. In the democracies, the absolute falsification of the repressive regimes is replaced by a “relative disinformation”. The mass media of the dictatorships had disseminated *hard* paranoia, those of the TV tycoons devote themselves to a *soft* paranoia. In a mediocre television like that of Italy, this can be seen in the excessive presence of crime reports: although in a less radical way than political slander, they are offered to the ordinary man so that he can project evil away from himself.

Pseudo-speciation

According to Jung, the opposite poles of the psyche should never be moved too far apart. The paranoiac attempts the absolute separation of the binomial good-evil: and for this reason he fails. He radically rejects the otherness inside himself, the evil of which we are all partly carriers. So he does not want to look inside himself. The true paranoiac, then, does not turn to the analyst: his mental processes, so to speak, *correspond to anti-psychology*. Nothing significant is interior; everything is projected.

What is the threshold beyond which the next man (the “neighbor”) becomes “something other”? Erikson (Erikson, 1968) has called it pseudo-speciation. Animals have instincts which enable them to recognize who belongs to another species. One does not socialize with an animal of a different species: therefore, it can be killed and eaten. With those of the same species one forms groups. Indeed, one can mate and have children: belonging to a species is defined precisely by the fertility within it and by the sterility of mating with other species.

A dog might bark at another dog; but then he sniffs him, recognizes him as similar, and lowers his hackles. Man too possesses instincts of this kind. But they have been overlaid by the infinite complexity of culture, which makes this simple certainty infinitely fluid. Our senses are “deceived” by colors, clothes, and especially languages, which others speak but we don’t understand. On meeting a new person, we don’t sniff them: we try to speak to them. If they speak an incomprehensible language, dress in an incomprehensible way, believe in a religion that seems to us absurd, our instinct takes the first steps towards pseudo-speciation. It considers them too other and begins to lose the inhibition against doing them harm: as if they didn’t belong to the human species, but to another one. As if they were one of those animals that we traditionally kill without feeling guilt, in order to eat them. In this way, the human species has become the only one which, for reasons that are not natural but cultural, regularly kills members of its own species.

In the instability of our cultural defenses, collective paranoia takes hold of us more easily than we think: it becomes the rule in racism, but also in nationalism. In genocide, but also in ordinary war. In the pogrom and in the lynching. The historians of genocide have noted a degeneration which is manifested especially in images. The enemy starts to be *caricatured as an animal*: a tendency so universal as to be practised even by anti-Fascist intellectuals. (Fig. 2 from *Simplicissimus*, 1920: caricature of colonial French troops).

When this happens a slide towards genocidal conditions is taking place. Killing animals is considered much less serious than killing human beings: so the feelings of guilt culturally associated with murder begin to be erased in the collective imagination. With the intensification of racist propaganda, Nazism had circulated films in which the Jews were presented as rats. With the escalation of the war in the Pacific, Allied propaganda circulated illustrations in which the Japanese became monkeys.

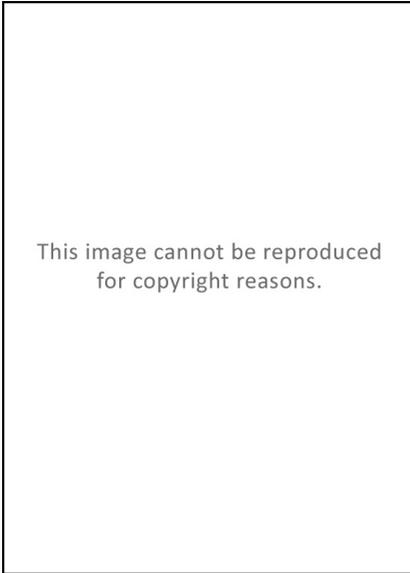


Figure 2: Caricature of French Colonial Troops (from *Simplicissimus*, June 9th 1920: Olaf Leonhard Gulbransson, *Eine Schmach für die weiße Rasse* © Olaf Gulbransson/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2020)

The military authorities often described the enemy as a “subhuman beast”, “a cross between the human being and the ape” (Dower, 1986, p. 53 and p. 71).

More on the Mass Media

The genocide scholars Chirof and McCauley (2006, p. 216) draw attention to an interesting aspect of the surveys carried out during World War II among American soldiers: of those who fought against the Japanese, 42 per cent were of the opinion that the entire population of Japan needed to be eliminated; among those who were still being trained in the United States it was as high as 67 per cent. This seems to correspond to the fact that the less you know your enemy, the more your attitude towards him is shaped by collective paranoia. That this is indeed the case has been partly confirmed, in the United States too, by the fearful reaction to the September 11 attacks: the panic, and the substantially paranoid rumours about new attacks, was greater in the internal states of the country and less intense in the states situated along the two coasts, which were, objectively, more likely to be attacked; but were more used to having relations with other countries and which contained a higher proportion of immigrants, both Islamic and non-Islamic.

“Where There Is a Projection There Must Be a Hook Where You Hang It”

The end of the Cold War eliminated the West’s real geopolitical adversary: the Soviet bloc. But it did not eliminate one of the most powerful factors in the collective unconscious: the need to identify evil and an enemy that represents it. Collective projections became more disorderly.

Projections do not originate in the void: there are almost always real reasons why evil is projected on to certain people or certain groups and not on to others. But the dimension of the evil that is attributed to them derives chiefly from our imagination.

On the tenth anniversary of the September 11 massacre, the New York Times published a Special Report, “The Reckoning” (2011). In the ten years following the attack, Al Qaeda had succeeded in killing only about fifteen Americans; whereas the number of deaths due to war and the expenditure on opposing Al Qaeda seemed to be running out of control.

Meanwhile, a paranoia of terrorism also fostered arms sales. The use of private weapons against other private citizens caused over 10,000 times as many deaths in the United States as Al Qaeda did in the same decade (2001–2011).

In present-day pacific Germany, it is worrying to see the rebirth of a paranoid nationalism called PEGIDA (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes [Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West]). But what may be particularly interesting is a geographical fact. PEGIDA originated in Dresden and has become widespread in the eastern *Länder*, where there are extremely few Islamic immigrants. It took much less hold in the Western ones: the very *Länder* which have received most of the huge number of refugees who poured into Germany and were welcomed there in 2015. Let us try to express this in other words. The need to project the collective evil not only does not correspond to the real political problems, but often *seems actually to proceed in the opposite direction*: where the real problem grows, the projections decrease. The respect for what Freud called “reality principle” evidently helps the psyche. If this is lacking, the “psychological infection” of the masses is fostered. The origins of our concerns may be real: but this does not prevent most of our reactions from potentially being paranoid.

We may even attempt to measure the difference between a real problem and the collective reaction.

The Paranoid Differential

We might describe the difference between a real problem and its “perception”, which certain inquiries have turned into figures (Fig. 3), as the “paranoid differential”.

Let us compare, within the EU countries, the real percentage of the Islamic population and the “perception” that the average citizen has of it (that is, the subjective conviction of how many Muslims there are in that country).

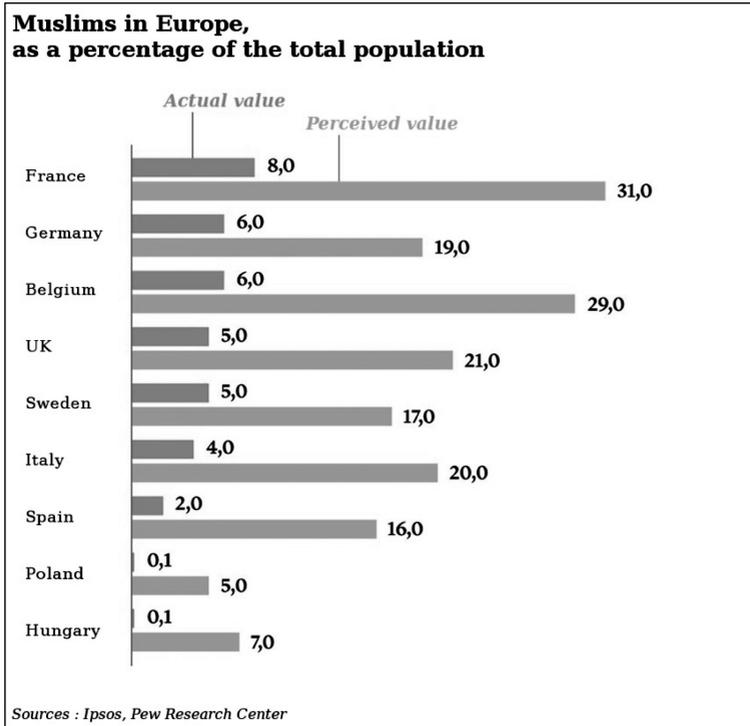


Figure 3: Perceptions of Islamic Populations in European Countries

The biggest surprises come from eastern Europe, where the proportion of Muslims in the total population is close to zero. In Poland it is 0.1 per cent: the public is convinced that it is 5 per cent. In Hungary it is also 0.1 per cent, but the public thinks it is 7 per cent. If we call the real problem 1, “paranoid fantasy” multiplies it respectively 50 and 70 times. In short, the real element is almost entirely absent, while the “paranoid differential” becomes almost everything: so the constant rise of racist movements, corresponds more to the collective projection of evil than to the real figure. We will therefore be less surprised if images like this (Fig. 4) are published in eastern Europe, which was subjected for nearly half a century to the paranoid vigilance of the communist police: not in Cologne, where local women really have been assaulted and sexually abused in group by groups of immigrant refugees.



Figure 4: Magazine Images

The problem does not derive from sexual violence, but from the paranoid imagination. So it is no coincidence that it activates the image of the white woman contaminated by the dark skin: an archaic projection of evil, which history has often associated with lynching.

Two Collective Problems: Terrorism and the Environment

It is meaningful to compare the collective frenzy about terrorism with the lack of attention that is attracted by climate change. The reports of the International Energy Agency (2016) and the World Health Organization say that deaths due to air pollution have reached 6.5 million a year: far more than the number due to HIV, tuberculosis and road accidents combined. According to the EEA (European Environmental Agency) in Europe the yearly deaths due to particulate alone are at present some 420,000 – down from 450,000 a couple of years ago.

Terrorism, however, remains “the evil” – that is, the adversary that we need. The Global Terrorism Database reports zero terrorist attacks in Italy, but fear of them provoked in Turin in 2017 a stampede of people in panic with consequent deaths. Pointing a finger is irrational but “psychologically useful”. In the short term, having an enemy is cathartic, for minds that cannot cope with the long term. But in the long term it has led to world wars and genocide.

By contrast, in order to deal with environmental problems, we don't need to identify an enemy, then split and project evil, but to cooperate: this arouses few passions. It does not authorize projections accompanied by “football crowd”

emotions. What it requires is self-criticism, both individual and collective (the finger should be pointed towards ourselves) sacrifices, both material and psychological. It activates both consciousness and conscience. We must ask ourselves: how much does each of us contribute to the environment's sickness?

Our Commitment

If the most devastating collective paranoia in history was directed at the most integrated minority in Europe, the Jews, we should already be asking ourselves today what might happen tomorrow, when China will become the most powerful country in the world: a country whose population is almost double those of the United States and Europe put together, and which is physically, linguistically and culturally so different from them.

I would not like to end, however, with the paranoid projections, but with an example of an anti-paranoid attitude. When he was a guerrilla fighter, Pepe Mujica was wounded several times, arrested, and held in prison for over a decade. In his old age, he turned himself into a constitutional president of Uruguay. At the end of his term of office, *El País* asked him to talk about his imprisonment in a long interview. "I was a prisoner for 25 or 30 years", he said. Noticing that his interviewer was surprised, he added: "about half of that time, imprisoned by the military; the other half, a prisoner of my own rigid thought" (that is, of revolutionary ideology). It would have been easy to put all the blame on the dictatorship! This, however, would have continued to encourage projections of the collective evil, even though democracy has long since returned in his country. The true defence against paranoid infections, which continue over generations, is a consciousness which acknowledges responsibilities in everyone.

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