

THE STRANGER: ON XENOPHOBIA

M.A. Thesis – T. Sibley; McMaster University - Philosophy

THE STRANGER: ON XENOPHOBIA

By TRISTAN SIBLEY, B.A. (Honours)

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree Master of the Arts

McMaster University MASTER OF THE ARTS (2013) Hamilton, Ontario (Philosophy)

TITLE: The Stranger: On Xenophobia

AUTHOR: Tristan Sibley, B.A. (Honours) (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Diane Enns

NUMBER OF PAGES: i-v, 1-104

ABSTRACT

For many of us, the events of 9/11 served as a violent birth into a new era. In subsequent years, we have witnessed a mechanical vacillation between reaction and revenge in the domain of politics, at a time where terrorism and counter-terrorism are virtually indistinct. September 11th was by no means the genesis of xenophobia, but it has been complicit in the production of a global climate where an understanding of xenophobic logic is increasingly relevant.

In this thesis, I begin with an analysis of the conceptual anatomy of xenophobia and its relation to ideas of sameness and difference, identity, selfhood, “Otherness” and community. In the second chapter, I provide a taxonomy of xenophobia, differentiating this “exclusive” mode of prejudice from “inclusive” modes. I analyze contemporary manifestations of xenophobia under this framework. In the final chapter, I conclude with an exploration of the manner in which communities may be re-envisioned, in order to avoid identity-essentialism and encourage freedom of action in the political domain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the faculty, staff and graduate students of the McMaster Philosophy Department. You have made it easy to call the third floor of University Hall “home” for two years.

To my parents, Brian and Janis, and my brother Aidan: I appreciate your ongoing encouragement, sincere interest and seemingly infinite tolerance for late-night think-tanking.

To Dr. Brigitte Sassen: I am grateful for your valuable contributions and feedback on this project. I never would have thought to read Wittgenstein otherwise.

To my long-suffering thesis supervisor, Dr. Diane Enns: the space I have available to me here cannot begin to do justice to my gratitude. I have little doubt that awaiting a draft of this thesis was more harrowing an experience for you than producing it was for me. Your feedback and support beyond the call of duty has made this possible. You continue to inspire me to be a better thinker, a braver person, and to continue to explore what philosophy has the capacity to be.

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Introduction

For many of us, the events of 9/11 served as a violent birth into a new era. More than a decade removed, I suspect that we can only now begin to comprehend the ramifications of that date in the realm of human affairs. I recall the surreality of that day, the distinct feeling that the world had reoriented on its axis. This was not a profound reorientation, not an instance of dissolution and remaking. It was more like a stirring, an indication that the shape of my world was no longer quite what I had, until that point, suspected. Perhaps it never had been. I am sure that those of us who sat transfixed before our televisions, watching the cycling footage of the North Tower collapsing into rubble, shared the intuition that we were perched at the precipice of something monumental.

September 11th was by no means the genesis of xenophobia. It was, however, proximate cause of a new constellation of political reactions. That I say “reactions” is not incidental because, while the ramifications of that day have spread in many directions as though by harmonic resonance, the trajectories of these offshoots have been characterized by a failure to *act*. On a global stage, we have witnessed the almost mechanical vacillation of reaction and revenge, at a time where terrorism and counter-terrorism are virtually indistinct. We have witnessed the genesis of a politics continuously orbiting issues of security.

The history of the 21st century, such as it is, has been consistently punctuated by startling instantiations of resentment and fear: the racial hate crime that erupted in the wake of 9/11, the rise of the virulently xenophobic Golden Dawn party in Greece from relative obscurity, the 2011 Norwegian attacks perpetrated by Anders Breivik, the recent Boston Marathon bombings. I do not intend to characterize the contemporary political climate by sensational outlying cases, but the fact of the matter is that while these acts are different in degree from the broader context of political reaction, they are similar *in kind*.

What I offer is not an analysis of politics in the post-9/11 era. What I am proposing is an exploration of the anatomy of contemporary xenophobia. I begin with an analysis of the cognitive substructure complicit in the production of xenophobic logic, addressing issue of sameness and difference and the manner in which these concepts flow through alternative understandings of selfhood and identity, “the Other” and “the Stranger”. I proceed into an analysis of xenophobia as such, distinguishing this phenomenon from prejudice and racism. I conclude with a suggestion about how we may go about re-envisioning communities in a manner that releases us from mechanistically reacting to the perceived threat of the enemy, “the Stranger”. I propose a movement towards a politics of freedom: liberation from past narratives of human behaviors and conducive to new and spontaneous action in the political domain.

Chapter I: A Taxonomy of Difference

ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ
Upon those stepping into the same rivers, different upon different waters flow
Heraclitus (DK22b12)

What remains of Heraclitean thought is given to us largely in disparate interpretations of half-remembered aphorisms from sources already centuries removed from the date of initial composition. Through the sieve of two and a half millennia of textual transposition and translation, there is little about which we can be certain. Even the most famous of Heraclitus' maxims, "*panta rhei*", central to the purported Doctrine of Flux, is something that we inherit second-hand.¹ Despite this, I choose to open this chapter with a reference to Heraclitus for a very particular reason. Among the few extant fragments, we strike upon a curious intuition: it is difference that underlies the appearance of sameness.

The enterprise of navigating the "Scylla of 'sameness'" and "Charybdis of 'difference'"² is a conceptual project that we have come by quite naturally. We have become the heirs to a dubious inheritance: an almost unbroken tradition suppressing the importance of contingency, of flux, of *difference*. In the works of Plato, we discover that it is the perfect and unchanging forms that comprise the fundamental substratum

¹ This rendering of the Heraclitus' purported aphorism is first recorded in Simplicius' *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, and in a similar fashion in Plato's *Cratylus* 401d, "τὰ ὄντα ἰέναι τε πάντα καὶ μένειν οὐδέν". *Aristotle's Physics*, and in a similar fashion in Plato's *Cratylus* 401d, "τὰ ὄντα ἰέναι τε πάντα καὶ μένειν οὐδέν".

² Narayan, Uma, "Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism". *Hypatia*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Border Crossings: Multicultural and Postcolonial Feminist Challenges to Philosophy (Part 1) (Spring, 1998), p. 89.

of reality; in the world of appearances, our imperfection and fluctuation are aberrations. We are pale facsimiles of the forms, participating only in piecemeal. True wisdom, *noesis*, is the knowledge of the transcendent, that which is in a very profound way much more *real* than we are. In the writings of Aristotle, there is a re-situation of such metaphysics in the physical domain. Individual substances comprise fundamental constituents of reality, certainly; but the impulse to explain away difference remains the same. Situated at a hylomorphic nexus, it is our unchanging forms, our souls, which allow us to persist through the superficial changes to our physical matter. We have been confronted with such puzzles as Theseus' ship as related by Plutarch, or Locke's prince and cobbler³, or countless other thought experiments; we are challenged to determine what is sufficient to make an individual or substance the same through alteration or prosthesis. In this extensive inherited history, there appears to be something of a conceptual lacuna which has contaminated the trajectory of discourses on identity. The basic thrust of such works appears to be apologism for making determinations of sameness despite the outward appearance of difference. The question of with which respect and in what proportion to dole out such determinations have been consistent matters of philosophic inquiry, but the suitability of these concepts in addressing reality seems to be infrequently problematized. There is only rarely a question of whether "sameness" is a coherent category of thought. It is this question which must serve as our point of departure.

³ As per John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 340.

This chapter begins with an essentially ontological point, but by no means an excursus. In order to set the groundwork for a discussion of “identity” (a concept which is of singular importance in the discussion of xenophobia), we must open with a katabasis into the conceptual substratum of “sameness” and “difference”. What I propose in this chapter is a return to a more essentially Heraclitean view, though perhaps one with a more thoroughgoing commitment to flux than even Heraclitus would espouse. I propose that we eschew the unreflective commitment to sameness that we will see is inherent in the logic of personal identity, and open ourselves to the possibility of infinite and primordial difference.

Sameness and Difference

In discourses on identity (especially feminist, post-colonial, social justice and political discourses), the debate regarding the privileging of sameness or difference is near-unavoidable. The approach favoring “sameness” should sound remarkably familiar, because it is in keeping with a common reprise in the social domain: “deep down, we are all the same”. The fundamental subtext of this aphorism does not imply a rejection of human polytypicality mentally, physically, or experientially. Instead, it is a rejoinder against prejudice, a reminder that we are all *human*, capable of joy and suffering. This approach has a substantive degree of rhetorical power: when we can empathize with others, when we are compelled to “think ourselves into” their position and experience, we must be more cautious about the glibness with which we dole out

judgment.⁴ In an academic context, among the works of some feminist thinkers, emphasizing sameness has historically played an important role in the defense of gender equality.⁵ This position stresses that substantive differences between men and women as collective groups are functionally trivial; there are not *essential* differences, but *de facto* differences.⁶ Such an approach is by no means limited to the domain of gender as we find a similar subtext in proponents of racially “color-blind” practices, emphasizing equal treatment given supposed civic equality.⁷

On the side of difference, some commentators caution us against the harmful reductionism of disparate experiences and factual data. As the feminist discourse, for instance, has become increasingly inclusive of issues regarding sexual orientation, ability, and ethnicity, there has been cause to articulate the degree to which privilege is

⁴ Compare Ahmen, Bipasha, "Constructing Racism", in *Culture in Psychology*, Corinne Squire (ed.), London: Routledge, 2000, p.74; Lee, Jo-Anne, "Narratives of Racialized Girls", in *Learning Civil Societies: Shifting Contexts for Democratic Planning and Governance*, Penny Gurstein and Leonora Angeles (eds.) (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 74; Metzler, Christopher J., *The Construction and Rearticulation of Race in a "Post-Racial America"* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2008), p. 91; Sian, Katy, Ian Law and S. Sayyid, *Racism, Governance and Public Policy: Beyond Human Rights* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.30.

⁵ Capps, John, "Pragmatism, Feminism, and the Sameness-Difference Debate", *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 65.

⁶ This is a view often tied to Liberal Feminism, with associated thinkers often stressing the equal intellectual and physical capacities of men and women. For a survey of proponents of such positions, compare: Liff, Sonia and Judy Wajcman, "'Sameness' and 'Difference' Revisited: Which Way Forward for Equal Opportunity Initiatives?", *Journal of Management Studies* 33(1), (January 1996), pp. 79-94; Capps, John, "Pragmatism, Feminism, and the Sameness-Difference Debate", *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 65-105; Wong, Jane, "The Anti-Essentialism v. Essentialism Debate in Feminist Legal Theory: The Debate and Beyond", *Mary and William Journal of Women and the Law*, 5(2), 1999, pp. 273-296.

⁷ Compare: Eastland, Terry, *Ending Affirmative Action: The Case for Colorblind Justice*, (New York: Basic Books, 1996). Conversely, see: Wells, Amy Stuart, *Both Sides Now: The Story of School Desegregation Graduates* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 33; Brown, Michael K., Martin Carnoy, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, David B. Oppenheimer, Marjorie M. Shultz and David Wellman, *White-Washing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

unevenly distributed within the nominal groups which had been previously treated homogeneously. This is to say, the issues faced in general by Caucasian women in North America may not speak to the experiences of, for instance, women of different ability or women of colour.⁸ This position questions the coherence of analyzing privilege under a binary rubric, and attempts to carve out a place for an experiential stratigraphy within such groups. Doubtless, this position aims at equity over equality: while a focus on sameness makes a powerful case of the latter, it does not ensure the former. To argue for difference in this way suggests differential treatment may be an important aspect of social justice.⁹

While each side of this debate takes a different route to a laudable end, in effect they possess the same conceptual substratum, masquerading as distinct through a shift in scope. Both foci, the emphasis on sameness or difference in this manner, have the function of treating “sameness” reductively and suppressing “difference”¹⁰ in the following manner: on every register in the physical domain, difference is an unavoidable item of factual datum on some level. By merit of spatial and temporal discontinuity, no two individuals or objects can be said to be rigorously “the same”. This is a functionally tautological point by merit of there being two objects under discussion,

⁸ Narayan, U., p. 86.

⁹ See, for instance: Vogel, Lise, "Debating Difference: Feminism, Pregnancy, and the Workplace", *Feminist Studies* 16(1) (Spring 1990), pp. 9-32; Copeland, L., "Valuing Diversity, Part 1: Making the Most of Cultural Difference at the Workplace", *Personnel* 65(6), (1988), pp.53-60.

¹⁰ For a critique of essentializing discourse in “third world” feminist literature, see: Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. “Under Western eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”, in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (eds.) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 51-80.

this is by no means the force of determinations of “sameness”; I mention this instead as a cursory elimination of one manner in which we may intend this term. The “sameness” of individuals over time is a question which will be addressed at a later juncture. In like fashion, while the sameness between individuals and objects cannot refer to their numerical identity, neither can it be quantitative judgment with a given respect. When we speak of two individuals having the same height or skin tone, we certainly do not suggest that their height is identical with a view to Planck lengths, or that their flesh expresses an identical melanin threshold. Such determinations merely pick out a point at which these differences are seen as being unimportant. It is not the case that the quantitative differences do not exist, merely that those differences are characterized as being *qualitatively* trivial. In every such judgment, we are the arbiters of the scope at which difference may be suppressed; in many cases, the scope within which difference is suppressed is a matter of mere convention. This is an important distinction: ostensibly quantitative judgments of sameness are, in fact, qualitative judgments doled out in an *ad hoc* fashion. Within an arbitrary locus, we decide that differences do not matter. To perform judgments of sameness regarding the perceptible physical qualities of two objects is a much more plausible endeavor than the attempt to make such judgments about the interior experience, or “virtual identity”, of given individuals, as physical properties (as we will see) have more profound a modicum of stability and accessibility. When it comes to such determinations regarding “identity”, there exists a much more substantive obstacle, but this element of reductionism remains problematic.

I suggest that both sides of the aforementioned sameness-difference debate possess a conceptual univocity. Both positions identify a point at which difference may be ignored, and then proceed to define that which is “actually” different as the privation of said scope. On the side of sameness, the scope is that which we call “human”. Within this collection, any apparent differences are qualitatively trivial; any expression of difference within this set is a *mere* difference, a contingent attribute, equally capable of being or non-being. That “women” and “men” may exist in some sense, for instance, may be taken as given; but these differences are not essential ones. There is a peculiar cognitive dissonance here, a simultaneity through which sameness and difference are referenced, as though through transubstantiation. Everything which is not human supplies the contrast class. On the side of difference, the scope is a marginally narrower subset: women, or differently-abled women, or differently-abled women of color, and so forth. Regardless of the diminishing scope, there remains a point at which the experiential stratigraphy within this set collapses into sameness; a point at which there has been sufficient modifications to the nominal characterization of a group to ensure the internal likeness of the members on the one hand, and suitable distinction from all “different” groups on the other. In both cases the assertion is that among the things that exist, some are the same and some are different. Those which are the same adhere to a given scope, and that which is different is simply everything else. Sameness and difference are seen as equally coherent categories of thought, set in binary distinction, with the latter bracketed off as the privation of the former.

The obvious issue with this perspective is that the content of “sameness” is unequivocally gestural, capable of being doled out in a fashion so broad as to lose any real meaning. To speak of “women”, for instance, does not refer to a biological capacity to bear children, for there are certainly “women” who are sterile for a multiplicity of reasons. It refers neither to sexual organs nor chromosomal pairings, for these are not universal among those who are identified or self-identify as “women”. It does not correspond to social roles, or a set of personality traits, or the accoutrements of gender performance. Fundamentally, there exists only a single criterion that may arguably be applied to all individuals within this set: that they call themselves or are called “women”. This is not to say that there is not a statistically relevant distribution of morphological features associated with “women”: as Ian Hacking eloquently notes, nature is “unusually abrupt in its division”¹¹ with this regard. These morphological features, however, are not so universally distributed as to serve as the sufficient condition for this nominal identity. As Kwame Anthony Appiah observes in *The Ethics of Identity*, in the social domain there must be an “availability of terms in the public discourse that are used to pick out the bearers of the identity by way of criteria of ascription”¹². Such criteria are generally organized around stereotypes, both descriptive and normative¹³: morphological features, social roles, proper behavioral mores, and the

¹¹ Hacking, Ian, “Making Up People”, in *Science Studies Reader*, Mario Biagioli (ed.) (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 164.

¹² Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 66-67.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.67.

like. That there is not a consensus regarding the boundary between men and women¹⁴, assuming for a moment that this cleft is a binary one, is not problematic for the social conception of identity for it seems as though “it is enough that there is a rough overlap in the classes picked out by the term...[“women”], so there need be no precisely agreed upon boundaries, no determinate extension.”¹⁵ The net result is that such identifiers cannot be factual, biological ascriptions but ideological determinations. Many individuals may consent to calling themselves “women”, but there is no overarching consistency in the manner in which this term is applied. At root, this term as such is content-free in any rigorous manner; there are women because there are people whom we call “women”. In speaking of “women”, if we were to use the term in a manner inclusive of all the (more or less common) conceptions of what such a term entails, the issue is not that “nothing fits the loose criteria but...[that] too many things do.”¹⁶ By the time we strike upon a definition that is suited to the task of capturing the constellation of ways in which such a term is, in fact, applied, we are left only with the fact that we dole this identity out to some individuals and do not do so with others. Of course, I do not suspect that determinations regarding “women” are often made with so broad an extension in mind. What this implies, however, is that it is a term used to describe a subset formulated through a collection of stereotypes. Such determinations are

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections" in *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race*, K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann (eds.) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 72.

ideological ones, which bear out concealed assumptions regarding what it is to be a woman.

In tandem with the gestural quality of sameness, we see a suppression of the differences within a nominal group, and an arbitrariness with which the contrast class is carved out. What remains in this paradigm are concepts of sameness and difference that are fundamentally unsuited to the task of describing reality. It is important to note that it is this paradigm, one which implies the dyadic distinction between, and mutual coherence of, sameness and difference that is complicit in the production of xenophobia. This is not sufficient for the existence of xenophobia, but it is unavoidably the necessary condition. This is a point that will be explored at length in the next chapter.

If this manner of understanding the expressive force of sameness and difference is unsuitable, we are left with two alternative manners in which we may understand the coherence of these terms. The first of these is to deny the existence of difference absolutely. The manner in which this must be done would be more profound a denial than the approach merely privileging sameness articulated earlier. On that account, essential differences were denied, while maintaining the coherence of various nominal groups of individuals as meaningful categories of thought. An embrace of unequivocal sameness would require a rejection of both essential and *de facto* difference, rendering the notion of identity-conferring communities conceptually void. This is by no means, in itself, a problematic implication. A manner in which this position might be workable is

to appeal to the contrast between numerical and real distinction, as per Duns Scotus. “Real distinction” is that which individuates given substances, whereas “numerical distinction” picks out spatio-temporally delineated iterations of a given substance.¹⁷ A numerical distinction is not sufficient to pick out a truly “different” substance; it is akin to the manner in which we might say that two given raindrops are spatially discrete, but not really different in any substantive manner. That one happens to be in such a place at a given time, and the other in another such place is not sufficient to hold that they are *different* in any thoroughgoing fashion. On this interpretation, we might suggest that among individuals there exists only a numerical difference; we are more akin to modifications of the same substance, instantiated discretely. There is, I think, a certain appeal to this view, logistically speaking. To appeal to sameness in so profound a sense seems to be something of a panacea for inequality; there seems no basis upon which to justify prejudice.

This approach, however, is problematic for two primary reasons. The first issue is a fundamentally phenomenological critique: the idea of mere numerical distinction cannot help but stand in antithesis to the lived experience of other individuals. Were the distinction between myself and any other person merely numerical in quality, it seems as though this other person should be infinitely fathomable, predictable. Like two raindrops, our trajectories should be alike, our responses to stimuli similar, our emotional states as evident to one another as though they were our own. Such as it is,

¹⁷ As per Cross, Richard, "Medieval Theories of Haecceity", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

in others we always encounter something elusive, a barrier preventing us from “thinking ourselves into” their interior experience. This barrier indicates more than the physical inaccessibility of the perceptual perspective of any other individual; it speaks to the capacity for freedom, to act spontaneously, unpredictably. It is real difference that allows us to be cognizant of that which differentiates us from all others; not simply that which occupies another spatial location, but a person who brings something singular to the fore. Without real difference, communication would be unnecessary; the drive to express ourselves in a manner beyond mere vocalization and gesticulations is an impulse to capture experiential difference, to disclose our singular natures in the social domain.¹⁸

More to the point, however, determinations of sameness between two objects requires something more or less stable about which to form such judgments. This is only plausible if we were to define individuals on the basis, to import Hannah Arendt’s terminology, of “what we are” as opposed to “who we are”. The content of “what we are” is a given set of qualities, capacities, preferences, and so forth.¹⁹ This does not seem to me to capture the essence of actual persons; if I were to catalogue such data to exhausting effect, nowhere in the middle of this would I find “myself”. In the nexus of these traits, we find simulacra of ourselves, haphazard approximations. Such “whats”

¹⁸ Compare Arendt, H., *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 175-176.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.179.

do little more than gesture at the potential behaviors of individuals, they fail to disclose the content of the underlying “who”. If somebody were to describe me to another person, they would by no means know “who I am” until such a time as they meet me, until I disclose myself to her through speech and action. They might possess the image of some hypothetical person, but this image does not have the same disclosing force as the actual experience of people. Accordingly, I would suggest that to make a determination of a real unity underlying the numerical distinction of individuals, we must do so on the basis of “who” actual people are. As I will explore in sections to come, “who we are” does not have a static nature. This lack of stability means that determinations of sameness cannot be made in a plausible or meaningful fashion.

I would suggest that the natural conclusion is that in the domain of human existence, sameness is an illusory concept. In prior renderings, we have seen difference expressed only as a contrast class to sameness; the privation of that which confers sameness to a given set of individuals. In rejecting sameness, we require a much more robust articulation of the content of difference.

Through experience, we discover difference unfolding as a near-infinite manifold, subtle and profound in turn. As I encounter others, I intuitively grasp the illimitable differences which delineate our being. Turning inward, I am aware of the internal differences within myself; at times, I confront my own consciousness as an alien thing, nebulous and spontaneous. As Etienne Balibar writes in “Difference, Otherness, Exclusion”, “...the most fundamental difference, the one that precisely resists the

classifications and typologies, or its own fixation as essential difference, always arises from the inside, from the very existence of singularities.”²⁰ This is a boundless and primordial difference, one which manifests macrocosmically and microcosmically. This is a difference which is the very pulse of being. That the locus of my embodiment is discrete from all others, that my interior experience of the world belongs of necessity only to myself, is a profound expression of difference. That I change alongside others, that I communicate and learn, conveys this difference: there can be no change in a proverbial plenum.

The image of difference that I propose is a deep and far-reaching difference, inseparable from being, constantly expressed. To the same extent that I am different from others, I also discover that I am profoundly different from “myself”, in a manner I will discuss shortly. Most importantly, difference is something which can certainly be modal (for difference exists in many ways, it is *different* in every existing iteration), but cannot be more or less “different” as such. This is to say, to make a determination that some two objects are less different than another set of object implies that the possibility of sameness. At most, we could say that sameness subsists as an idea, at least nominally speaking; we can think about sameness, but can never experience sameness. It is an artificial concept plied upon reality to order perceptions in a communicable way. There is a role for sameness as a category of thought, as it is a precondition for language; it confers the ability to apply a singular name to something spatio-temporally

²⁰ Balibar, Etienne, "Difference, Otherness, Exclusion", *Parallax*, vol. 11(1), (2005), p. 26.

numerically sequential, but we must at the same time be constantly aware of the limitations of the concept in describing reality. That we use a given name for a sequence of perceptions over time should not by any means imply that we perceive something that is *actually* the same, merely successive. For the time being, it suffices to say only this, and bracket this particular discussion for a chapter to come. While I have mentioned that recourse to sameness is often seen as a justifying factor in defense of equality, this is also the case for difference. To say that all individuals are different, none more or less so, also has a powerful equalizing force. To whatever extent appealing to universal sameness has a powerful rhetorical effect, we may say the same of appealing to absolute difference.

Identity and Selfhood

With this understanding, we can progress into an account of the conceptual content of the terms “identity” and “selfhood”. This is a critical movement in progressing towards an account of xenophobia as such, as our manner of relating to ourselves is influential in this paradigm in no small part.

In providing an account of selfhood, I want to begin at the beginning; though this story does start with the “beginning” to which we have, perhaps, become accustomed. Our own story is not one of lordship and bondage.²¹ This is a mythological beginning. It is graspable but not relatable; it does not coincide with the lived experience of the

²¹ As per Hegel, G.W.F., *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 115-116.

world. If we are to comb our memories, we won't strike upon the first confrontation with another consciousness; we won't recall asserting our essential being over an abyss of contingency.

From the moment of conception, though far removed from memory, we exist alongside another in the most intimate possible sense. To exist apart from, or prior to, other selves, is incomprehensible. We must take as given that there is no "being" prior to "being with".²²

So our beginning, then, is an indefinite point in our personal history; the point at which our memories commence. At this point, and at every point after, the domain of perception unfolds with immediacy and simplicity. In this locus, we can survey from any one of innumerable vantage points; or perhaps look down, see the piecemeal fragments of our own extension. But, of course, we do not apprehend ourselves in our entirety, and certainly not such as another would. Because we have always lived alongside others, we're not strangers to being regarded. We have not returned every look cast in our direction; the knowledge that we have at times been seen as an object is not something foreign to us, even if we are never fully at home with the idea.

As Merleau-Ponty notes in *Phenomenology of Perception*, it is not the case that the gaze of a dog brings us any shame or discomfort. Discomfort comes with the absence of possible *communication*.²³ It is the look prior to communication that we

²² Nancy, J-L, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 30.

²³ Merleau-Ponty, M. "Other Selves and the Human World", in *Phenomenology of Perception*, (New York Routledge, 2002), 420.

sometimes experience as a sort of violation, as an unwelcome orientation towards the possibility that we occupy a position of strict objecthood for another self. It is in this way that I am privileged over any another self, and she over me. The moment of eye contact brings with it a startling symmetry. Here, too, we depart from the more mythological accounts of our interaction with other selves: this is not experienced as unequivocally polemical. It is not a matter of willing an absolute unity with, or obliteration of, another self.²⁴

In a moment of eye contact, there is a symmetrical *yearning*: it is a yearning to be “seen” rather than “looked at”. By this, I mean to say that we yearn for the other self’s awareness of the fact that interior experiences accompany the presentation of our exterior embodiment. Because we can never truly “think ourselves into” another self, our cognizance of the other self’s awareness comes in the form of communication. To put so fine a point on it, this is precisely why we do not feel the need to absorb or obliterate another self. Our liberation from the anxiety of our orientation towards our objecthood hinges on communication; and the desire to communicate with another self takes for granted that we have apprehended that person as an individual with the capacity to communicate.

In this way, my freedom depends on the freedom of others; it is a reciprocal liberation. This is not a unity but a symmetry, I apprehend some echo of myself in that other self. In our interaction with other selves, we discover a certain mimesis. I see him

²⁴ As per Sartre, J-P., “Chapter One, Part IV: The Look”, In *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), pp. 476-477.

smile and I can't help but smile too, it's automatic; or she laughs and I start to laugh. And we don't laugh for the same reason, it's as though there is a sympathetic resonance. We see somebody crying and we feel pain, even for a stranger; it is empathy in the truest sense of the term.²⁵ Although the impetus for or acuity of that suffering is never the same, because we have suffered, we can understand what it is for another to suffer. This sympathetic resonance, this mimesis, is what allows for communication.

And although, as I have said, we never truly "think ourselves" into another self, and our perception of any interaction will never have identical content, our experiences of other people allow more to come to the fore than that which could exist apart from one another. We enter into an intersubjective world. Through language, we are able to constitute a shared world of meaning; in this communion, our thoughts are "interwoven"²⁶. We find another self challenging or supplementing our own views, we are spurred to reconceptualizing our worldview in a manner we never previously considered²⁷. As the topography of my thoughts change, so too do those of that other self.

Such is the experience of *being* a self. Thus far I have avoided the term "identity" for a very particular reason. The term "identity", even on a strictly etymological level, implies sameness, derived from the Latin *identitas*²⁸. This term

²⁵ From the Greek "εμπάθεια", to "suffer with" another.

²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, M., "Other Selves and the Human World", in *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York Routledge, 2002), p. 413.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Literally, "sameness".

asserts some static core at the centre of our locus of being, some unchanging essence. “Who we are” is not idempotent, interacting in the world and with others without changing the agent in some manner. In the social domain, association with a “nominal identity”²⁹ has a political dimension, with an almost unparalleled capacity to both create communities of otherwise disparate individuals, and coerce individuals into political action that would not otherwise occur. A curious feature of nominal identities is that their conceptual content is not truly informed by the experiences and beliefs of those who associate with the corresponding virtual identity³⁰. To identify as Christian, for instance, does not necessarily implicate the belief that The Bible is the word of God, nor adherence to the tenets therein, nor a belief in Jesus as Messiah³¹. The fact of the matter is that a given nominal identity is held to apply equally to individuals with experiences so heterogeneous as to have functionally no resemblance in reality.³² Nonetheless, this nominal identity and the virtual experience thereof, though often utterly disjunctive, are “chronically implicated in each other”³³. Through this ascription, one has no recourse from bearing the weight of the entirety of the association

²⁹ Jenkins, Richard. *Social Identity, 3rd Ed.* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), pp. 44-45.

³⁰ See *Ibid.* For the sake of clarity, I maintain this terminology to indicate the experience of those who associate with a nominal identity and their corresponding experiences insofar as they have this association, rather than the notion that we, in fact, possess a virtual identity.

³¹ Similarly, the belief in Jesus as the Messiah is also accepted by some associating with Islam, Messianic Judaism and the *Baha’i* faith, and does not itself serve as a sufficient differentiating factor.

³² I am in agreement with Wittgenstein’s comments in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, writing at 5.5301, “That identity is not a relation between objects is obvious”, and in 5.5303 expands by noting, “Roughly speaking: to say of two things that they are identical is nonsense...” See Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, C. K. Ogden (trans.) (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd.), 1922.

³³ Jenkins, Richard. *Social Identity, 3rd Ed.* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 45.

implicated by the nominal identity, superimposed upon them in the social domain like an afterimage. Simultaneously, although association with a nominal identity is ostensibly meant to describe a subset of the experiences of an individual, in the public domain they are often seen as synecdochic, as though this piecemeal data is suitable to disclose *who* a person is.

This phenomenon occurs precisely because a nominal identity is not simply the complex of the *actual* experiences of those associating with the corresponding virtual identity. The relation between nominal identities and the corresponding personal experiences associated with adherence to them is strikingly Platonic in nature. These nominal identities are more or less static concepts in which individuals participate, bearing the burden of untold generations of human action in the political domain. The reality is, however, that identity is fictive. Who we are is not fixed, nor is association with a nominal identity sufficient to describe actual experiences or beliefs in any meaningful way. As Appiah succinctly states in *The Ethics of Identity*, “What’s modern is that we conceptualize identity in particular ways. What’s age-old is that when we are asked—and ask ourselves—*who* we are, we are being asked *what* we are as well.”³⁴ Fundamentally, the belief in identity involves the illicit commutation of an artifact of *what* we are into the category of *who* we are. That one may be of German extraction, for example, is an artifact of *what* an individual happens to be. To adopt this as an

³⁴ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *The Ethics of Identity*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. xiv.

element of identity involves the conflation of this with *who* that person is, believing that it has disclosive force.

It is for these reasons that I distinguish between identity and selfhood. While “identity” is conceptually null, there remains the fact that we *feel* some self at the centre of our perceptions over time. How are we to make sense of this? The content of this selfhood is informed in tandem with our experiences of other selves; we construct ourselves in relation to others. We are not best seen as discrete points, self-contained: we construct the “I” at the centre of our perceptions through the confluence of these relationships. Existing at a nexus of relations, we do so time and time again; we are constituted and reconstituted through the shared worlds formed with other selves. This is why we experience ourselves in ways that, at times, seem nominally antithetical. We behave in such a way that we consider extroverted, and in other times we recede into introversion. It is not that these attributes exist in a given ratio in our personalities. Both of these experiences are absolutely real in equal measure. So this should this not imply that there are fixed attributes corresponding to each relationship, as though one contrary recedes and the other steps forward.

Similarly, this dynamic cannot be captured by saying that we have “many selves”, doled out in proportion to each relationship with a certain isomorphic correspondence. Through the construction of interworlds, we change. But these worlds themselves are not hermetically sealed. Having changed, we bring that change to the

fore in other relationships. We experience the world through shifting schemata, actions taking on new meaning. Each of our relationships sediment all others.

I have stated that we are not one static self, nor or we many selves. Instead, I favor the idea that we are in a constant state of becoming, anchored within the loci of our bodies.³⁵ Each of us is a process rather than a product. Our embodied condition provides a limitation to our becoming, finite as we are. We are akin to a drop of ink in water; constantly and simultaneously articulating, while maintaining some internal structural cohesion. This is simply to say that, as with a drop of ink, all modifications refer to past states, both with respect to our internal experiences and physical embodiment. We do not “become” disjunctively, but it is a ceaseless process. Given enough time it may appear wholly different, the locus having changed absolutely.

Selfhood corresponds to the “human condition of plurality”³⁶ and our numerical sequential spatio-temporal referentiality. That we are aware of an “I” corresponds to the condition of plurality because selfhood is an expression of that which differentiates our interior experiences from that of other selves. Apart from others, an orientation towards our selfhood is impossible. Our “numerical sequential spatio-temporal referentiality” refers to the fact that we are not *the same* over time. Rather, the self at each point is numerically one and *similar* to the immediately preceding state. This

³⁵ Here, I am in agreement with such works as: Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, (London: Continuum, 2004); Bergson, Henri, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999); Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge, 1962); and others.

³⁶ Arendt, H., *The Human Condition*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 7.

account appeals, I think, to our lived experiences of ourselves. If I reflect on the events of my personal history, the “I” that perceived and experienced at age six has a relationship with the “I” that does so at age twenty-six. These are not *the same* people; I am not the same as that six-year-old physically, nor is my interior experience of the world the same. There is, however, a “connectedness”³⁷. Reflecting on my personal history, I construct a narrative uniting persons who I have been and the persons I am becoming. My awareness of these successive states forms the content of my selfhood.

That I may act in a way that others call “compassionate” or “selfish”, “outgoing” or “aloof” are not constitutive of *who* I am. These are features of *what* I am; attributes I can reveal or keep hidden, qualities that may change over time or disappear altogether.³⁸ These characteristics do not reveal myself, not that which makes me specifically *me*. In a similar fashion to identity, these descriptors conform to pre-existing schemata imposed upon behavior; it is not that they do not have descriptive force in the context of communication, but none are sufficient to capture the *who* behind these *whats*. *Who* we are, our becoming, our selfhood, is not something that I think can be captured by language. It is something that can be disclosed to others through action, as through each act we become the authors of our own narrative, but this selfhood is cognitively primitive. Appealing to identity is a matter of clumsily fumbling to capture the uniqueness and utter singularity of each human experience. In reality, such

³⁷ Compare Parfit, D., *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 300.

³⁸ Arendt, H., *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 179.

concepts and language itself serve as crude and unwieldy tools. In the flux of our own becoming, our selfhood is always something elusive, ephemeral and miasmic.

“The Other” and “The Stranger”

In the works of Hegel, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, we find accounts of the alteration of our interior experiences of the world in the wake of encountering another consciousness. In the writing of Sartre and Hegel, encountering the Other has an unequivocally polemic subtext: we experience an unwelcome orientation towards our simultaneous position of *being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself*, both contingent and necessary. Selfhood requires that we are capable of viewing ourselves as *being-for-itself*, a subject with the capacity for perception and thought. To interact with another consciousness, to be held in their gaze, also thrusts us into the awareness that, for that Other, we occupy a position of objecthood. Our perspective is decentered. We are driven, then, to assert our necessity over the other self. We desire to validate our interior apprehension of freedom through the subjugation of the Other; we aim to hold her in thrall, to absorb her, to obliterate her, to diminish her. This is, of course, impossible. It is precisely this tension that inspires the development of consciousness. So much as we seek to eclipse the Other, we require his existence for our own self-awareness. The capacity for selfhood balances precariously between our feelings of necessity and contingency, on these accounts. For Merleau-Ponty, the interaction between a consciousness and the Other does not have the same unequivocally

combative progression. This possibility is by no means excluded, but his own account makes more explicit the capacity for our experiences of other selves to be exquisitely beautiful and deeply transformative moments. Although these accounts appear, at first blush, as abstruse and removed from the terrain of reality, I think they do speak to experiences in our personal histories. We have experienced the gaze that is intrusive and unwelcome, felt ashamed or insecure in a moment we believed to be private. We have felt as though we were perceived as objects to another, as though they surveyed us with the detached glance of one buying produce rather than one connecting with a human being. We can never see ourselves as another sees us, or know what they think of us, or believe beyond any doubt the truth of their words. We simultaneously desire and fear this knowledge, and its capacity to flatter or wound. We long to have another see us as equal, and to be truly *known* in as intimate a way as we know ourselves. That the perspective of the Other is unreachable can be a deeply unsettling experience.

The concept of Otherness is also addressed outside the rubric of such phenomenological accounts. In Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, we find a brilliant exposition of the structural violence and inequality faced by "Western" women. Women are defined as the privation of that which is perceived as characteristically male: emotional where men are rational, fragile where men are strong, receptive where men are aggressive, and so forth endlessly.³⁹ Of women, de Beauvoir writes, "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she

³⁹ De Beauvoir, S., *The Second Sex*, H. M. Pashley (trans.) (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 52.

is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.”⁴⁰ De Beauvoir suggests that women, in a profound sense, are not seen as human in precisely the manner that men are, as though they were another species altogether. Where men are, of necessity, subjects, women are objects. They are objects to be sexualized, tools for procreation. We find a similar sentiment in Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, restructuring this tableau with the colonizer donning the mantle of the essential being, and the colonized, the contingent being. Fanon speaks of the Manichean paradigm of the colonizer, which the colonized can do nothing but internalize.⁴¹ Once again, we see the oppressed peoples characterized in a manner antithetical to the oppressors: the colonizer is civilized, rational, moral, where the “colonized race” is brutish, violent, immoral. “The governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants,” writes Fanon, “the others’.”⁴² In both such accounts, we find an echo of Hegel’s lordship and bondage, a recapitulation of that motif on a broader scale.

The linguistic equivocation between these two senses of Otherness runs the risk of proving misleading. While we may find a nebulous analogue for the oppression of a community in the narrative of the initial interaction between two consciousnesses, the framework for the latter does not fully capture the dynamic of the former. Any self is the Other respective to a given individual; this much is uncontroversial. Among

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴¹ Fanon, F., *The Wretched of the Earth*, Richard Philcox (trans.) (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004), p. 41.

⁴² Ibid., p. 40.

individuals, “the Other” is he who is discretely embodied and nothing more. Returning to de Beauvoir’s example, all men are Others respective to one-another. Despite ostensibly sharing membership in the same identity-conferring community, their discontinuity of their bodies and inaccessibility of their interior experiences secure this alterity. To say that women are Others respective to men is to make a much stronger claim than mere individual alterity. It is at this point that I return to an earlier observation: in asserting sameness of a set of individuals there is a qualitative judgment about the scope within which difference is trivial. Because all those included within that community are in fact different, the individuals excluded are not *merely* different but *radically* different. On this account, the difference between any man and a given woman is much more profound than the difference between any two men whatsoever. What I propose, accordingly, is a distinction in terms to differentiate between the alterity of individuals and the (perceived) alterity of communities. On de Beauvoir’s account, it does not suffice for us to say that woman is the Other⁴³. We find an image of woman as “the Stranger”: inaccessible, unrelatable, radically different.⁴⁴

⁴³ This is an essentially semantic point, for the purposes of clarifying my own idiom. De Beauvoir, I suspect, intended a reading very close in definition to my usage of “the Stranger”. I mean to say that because of the radical difference expressed, I elect to use a term that does not contain the ambiguity inherent in “the Other”, for reasons previously noted.

⁴⁴ I have elected to use this term, as it is a translation of the Ancient Greek word “ξένος”, to which “xenophobia” is etymologically related. In the Attic dialect, “Xenos” carries an array of meanings: it can convey an enemy-stranger, a guest, an individual from outside of one’s community, and so forth. That the original meaning is ambiguous seems an advantage to this selection in terminology. As per *The Second Sex*, the oppression of women would certainly constitute “prejudice”, but would not be an instance of “xenophobia” under my interpretation, as I will discuss in the following chapter.

On Community

Before proceeding to the discussion of xenophobia as such, we must make one final expedition into the topic's corresponding conceptual substratum. Broadly defined, I take "community" to mean the association of two or more individuals on the basis of physical, experiential or conceptual resemblance. Although communities are conceptually separable from individuals, this is not the case in reality. Whether we consent to this fact, whether we will or desire it, from the moment of conception we are situated in a community. More to the point, we hold membership in *many* communities. To conceive of a human self apart from others is fundamentally unthinkable. As Jean-Luc Nancy writes in *Being Singular Plural*, "...it is not the case that the 'with' is an addition to some prior Being; instead, the 'with' is at the very heart of Being."⁴⁵ There is no existence outside of contextual existence; to live as a human is to live *with* others. It is with this understanding that I proceed: the existence of communities is absolutely primitive to the human condition.

In sweeping terms, there are two manners through which communities are constructed: they can be "closed" or "open" in nature. For our purposes at this juncture, it is the first mode of constructing communities that is relevant to our discussion, as the latter is the topic of the third and final chapter of this thesis. A closed community is one which determines membership on the basis of association with a nominal identity. As discussed in the first subsection of this chapter, this class of community involves a

⁴⁵ Nancy, J-L, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 30.

paradigmatic commitment to the identification of sameness of those included in its confines, and identifies those falling outside of the scope of that community as all those who do not possess the relevant “identity”. In this way, we return to the paradigm that upholds the simultaneous conceptual coherence of both sameness and difference, and the dyadic relationship that this implies. As we will see, this serves as the cognitive precondition for the existence of xenophobia.

Chapter II: Xenophobia

Prejudice

It is at times tempting to speak of xenophobia as a function of racism; as a disposition of that attitude, or perhaps a modal subset. While xenophobia often has racial overtones (though not of necessity) and these two attitudes often manifest in a similar manner on a grassroots level, I do not think that these terms are by any means fully equivalent. Here, too, it is worth offering a schematization of relationship between these attitudes.

Our story begins with prejudice, which in itself asserts only the adverse judgment of a collection of individuals on the basis of a facet of their presumed identity. Under the framework I have provided, it should be clear that I speak of “identity” in only the most glib and superficial sense. Identity, it has been noted, is a spurious concept: to speak of identity involves an erroneous transposition of *what* an individual is with *who* that person is. When I say “presumed identity”, then, I intend a double-meaning. Firstly, because identity is a fictive concept on the terrain of reality, a belief that such a thing exists can only be presumed without suitable justification. In another sense, that somebody wields such terms to reference an individual or group by no means suggests that the individual or group in question consents to internalizing a given identity. On this level, to speak of the identity of another is often highly presumptuous.

Any determination of identity involves an explicit or implicit judgment of sameness. In one sense, as we have seen, it implies the belief that the selfhood of an individual has static content over swaths of time. In another sense, generally, when we speak of *our* identities, we are not referencing a singular affiliation. We aim to capture the particular constellation of nominal communities that we believe inheres in us in such a way that picks us out distinctly from others. To clarify, the content of “my identity” might involve a laundry list of attributes referencing ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, gender, creed and so forth on to infinity. Taken separately, none of these pieces of information are specific to me, uniquely. It is the complex of these, the particular configuration and proportion in which they exist, that putatively indicates *me* with a certain degree of specificity. In this way, feelings of prejudice regarding some aspect of an individual’s “identity” are judgments of homogeneity among those participating in that identity. I do not suspect anybody could make the case that disliking some revelation of *who* a person is could constitute prejudice; to dislike or to hate somebody in particular in an endlessly understandable occurrence. Prejudice generally involves adverse judgment without, or in spite of⁴⁶, the experience of *who* a person is on the basis of their presumed association with a given identity.

⁴⁶ I say “generally” because it is, of course, possible to have such an attitude towards somebody whom you also dislike in particular. By no means does a particular adverse judgment of an individual preclude prejudice. In many ways, prejudice may predispose an unfavorable judgment of *who* a person is. We may safely say that such a situation involves prejudice when the presumed affiliation with a given identity would have been sufficient for adverse judgment.

Prejudice serves as an umbrella term, spawning a kaleidoscope of manifestations. There are two primary designations which aid in understanding these manifestations: prejudice can exist either “inclusively” or “exclusively”. With respect to the former, this should by no means imply that the community on the receiving end of the discrimination (henceforth, the “Strangers”) are in some fashion viewed as insiders⁴⁷ by the discriminator, rather that these communities can exist together within the same geographic or political locus.

Etienne Balibar draws a similar conceptual distinction, identifying what he calls *internal racism*, which is “directed against a population regarded as 'a minority' within the national space”, and *external racism*, which is an “extreme form of xenophobia”⁴⁸. Balibar provides a further schema for categorizing racist ideologies in tandem with this, distinguishing between *auto-referential* and *hetero-referential* racisms. The former involves the self-identification of the “bearers of prejudice” as the superior race, whereas the latter involves identifying the “victims of prejudice” as the “evil or inferior race”⁴⁹. This schema has been an influential orientation towards modes of racism in the context of my research, but I break pattern with this division for a couple of reasons: firstly, while xenophobia often has a racial dimension, this is not the case in all

⁴⁷ I elect to use this terminology to indicate those who have membership in a given closed community against which the Stranger is compared. This should not imply that “insiders” and “Strangers” are absolute distinctions: both communities in question (given that they both actually view themselves as communities) may view the one another as mutually strange. All closed communities will have their own insiders and outsiders, these are relational terms.

⁴⁸ Balibar, E., “Racism and Nationalism” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstien (eds.) (London: Verso, 1991), p. 38-39.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

instantiations. Secondly, on my interpretation, xenophobic ideologies may be directed towards a minority within a national space. The distinction I draw orbits two basic attitudes that drive prejudice: in the case of *inclusive prejudice*, the governing attitude is a feeling of superiority over the outsider, whereas it is fear and resentment which gives rise to *exclusive prejudice*. To import Balibar's terminology, there seems to be a general tendency for ideologies of inclusive prejudice to be auto-referential, whereas ideologies of exclusive prejudice are often hetero-referential.

By way of illustration, the accounts of de Beauvoir and Fanon serve as excellent models of the inclusive mode of prejudice. Although on de Beauvoir's account women are defined by their radical alterity from men, to conceive of a viable social community without women is challenging. Despite the fact that, in this paradigm, men are constructed as the bearers of countless laudable qualities and women as their antitheses, these disjunctive natures are not sufficient to dictate the exclusion of women from all registers of societal structure. Certainly, it is adequate to justify the exclusion from certain levels of societal stratigraphy: from education, from manufacturing, from leadership, and so forth. Nonetheless, there is a role, however bleak, carved out for women. We find a similar dynamic in place in Fanon's account. The colonized are commodified and objectified profoundly; they are animalistic, immoral. Violence is administered brutally, thoughtlessly, utterly nonchalantly. The life or death a Stranger is a trivial thing. Despite this, the colonizer does not strive to obliterate the colonized; each individual is replaceable, because there will always be

another to take her place. Any Stranger himself is inconsequential, but the “colonized race” must remain. This attitude exists precisely because the colonized, in fact, fulfill a function: she can labor in ways too ignominious for the colonizer.

In this fashion, inclusive prejudice is remarkably opportune for the oppressor; it is highly self-interested. The judgment that the Stranger is by his very nature unsuited to equal footing in societal strata is a powerful justification of existing power structures. Inclusive prejudice has an intimate relationship to mastery, asserting dominance and ordering bodies within a community. While issues of “race” are by no means unique to inclusive prejudice, what we ordinarily call “racism” or “sexism” generally reflect the attitude of this mode of prejudice. It is this mode that consents to such phenomena as disjunctive compensation for work, limitations to upwards mobility, estrangement from similar social freedoms. It is what ensures that there will always be a class of laborers toiling for the relative luxury of the oppressors.

The identities targeted by inclusive and exclusive prejudice are not discrete. The differentiae exist in the attitude towards the relative role of the Stranger, and the course of action that this relationship dictates. To loosely import Aristotelian terminology, the relationship between a given community and the Stranger in a milieu of inclusive prejudice is contradictory. For the insiders, the qualities of the Stranger are privative with respect to their own; if the insiders are intelligent, the Strangers are ignorant. They are like incomplete facsimiles of the insiders, diminished and developmentally embryonic approximations. The insider can know all that the Stranger

knows. The insiders can “think themselves into” the Stranger, can understand the uppermost limits of their capacities, but the reverse is not the case. The Stranger is understandable, simply lesser. In the environment of exclusive prejudice, this is not the case. The Stranger is the contrary of the insider; not simply different, not simply diminished, but the opposite. If the insider is intelligent, it is not simply that the Stranger should be seen as ignorant; an aspect of the rationale for this mode of prejudice is that she is, in fact, devious and wicked. Unlike the relation in the scheme of inclusive prejudice, the Stranger is not seen as a lesser human: if he is human at all, it is in an utterly different way. A virtual dehumanization often accompanies exclusive prejudice. In *The Force of Prejudice*, Pierre-Andre Taguieff draws a similar distinction, arguing:

From now on the racism₁ of domination should not be confused with the racism₂ of extermination: inegalitarian logic, that which gives way to the Self-Other relation on a hierarchical scale, results in the struggle of the master and the slave, that is, in a dialectic whose very principle has been accepted; the logic of identity, that which refused any Self-Other relationship, and thereby all dialectization, can result only in the achievement of the desire for proper purity by the elimination of the unique source of impurity, the Other.⁵⁰

The Stranger is so foreign, so “strange”, that her identity is simply irreconcilable with the societal structures in which the insider exists. When the attitude of exclusive prejudice sufficiently enters the political sphere, the only recourse for the insider is the absorption, expulsion or obliteration of the Stranger.

⁵⁰ Taguieff, Pierre-Andre, *The Force of Prejudice*, Hassan Melehy (trans.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 131.

Absorption, Expulsion, Obliteration

Having drawn the distinction between Colonialist and National Socialist modes of prejudice, Taguieff turns to a discussion of the mandates of exclusive prejudice, writing:

The Other who cannot be made inferior, that is, acceptable within the strict measure of his allocation to an inferior place on a common scale, may be defined only as exterminable. The genocidal logic imposes itself on the basis of the Other's incapacity to be ranked on a hierarchical scale. It constitutes the necessary steering of the perception of the Other as uncategorizable (unclassifiable, anomic), posited in his pure Difference, threatening proper identity.⁵¹

That the insider and the Stranger cannot co-exist in the context of exclusive prejudice is given, for their beliefs, behaviors, and fundamental lifeways are impossible to reconcile. As both domination and cohabitation are impossible, Taguieff is correct to note that the path to genocide is distinctly possible. I think, however, that there are three possible manners in which the problem of the Stranger can be addressed.

The first approach is the absorption of the Stranger. By this, I mean that the insider may endeavor to eclipse the identity of the Stranger with something new and palatable, to isolate that which makes the Stranger “strange” and replace it with a comprehensible attribute. This might be seen as a civilizing process, a service to the Stranger, necessary for her to be able to understand the superiority of the insider’s life way. This should not suggest, out of hand, that the aim of this process is absolute naturalization. Over the course of time and the particularities of the situation, this may be seen as a possibility. If anything, however, this approach paves the route for the

⁵¹ Taguieff, Pierre-Andre, *The Force of Prejudice*, Hassan Melehy (trans.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 125.

transition from exclusive prejudice to inclusive. In many cases, the Stranger cannot become un-strange, merely strange in a less insidious fashion.

The first approach may appear, in a certain view, the mildest. Most often, I suspect, this programme is instituted with the most optimistic of intentions. In every manifestation of prejudice, I cannot imagine that the insider feels anything but justified in their actions. Absorption is a method which must appear to confer endless benefits on the Stranger, to allow them some poor piece of boundless richness of the insider's social reality. In effect, however, this approach has the capacity to be devastating.

I reflect now on Aboriginal residential schools in Canada, instituted in the latter half of the 19th century and remaining in operation until the closure of the last remaining school in the 1990s. The widespread physical, sexual⁵² and psychological abuse that is now known to have occurred in those confines is actually utterly tangential to my point, although this certainly counts among the reasons that this represents a disgraceful and, frankly, horrifying epoch in Canadian history.⁵³ More to the point, this acutely illustrates both the rationale for this approach in the context of exclusive prejudice, and the staggeringly profound ramifications thereof. Attendance at one of a given network of schools was made legislatively compulsory for all Aboriginal children. Putatively, the rationale for the institution of such schools was to equip the Aboriginal

⁵² In some locations, this "sexual abuse" included sterilization.

⁵³ See: Miller, James Rodger, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools*, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2003); McCormick, Roderick and Paul T.P. Wong, "Adjustment and Coping in Aboriginal People" in *Handbook of Multicultural Perspectives on Stress and Coping*, Paul T. P. Wong and Lilian C. J. Wong (eds.) (New York: Springer, 2006), pp.515-535.

population for a life in the quickly-industrializing Canada, to furnish with them with language and education in order that they might advance in civility and productivity. If this characterization seems to overstate the point, we must keep in mind that one of the items of legislation complicit in the institution of residential schools in 1857 was entitled the “Gradual Civilization Act”.⁵⁴ In effect, the aim of the programme was to make Canadian children of Aboriginals, and in so doing, absorb Aboriginal cultures absolutely in generations to come. The fact of the matter was that Aboriginal cultures were not reconcilable with what was seen by some as the Canadian way of life. The result of this action was, in effect, tantamount to a cultural genocide^{55,56} “Cultural genocide”, or “ethnocide”, is not synonymous with genocide *per se*⁵⁷; it is not the extermination of individuals, but in this case the destruction of language, family structures, cultural

⁵⁴ Chamberlin, J. E., “Culture and Anarchy in Indian Country” in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference*, Michael Asch (ed.) (Vancouver, Canada: UBC Publishing, 2002), p. 28.

⁵⁵ Lest I appear to sound inconsistent at this juncture in implying that the loss of culture is troubling, while maintaining the illusory nature of identity, I offer the following: while “culture” or “heritage” does not have expressive force in disclosing *who* we are, the many and varied manners of expression and communication that develop in a given community is a valuable thing. To force others to conform to a common idiom also forces these individuals to think, perceive, know, and express themselves in a given fashion. While we do not bear the burden of the history of a community with which we are affiliated, the lessons of human action are important. This manner of absorption is also a loss of the knowledge of that history. On an individual level, there is also a near-endless wealth of literature on the potential effects of estrangement from family at an early age on the psyches of children. In these respects, and others, I believe it is consistent to maintain these dual positions.

⁵⁶ For similar usage of the term, see: Dean E. Neu, Richard Therrien, *Accounting for genocide: Canada's Bureaucratic Assault on Aboriginal People* (Lackpoint, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2003), p. 23; Llewellyn, Jennifer J., “Dealing with the Legacy of Native Residential School Abuse in Canada: Litigation, ADR, and Restorative Justice”, *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 52(3) (Summer, 2002), pp. 253-300.

⁵⁷ David MacDonald, “First Nations, Residential Schools, and the Americanization of the Holocaust: Rewriting Indigenous History in the United States and Canada”, *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 40(4) (Dec., 2007), p. 1005.

practices, and so forth. In this way, the case of Canadian Residential Schools is an example *par excellence* of the programme of absorption.

The second approach I have mentioned is expulsion, which involves the direct or indirect conveyance of bodies to a given geographic region. By “directly”, I am speaking of programmes instituted with the explicit aim of the repatriation, segregation or deportation. “Indirect” expulsion is the more hidden and implicit counterpart, often achieved through the medium of legislation. This may involve a shift in immigration policy, impediments to travel through border crossings, and urban planning strategies that prevent the free movement of bodies. Such an approach effectively controls those who may pass into and outside of a given location without explicitly targeting a subset of Strangers.

Expulsion as such is not unique to exclusive prejudice. What differentiates this process in the contexts of inclusive and exclusive prejudice is the aim of social programmes of expulsion. In the logic of inclusive prejudice, the aim is to reduce interaction between the insider and the Stranger. As these groups occupy different vertical positions in the same hierarchy, separation and reduction of interaction is the goal. By way of illustration, a paradigmatic example is the overt structural and systemic oppression of African-Americans in the late 19th through mid-20th centuries.⁵⁸ Racial zoning was a common practice in municipalities, beginning in the 1870s. In the same

⁵⁸This should by no means suggest that systemic barriers to movement and housing is not alive and well in a contemporary context, for it is undoubtedly the case that these impediments continue to exist.

decade, the Jim Crow Laws were instituted in the Southern States, mandating the segregation of public facilities such as public schools, medical facilities, public transportation, and restrooms.⁵⁹ While this was not a mandate in the Northern States, there often existed a “*de facto* segregation arising from residential patterns”.⁶⁰ Despite the fact that racial zoning was deemed unconstitutional in 1917, many municipalities continued to enforce racial zoning for decades; Birmingham, Alabama, continued to unconstitutionally enforce this residential segregation until 1951.⁶¹ Although the Jim Crow laws were overruled in 1964, there were other systemic practices which prevented the integration of the, largely poor, urban African American population. The Housing Act of 1934 gave rise to the practice of “redlining”, which allowed for financial institutions to designate certain high-risk neighborhoods which would be ineligible for banking and insurance.⁶² Predictably, the neighborhoods in question were generally low-income “racialized” neighborhoods, which ensured that many African Americans would be unable to secure mortgages in predominantly white residential areas. Meanwhile, there was a metropolitan tendency for middle-class white residents to relocate to suburbs, due to housing incentives. Although by the 1960s there was “mounting pressure for integration”, many suburban neighborhoods became inclusive

⁵⁹ Briggs, Xavier de Souza and William Julius Wilson, *The Geography of Opportunity: Race and Housing Choice in Metropolitan America*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), pp. 220-221.

⁶⁰ Clotfelter, Charles T., *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.19.

⁶¹ Connerly, Charles E., *"The Most Segregated City In America": Urban Planning and Civil Rights in Birmingham, 1920-1980* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), p. 3.

⁶² Wagner, John A., "Redlining" in *Encyclopedia of American Race Riots, Volume 2*, Walter C. Rucker and James Nathaniel Upton (eds.), (Westport, CT: Green Press, 2007), pp. 547-548.

along the lines of race rather social class.⁶³ In effect, this purported diversification did little for the urban poor.

Despite the, in turn, *de jure* and *de facto* segregation in the urban United States, the aim of indirect expulsion was not to eliminate any and all contact with the African American population. At this time, many African Americans performed vital (although generally menial) social roles. The aim of this social programme was safety and palatability of white residential neighborhoods and the reduction of the degree to which the privileged class would be forced to interact with the oppressed class.

By contrast, in the logic of exclusive prejudice, the insider and the Stranger may not occupy different vertical strata in a social hierarchy. The aim of exclusive programmes of expulsion is the absolute alienation of the Stranger from the insider. In an environment of exclusive prejudice, the aim is that of absolute separation. An example of this kind of programme of exclusion is the internment of Japanese Canadians and Japanese nationals in British Columbia following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Following the initial Order in Council mandating that all Japanese “aliens” and “persons of Japanese Ancestry” relocate from coastal military zones, the anti-Japanese sentiment towards the province interior in 1942 was so profound that “the ‘evacuees’ would need to be ‘resettled’”⁶⁴. In this “resettlement” process, Japanese Canadians were

⁶³ Wilson, William Julius, "The Impact of Racial and Nonracial Structural Forces on Poor Urban Blacks" in *Covert Racism: Theories, Institutions, and Experiences*, Rodney D. Coates (ed.), (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), p. 24.

⁶⁴ Peterson, Nancy J., *Against Amnesia: Contemporary Women Writers and the Crises of Historical Memory*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 143.

transported in “trains with covered windows, so they would not be able to see where they were going”⁶⁵. Rather than “internment camps”, these facilities were euphemistically called “interior settlements” or “interior housing centres”.⁶⁶ Some 21,000 individuals of Japanese descent, over 75% of which were Canadian citizens, were sent to labor or detention camps, their property confiscated and sold.⁶⁷ 1,500 individuals of Japanese descent were sent to forced labor “road camps”, and 750 sent to Prisoner of War camps.⁶⁸ Between 1945 and 1947 there was a gradual closure of these detention facilities, although this was accompanied by pressure for many of Japanese descent (including Canadian citizens) to “repatriate” to Japan.⁶⁹

This example follows the model of expulsion in the logic of exclusive prejudice. As Japanese Canadians in the wake of Pearl Harbor were perceived as the Stranger or enemy, occupying different strata in the social sphere was not possible. The solution was to remove those of Japanese ancestry from cohabitation with “Canadians”, to detain them in a central location and restrict their movement. The intent of expulsion under exclusive prejudice is absolute and discrete separation.

The final approach that the insider may adopt is extermination. There is little that must be said on this count, as this approach is largely self-explanatory. Violence

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.145

⁶⁶ Drinnon, Richard, *Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1987), p. 279.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Razack, Sherene, *Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society*, (Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 2002), p. 80.

⁶⁹ Peterson, Nancy J., *Against Amnesia: Contemporary Women Writers and the Crises of Historical Memory*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 153.

itself is by no means the specific to the domain of exclusive prejudice. It is, in fact, frequently a feature of inclusive prejudice. That having been said, mass extermination or genocide always reflects the attitude of exclusive prejudice. Often, the rationale for this project has overtones of expiating some taint: “ethnic cleansing” or the pursuit of “racial purity”. Although all three methods of responding to exclusive prejudice can bear out devastating consequences, I suspect it is uncontroversial to state that this approach is the most extreme. Extermination is not the ultimate trajectory of exclusive prejudice in all cases; these three approaches do not represent an inevitable linear progression. Extermination is, however, the pinnacle act in an environment where hatred, resentment and suspicion are left to fester.

Xenophobia: The Fear of the Stranger

“Xenophobia” tends to be loosely defined in cross-disciplinary literature as an intense hatred or fear of the Stranger. Hatred certainly, in effect, is often an emotion associated with xenophobic logic. Xenophobia also, perhaps ubiquitously, orbits a subset of the sentiments of resentment, desire for vengeance, hatred and disgust. When I say now that I believe the fundamentally characteristic attitude of xenophobia logic is “fear”, it is by no means to the exclusion of these other sentiments. The rationale for this suggestion is that, if we are to consider what differentiates inclusive

and exclusive prejudice, inclusive prejudice tends to ascribe superiority to the insider on all registers. To import the idiom of Balibar, inclusive prejudice is auto-referential, constructing the insider as moral, intelligent, and civilized. Exclusive prejudice is hetero-referential; the Stranger is not a human of reduced capacities, but posited as a “counterrace”⁷⁰. The Stranger may be uncivilized, is almost certainly immoral, but there is something about the Stranger that makes her potentially powerful, a threat and an enemy. This is precisely why the insider and the Stranger cannot occupy positions in the same social stratigraphy. Resentment, desire for vengeance, hatred and disgust correspond to narratives of past wrongdoing or perceived moral deficiency, but it is fear that underpins the inability for the Stranger and the insider to engage in common politics.

As we know from lived experience, fear has a profound ability to interrupt regular thought processes. We cross to the other side of the street at night. We ready our keys, that we might enter our homes as quickly as possible; we close the door. We lock it, reverberating like a plucked guitar string. We stand for a minute reeling from adrenaline, the pulse at our jugular a palpable thing, feeling the entirety of our embodiment in our fragile beating hearts. Fear is a deeply physical experience. It is not a cautioning voice in the periphery of our consciousness. It is an irresistible compulsion. It is consuming. The entirety of our past and future contracts into the immediacy of the present, into one bodily moment. We act in ways that we would otherwise deem

⁷⁰ Taguieff, Pierre-Andre, *The Force of Prejudice*, Hassan Melehy (trans.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 132.

irrational, often in advance of any manifest threat. While it is, at times, a natural action, it also has the capacity to be a deeply coercive and controlling force. In the political domain this is no less true. Fear is an incomparably dangerous force, because fear consents to all things. Fear always says “yes” and never says “no”. In fear, there are no limits. Everything is justified. We are justified in killing to prevent killing, justified in torturing to prevent suffering. As Tzvetan Todorov writes in *The Fear of Barbarians: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations*, fear is “...the main justification for behavior often described as ‘inhuman’”.⁷¹ We often take as given that we have the *right* to protect ourselves and our loved ones, whatever the cost. At times, the “cost” is that we must strike first.

In some instances, this fear is predicated in the perceived threat of violence. In the Stranger we find a brutal and barbaric people. They are aggressive. They hate us and our way of life. Their methods are beyond all propriety, beyond the confines of morality. In that way, they are an unpredictable and pervasive threat. Their violence is not easily comprehensible, it is transgressive. In response to Ron Paul’s statement in the 2007 GOP debate that the attacks of September 11th were caused by American foreign policy, Rudy Giuliani, on the FOX News program *Hannity and Colmes*, stated, “These people came here and killed us because of our freedom of religion, because of our freedom for women, because they hate us... If you are confused about this I think you

⁷¹ Todorov, T., *The Fear of Barbarians: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations*, Andrew Brown (trans.), (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010) p. 10.

are putting our country in much greater jeopardy."⁷² What we see here is characteristic of the rhetoric surrounding the Stranger: an outright denial that there is a causal link between the insider's actions and the Stranger's violence. Their violence is not sensible; it is motivated by a baseless hatred for the insider's identity.

This having been said, fear in the political realm may be more of a nebulous thing than our individual "fight or flight" reactions. This is the case because at times (though by no means always), the threat is not to our survival as such, but to that upon which we base our identity. It is often the case that we fear the contamination of our existential substructure. This should in no way imply that this sort of fear is not a far-reaching and robust thing: if we believe that our identities are constitutive of the people who we are, a disruption of this involves a loss of self. In a way, this could be seen as a sort of death. It could be the death of *who* we believe we are, eclipsed by something new and unknowable.

There are a number of ways we may fear for the sanctity of our collective identities. As mentioned, the oppositional identity of the Stranger means that our basic values are not common. Because of their absolute difference, with certain respects communication is simply impossible. We can't always reason with the Stranger. In a profound way, we are not speaking the same language, even in the same idiom. Our cognitive substructures are not the same. The Stranger may penetrate our institutions legally, politically or economically. The Stranger is morally transgressive, with the

⁷² Giuliani, Rudy, Interview, Interview with Sean Hannity, *Hannity & Colmes*, FOX News, May 15, 2007.

capacity to uproot important mores. One brilliant example of the rhetoric surrounding these fears can be seen in the transcript of the television advertisement by the National Organization for Marriage in 2009 entitled “Gathering Storm”, airing on channels in New Jersey, Iowa, New Hampshire, Maine and Rhode Island. The advertisement features a number of people speaking about their concerns in a world where same-sex marriage is legal:

"I'm a California doctor who must choose between my faith and my job."
"I'm part of a New Jersey church group punished by the government because we can't support same sex marriage."
"I'm a Massachusetts parent helplessly watching public schools teach my son that gay marriage is okay."
"Some who advocate for same sex marriage have not been content with same-sex couples living as they wish."
"Those advocates want to change the way I live."
"I have no choice."⁷³

Evidently, same-sex marriage has the capacity to uproot families economically, as professionals are forced to choose between their beliefs and their legal obligations. We see that morality and familial structures are uprooted, threatening faith groups and promoting an undesired ideology to youth. Fundamentally, same-sex marriage is threatening a core aspect of American identity: freedom. Because advocates for same-sex are not content to simply enjoy their own freedoms, they are chipping away at the freedom of other Americans in so profound a manner one would think the advertisement was opposing *mandatory* same-sex marriage.

⁷³ National Organization for Marriage, Advertisement, April 7 2009, Television.

I suspect that there are three key ways we might fear that the Stranger could go about disrupting these aspects of identity. The first is through sheer violence, victimizing or annihilating through war, terrorism, or hostile takeover. The second method would be through absorption. The mere presence of the Stranger may have a corrupting influence on the suggestible. We might see a virtual diaspora on the basis of identity. Finally, we may fear a social takeover. Through increasing birth rates, immigration, or proselytization, there may be a point at which the shifting demographics supply a suitable foothold for the Stranger to disrupt these factors within a given locus.

Todorov puts so fine a point on the fearsomeness of the threat of the disruption to identity on any of these levels. As compared to the narrative of our personal histories, he writes,

Collective identity works in a completely different way; it is already fully formed by the time the individual discovers it, and it becomes the invisible foundation on which her identity is built. Even if, seen from the outside, every culture is mixed and changing, for the members of the community that it characterizes, it is a stable and distinct entity, the foundation of their collective identity. For this reason, all changes that affect culture are seen as an attack on my integrity... what forces changes by force of circumstance over which the individual has no power is perceived as a kind of degradation, for it makes our very sense of being feel fragile. The contemporary period, during which collective identities are called on to transform themselves more and more quickly, is thus also the period in which groups are adopting an increasingly defensive attitude, and fiercely demanding their original identities.⁷⁴

This passage represents an acute articulation of precisely that at which I am attempting to gesture. When our sense of *who* we are is bound up in the perception of identity,

⁷⁴ Todorov, T., *The Fear of Barbarians: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations*, Andrew Brown (trans.), (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010) pp. 64-65.

anything that destabilizes the trappings of that identity confronts us as a polemic. Identity is something to be protected, because if we do not we run the risk of losing ourselves. With the introduction of profound change the world, *our* world, our *being* is at stake. This is the reason that the psychological roots of xenophobia are more complex than the simple fear of violence. The threat of violence can certainly be a proximate motivating factor, but the more distal and, perhaps, subconscious factors exert at least as much influence. To lose identity seems tantamount to ethnocide.

The loss of lives, if such a thing occurs, has the capacity to be a liminal experience, it can provide the necessary push to collective action that may otherwise seem extreme. It urges us to cloister, to protect a way of life, to band together under a common banner and make comrades of otherwise disparate peoples. This is especially the case in nations where politics orbit the issue of security, where violence appears to us as a disruption of the natural order and so easily thrusts us in to a “state of exception”. Such circumstances serve as a vector to react to deep-seated, pre-existing anxieties. Violence is by no means necessary to react to the threat of the Stranger, for communities often take action in the absence of violence. Neither are such threats a question of borders and national frontiers, for they can take root within and without of these boundaries in equal measure. I linger on the matter of violence because it has played a role in the genesis of the most sensational and far-reaching examples of xenophobia in the contemporary era, a topic to which we shall turn shortly. As mentioned, violence or the threat thereof serves as the ultimate mechanism of consent,

carving out the ability to react in a manner and degree that would otherwise be unjustifiable with a singular cathexis. In such situations, terrorism and counter-terrorism, threat and security, violence and defense become indistinguishable from one another in everything but name.

In xenophobia, the identity of the Stranger appears to us as something fully formed, monolithic, impermeable. The object of xenophobia is never actual people; more often than not, xenophobia exists in spite of any lived experience of those partaking in the ostensible target identity. The object of xenophobia is the hypothetical Stranger, the Platonic Form of the Stranger, unshaped by the actual complex of selves “participating” in the identity in question.

The Homunculus

The object of xenophobia is not a *who*, nor a complex of *whos*. The object of xenophobia is akin to a homunculus, a representation of a potential person imbued with countless characteristics. The homunculus could be anybody, but corresponds to nobody. The homunculus is an idea.

I have mentioned already the peculiarly Platonic nature of identity. Identity is not constructed in a bottom-up fashion, given shape by the actual selves to whom the name supposedly corresponds. The expressive force of a given identity does not

describe the lived experiences of those selves. Identity is constructed out in top-down fashion. It is a pattern of supposed characteristics, a prototype that is conceptualized and overlaid upon individuals. It is not a description of reality, but an addition to reality. It is doled out in a manner that has little regard for applicability, which we carry upon our shoulders like an ill-fitting garment. While we are, at times, partial authors in the construction of identity, they are also in many ways burdens thrust upon us. Identities are also shaped by those who define themselves otherwise, by the deeds of those to whom we possess only a nominal relation, and by the narratives of some version of the past that we temporally succeed.

The perceived identity of the Stranger is often, in large part, the construction of those who define themselves in the contrary manner. That is to say, identity does not strictly arise within a community as a result of the self-definition of the members of that community. The insider fashions a mold that may be applied to a set of Strangers, one which justifies their exclusion from being granted membership within a given community. I by no means suggest that this is an intentional or specifically malicious process, only that having membership in a closed community by its very method of construction asserts the existence of given criteria sufficient to provide this membership, and requires that there are others who do not meet these criteria. For identity to have distinguishing force, it must pick out what makes a community different from other communities. The existence of those other communities is a precondition for the viability of a given identity. Those who are excluded from membership are not

always apprehended simply by their privation of given necessary qualities, but seen as having a counter-identity implied by the collection of those negative qualities. As Jean-Luc Nancy writes in *Being Singular Plural*, “identity is by definition not an absolute distinction, removed from everything and, therefore, distinct from nothing: it is always the other of another identity... identity *as such* is indiscernible.”⁷⁵ This is to say, to conceive of identity without the existence of individuals participating in that identity is impossible. If it applies to nobody, or applies to everybody, it could not be said to be an identity. Physical extension, for instance, is so universally applicable that, while it is a necessary fact of the human experience, it is not something by which somebody identifies. They may construct identity on the basis of an idiosyncrasy or specific configuration of their physical embodiment: a color, a set of features, physical ability and so on. But embodiment as such is not an “identity”. That which has identifying force is always the mutual other of some other identity; it is never simply auto-referential. The construction of the Stranger does not simply imply a disconnection from these necessary qualities, then, but a comprehensive identity unto itself. The lack of certain qualities gestures at untold other qualities, especially when the disparity between identities is seen to be on the basis of specific values. That the Stranger, for example, is not seen to value equality may also indicate her lack of civility, her ignorance, perhaps even her violence. She clearly does not have a similar conception of human rights; she may be sexist, or racist, or homophobic and so forth. These attributes

⁷⁵ Nancy, J-L, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 145.

may be seen as the natural conclusion of the given set of oppositional qualities inherent in the Stranger. Etienne Balibar, referencing an argument in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, writes,

...this Other is constructed not at the level of a simple stranger, in the sense in which descriptions of nationalism involve an analyses of antithetic characteristics granted to the national community or the 'us' and the foreign/enemy communities or the 'them', but at the level of another completely different set of human values, which can be called a 'civilization', and which towers above national differences just as a deep antinomy in the very orientation of human evolution would tower above singular episodes in the history of nations.⁷⁶

The Stranger appears to us as an inverted self, a member of a "counterrace"⁷⁷ (in Taguieff's idiom). Her identity expresses radical and fearsome difference.

The characterization the insider ascribes to the Stranger becomes an aspect of his perceived identity. This should not imply that the Stranger self-identifies on the basis of these qualities, there is surely a degree to which this sediments the content of his own conception of his identity. I intend this in a way akin to W. E. B. Du Bois' conception of the "double-consciousness": the Stranger can simultaneously apprehend the manner in which they self-identify and the manner in which insiders construct the content of their identity.⁷⁸ There must be a degree to which the apprehension of how the Stranger is seen by others must be internalized. There is a process of reconciling the external image of himself with his internal manner of identification. It is difficult to

⁷⁶ Balibar, Etienne, "Difference, Otherness, Exclusion", *Parallax*, vol. 11(1), (2005), p. 26.

⁷⁷ Taguieff, Pierre-Andre, *The Force of Prejudice*, Hassan Melehy (trans.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 132.

⁷⁸ Du Bois, W. E. B., *The Souls of Black Folks*, (Rockville, MD: Arc Manor, 2008), p.12.

imagine that this could be otherwise: that others conceive of us in a given fashion is a social reality. Because our own self-definition is given form through the webs of social relationships, that our identities are seen by others in such a way modifies the constitution of our perceived identities. This is not to say that the Stranger consents to all or most of the aspects of the manner in which the insider constructs his identity, merely that he is aware of this fact and that it leaves fingerprints on his experiences and interactions with others. The awareness of this disjunctive conception might also lead to resentment and reactivity, which tends to be counter-productive to the end of dissolving the constitution of the perceived identity of the Stranger. If anything, reactivity and resentment tends to have a further essentializing force: it can be the catalyst for reasserting polemic opposition, for more deeply committing to a “them and us” mentality. In this fashion, identity can certainly be something that is thrust upon the Stranger, resulting in a feedback loop which only serves to reassert the initial expression of difference.

When I say that identity can also be constructed in part by perceived association, I mean this: the acts of certain individuals determined to have membership in a given community has the capacity to profoundly shape the image that others hold of the corresponding identity. This is especially the case with actions that are in some manner sensational. Even if the act of an individual is in no way indicative of trends in the actions of other members of that group, or representative of prevailing attitudes or beliefs, it is all too easy for a part to come to stand for the whole. Outliers can have a

remarkably synecdochic character. A curious aspect of this phenomenon is that this synecdochism is more a component of the construction of the Stranger's identity from the perspective of the insider than it is constitutive of the insider's identity. As a case in point, I do not suspect that many individuals who identify as "Christian" would cede that the actions of Anders Breivik or the attitudes of the Westboro Baptist Church are in any manner indicative of the content of being Christian. These are strictly outlying cases, which are, if anything, antithetical to the general content of this identity. They are deviant cases, aberrant or dissident cases. Rather than representing a group in some way, such cases, if anything, might call into question whether one might call these outliers truly "Christian" at all, whether they ought to be included under the same mantle. For those to whom Christians serve as the Stranger, however, such cases may be synecdochic. They may indicate a perceived justification for fear or hatred, indicating an absence of common values or the intrinsically violent nature of those participating in said identity, or organized religion as a whole. On this point, it is not only contemporary acts and attitudes in the political realm that can influence the construction of identity, but the much more slippery element of acts throughout history.

Identities tend not to refer exclusively to a set of individuals in the present, but to a long accompanying narrative that precedes these individuals. In associating with an identity, we are also associating with a shared history of acts, for good or for ill. These acts may influence, in no small part, the manner in which the nature of a community is conceived. To return to my previous example, for instance, alongside the inheritance of

St. Augustine and Mother Teresa, we also inherit the more ignominious legacy of the Crusades or Spanish Inquisition. Our history forms an unbroken line that expresses the content of an identity; although we may not be the same Christians, we are Christians who can exist such as we do because of these acts. The laudable and wondrous acts of the past give us a sense of pride in this shared history, while the more questionable acts may be a source of “collective guilt” or a sense of communal responsibility for impropriety. We often bear the burden of guilt for deeds which are not our own, enacted by people long since dead, directed at others long since dead. We also hold others to account in a similar manner, believing that the deeds of the past express the nature of those in the present. They provide content by which we form judgments about ourselves and about others. We are thrust into a situation not of our making, living out a legacy we do not fully understand, or do only in part. The relevant narratives of the past are built of artifice, a certain interpretation of half-remembered distal phenomena. And beyond inheriting praise or blame-worthiness, we also inherit tensions, conflict, and enemies. On this point, in an essay entitled “The Construction of People: Racism, Nationalism, and Ethnicity”, Immanuel Wallerstein writes,

Pastness is a mode by which persons are persuaded to act in the present in ways they might not otherwise act. Pastness is a tool persons use against each other. Pastness is a central element in the socialization of individuals, in the maintenance of group solidarity, in the establishment of or challenge to social legitimation. Pastness therefore is preeminently a moral phenomenon, therefore a political phenomenon, always a contemporary phenomenon. That is of course why it is so inconstant. Since the real world is constantly changing, what is relevant to contemporary politics is necessarily constantly changing. Ergo, the content of pastness necessarily constantly changes. Since, however, pastness is

by definition an assertion of the constant past, no one can ever admit that any particular past has ever changed or could possibly change. The past is normally considered to be inscribed in stone and irreversible. The real past, to be sure, is indeed inscribed in stone. The social past, how we understand this real past, on the other hand, is inscribed at best in soft clay.⁷⁹

This passage neatly articulates two key points about our association with a shared past.

Firstly, the content of our relevant past is often viewed as having an indelible nature.

Past acts cannot be undone, this is an uncontroversial point. That having been said, the interpretations of the meaning of these events, the degree to which they have dominion in the present, the extent to which we internalize the ramifications of them, are fluid.

Any narrative is simply that: one manner of reconstructing the almost noumenal causal chain between occurrences. That we favor one narrative over another can be a highly

ad hoc choice, for every narrative allows for another perspective. In this fashion,

association with the past, with some interpretation of the past, is not something that

arises of necessity. Secondly, Wallerstein makes a salient observation in noting the

coercive force of an association with some shared past. The apprehension of a shared

history influences our orientation towards others. They confront us as the enemy

because such Strangers have always been the enemy. We are constrained in the degree

to which we can know another or be known, our mutual dispositions towards each

other having already been established. An association with the past can compel us to

⁷⁹ Wallerstein, I., "The Construction of People: Racism, Nationalism, and Ethnicity" in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), (London: Verso, 1991), p. 78.

structure communities that would not cohesion otherwise. We only rarely question that these alignments, these constellations of being, have the capacity to be otherwise.

When I speak of “the homunculus”, then, I am speaking again of the artificiality and inessentiality of identity. I am speaking of the fact that what we perceive to be the identity of the Stranger does not correspond to the actual individuals thought to represent instances of that identity. Richard Handler, in his essay “Is ‘Identity’ a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?” puts so fine a point on identity’s failure to capture who we are, writing,

I would avoid—or, at least, refuse to privilege—the discourse of “who we are,” that is, of identity. Groups are not bounded objects in the natural world. Rather, “they” are symbolic processes that emerge and dissolve in particular contexts of action. Groups do not have essential identities; indeed, they ought not to be defined as things at all. For any imaginable social group—defined in terms of nationality, class, locality, or gender—there is no definitive way to specify “who we are,” for “who we are” is a communicative process that includes many voices and varying degrees of understanding and, importantly, misunderstanding.⁸⁰

The people whom we fear or hate are constructed of the complex of our own self-conceptions, of outlying and sensationalized acts, of given interpretations of a narrative of the past that, in reality, corresponds to nothing. We fear the existence of that hypothetical person posing a hypothetical danger. Because the complex of these factors cannot ever be instantiated in an individual, we can never know the Stranger. There is a perpetual estrangement, an irreversible orientation. The reality is, however, that this Stranger does not exist. There is no earthly object of xenophobia. The object of

⁸⁰ Handler, Richard, “Is ‘Identity’ a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?”, in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, John R. Gillis (ed.), (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 30.

xenophobia is always an idea. We must, I think, strive to overcome xenophobia as a prevailing attitude, because so much as it is a destructive force, so much as it is an attitude which cripples our ability to act and asserts the need to simply react in mechanical vacillation, it is also a fundamentally nonsensical attitude. This is not to say that the devastating and often inhumane consequences of xenophobia are not a reasonable ground to reject it outright, for this is certainly an important consideration. This is simply to say that the attitude itself arises of a cognitive framework that is conceptually null. It is as Kwame Anthony Appiah notes: when a doctrine cannot be “rationally reconstructed”, reasonable people should reject it.⁸¹ That we do not question this substratum, that we take ideas of “sameness” and “identity” as given, impairs real action. It impairs our ability to truly *know* others and to be known, and obscures the knowledge that all things in this life are contingent and changeable. The task of reconciling ourselves with a new and more robust understanding of other selves, Jean-Luc Nancy writes, “...is enormous, and is very simple. It is the task of a culture remaking itself, or the re-casting of thinking such that it would not be crude or obscene like every thought of purity... It is the task of never believing in the simple, homogeneous, present ‘man’. Or Woman.”⁸² This task involves a widespread reconceptualization of the meaning of differences between selves, encountering others as though for the first time, without the intervention of identity. It is to this topic that I turn in my final chapter.

⁸¹ Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racisms”, in *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach* (5th ed.), Larry May, Kai Wong and Jill Delston (eds.), (Boston: Prentice-Hall, 2010), p. 472.

⁸² Nancy, J-L, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 147.

On Contemporary Xenophobia

Before leaving the topic of xenophobia as such it is worth discussing some contemporary instances by way of epexegetis. We are living in a curious time, witnessing a global shift in the political treatment of Strangers. I do not suspect that we have seen the apex of this trend, nor that we should expect a reversal of this tendency in the proximate future. This xenophobic attitude has tendrils that extend into countless communities, and there is an increasing urgency with which protective countermeasures are being instituted for the security of political communities. This constellation of behaviors seems to be increasing rather than diminishing over the course of time, as though by harmonic resonance, rippling broader and broader, still.

The state of the legislative and social sentiment towards Mexican nationals and immigrants in the United States serves as an interesting study in the simultaneity with which we can observe instances of inclusive and exclusive prejudice. With respect to the inflow of new legal permanent residents in the United States, Mexico is the country of origin that is the single largest contributor to immigration, and has been so for decades. Naturalized citizens considered to be of Latin-American origin number well above fifty-one million, almost thirty-four million of which are of specifically Mexican ancestry.⁸³ I noted earlier that exclusive prejudice largely takes root in fear, and in this

⁸³ As per statistics in the 2011 community survey administered by the U.S. census bureau. Such information is retrievable at:

scenario I would suggest that there are two primary foci for the fear of the disruption of what is seen to be the American identity. The first and more manifest of these is an economic disruption. A substantial portion of the rhetoric surrounding the status of those of Mexican origin in the United States fixates on the issue of job availability, and the fear that Mexicans are willing to take equivalent positions for lesser pay. The drastic economic downturn in recent years and the associated increase in unemployment rates certainly do little to curb this anxiety. The target of this fear is first and foremost “illegal immigrants”, who operate outside the boundaries of requiring a legal minimum wage, though it is by no means limited to this subset. We are all familiar with the refrain that immigrants in America are “taking our jobs”, and this phrase in itself says a proverbial mouthful. There is a line being drawn between some cohesive “us” who are entitled to said jobs, and these nebulous Strangers who are impinging upon our ability to support our families and continue our way of life. This is a particularly troubling sentiment because those who immigrated to America through governmental channels are, on every interpretation, legal American citizens. What it means to be “American” in the context of this anxiety is not equivalent to holding American citizenship, which it *should* as that is certainly the legislative definition. There is a profound subdivision that picks out “real Americans” from Strangers. Xenophobia, history has shown⁸⁴, often has a

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_11_1YR_B03001&prodType=table>

⁸⁴ Of the examples that come to mind, one of the more profound would be the demonization of Jews in the years following WWI, on largely economic grounds. This is a motif that we see repeated in many nations in the event of a profound economic downturn.

component of scapegoating, where the fear and discontentedness culminates in a cathexis towards the Stranger. To focus the blame on a given group is, in many ways, much more digestible and comprehensible than the more accurate apprehension that in any drastic social shift is the result of overdetermination by a number of nebulous forces. The second focus of fear in this situation is, I think, fear of social takeover. Because those of “Hispanic” origin represent more than sixteen percent of the American population, this represents a considerable voting bloc under a democratic system. Because of this, I would suggest that part of the fear of immigrant Strangers in the United States orbits the concern that this bloc could drastically alter the structures of power on a national level. This may include the election of candidates who are seen to have considerable popularity in that community, or contributing to passing legislation that may not otherwise have suitable traction. This runs the risk, some surely believe, of altering the core structure of the American way of life. We risk the insertion of something strange and foreign into the social and political domain, and our conception of what it means to be American will have to adjust to accommodate these revisions.

These fears, however, speak of a certain cognitive dissonance. Not only does the United States require a substantive introduction of immigrants to support what would otherwise be a top-heavy population, but Mexican immigrants specifically (both “legal” and “illegal”) often play a distinct and idiosyncratic economic role. America relies heavily, for instance, on migrant workers in the agricultural sector, and many of the workers undoubtedly do not possess valid working visas. Such jobs are often highly

physically demanding and require long hours, and as a matter of course would simply not be attractive to many American citizens. In Border States specifically, many Mexican immigrants are employed in housekeeping, landscaping, serving as nannies, and so forth. These, too, are often physically demanding occupations with a relatively low level of compensation. To speak a little reductively, these are positions that many Americans would simply not deign to occupy, out of hand. It is precisely at this point that we see an intersectionality between inclusive and exclusive prejudice: when the exploitation of the Stranger reasserts existing structures of power, we see a focus on inclusive prejudice. When the Stranger is perceived to pose a threat, sentiments vacillate towards exclusive prejudice. At present, we see these two attitudes overlaid upon one another; in the social domain we are privy to two simultaneous impulses. We are happy to direct the Stranger towards jobs that support many aspects of the economic substructure, so long as they are not taking “our jobs”. The content of “our jobs” seems to be, functionally speaking, any form of skilled labor we deem appropriate in the context of our way of life.

The measures instituted to protect American citizens from suffering the ramifications of a hypothetical Mexican diaspora serve as a concise recapitulation of the method of expulsion that we often see accompanying xenophobia. We consider, for instance, the construction of the Southwest Border Fence, which now adorns more than six hundred and fifty miles of the US-Mexican border. It is difficult to imagine a more apparent articulation of difference and exclusion than such walls, demarcating the

precise point at with “they” end and “we” begin. The actual protective power of this wall is dubious: some expanses are reinforced and manned by officials on patrol, while others have little more structural integrity than a schoolyard fence. Such barriers, however, are not intended to be impenetrable in any rigorous fashion. Such barriers are a statement. They serve as a form of exposition: whoever crosses this border transgresses. Such fences are both physical and psychological statements, to whatever extent they limit the movement of bodies, they also indicate that the Stranger is unwanted, here.

To my thinking, one of the most troubling items of American legislation in the last few years was the 2010 institution of SB 1070 in Arizona. Also euphemistically known as the “Support our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act”, this legislation stipulates that all resident aliens in Arizona carry registration documents upon their person at all times, to be supplied to police officers under any circumstance of lawful stop or detainment. Resident aliens may be stopped or detained in any situation where a “reasonable suspicion exists that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States”.⁸⁵ Failure to comply can result in a minimum fine of \$500 and up to 20 days in prison for a first offense, with the quantity increasing on both counts for subsequent failures. Any detained individual cannot be released until such a time as the necessary documentation can be provided. This provision places a substantive amount of power in the hands of police officials, and represents

⁸⁵ See State of Arizona, *Senate Bill 1070*, 49th legislature, 2nd session, 2010, p. 1. Retrieval at: <<http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/sb1070s.pdf>>

something of a tacit acceptance of “racial profiling”. Such legislation does not simply send an unambiguous statement to illegal residents, but also sends a message to those of Latin-American extraction that they are fundamentally different from other Americans; they are individuals about whom we are suspicious. They cannot expect privacy because they have a little too much melanin. Subsequent to the institution of SB 1070, the US Department of Justice filed an injunction with the Supreme Court, challenging the constitutionality of the senate bill as a breach of human rights.⁸⁶ As of the July 2012 Supreme Court ruling on *Arizona v. United States*, while some of the articles of the bill were overturned, the above provision was upheld. This Senate bill serves as an excellent example of that to which I am referring when I speak of “expulsion”. It a legislative approach to ensuring that only insiders are allowed to remain “inside”, protected from cohabitation with the Stranger.

This class of legislation signals an alarming political trend that has become common in recent years: increasingly strict measures instituted to ensure the safety of a given population. In saying this, I use the term “political” in the loosest of senses, because what this actually represents is a breakdown of politics in the sense intended by such political thinkers as Hannah Arendt. In the context of Arendt’s philosophy, “the meaning of politics is freedom”⁸⁷. Politics arises from the human capacity to act in a spontaneous and unexpected fashion, to begin anew, to work together. In

⁸⁶ See the US Department of Justice press release, July 2010, retrievable from: <<http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2010/July/10-opa-776.html>>

⁸⁷ Arendt, H., *The Promise of Politics*, Jerome Kohn (ed.), (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2005), p. 108.

Disagreement, Jacques Ranciere maintains the spirit of this conception, distinguishing between the antithetical acts of “politics” and “policing”. Rancière writes,

Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it *the police*.⁸⁸

Those mechanisms which recapitulate structures of power and conventional mores are not instances of political action. They are instances of *policing*, of perpetuating given models of behavior. That such legislation so profoundly redefines the role of the police officer in Arizona is absolutely coincidental to the terminology given, but it is nonetheless apropos. An investment in police power often accompanies the apprehension of a “state of exception”. To grant police officers a broader degree of penetration into the lives of citizens with a diminished standard of evidence to be met and stricter corresponding penalties really illustrates the compelling force of fear. Fear consents to curbing our own freedom, to interrupting the political process, in order to ensure that there are no Strangers hidden among us.

A more overt case of xenophobia with a similar manner of genesis is the recent status of the “Χρυσή Αυγή”, or Golden Dawn, party in Greece. Founded in the 1980s by Nikolaos Michaloliakos, the party has seen a renewed public interest in recent years, winning 21 seats in Greek parliament in the National elections of 2012. Although the base of popular support remains relatively small, the Golden Dawn is currently the third

⁸⁸ Ranciere, J., *Disagreement*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) pp. 21.

largest party represented in Greek parliament.⁸⁹ Among the concerns central to the Golden Dawn platform are issues of economic stability, unemployment and immigration; more to the point, members of the party have taken an adamantly anti-immigration stance. Frequently called a “neo-Nazi” party in the media, it is certainly difficult to see the banner of the Golden Dawn party without being reminded of Third Reich iconography. Over the course of the party’s existence, images of swastikas have been included in articles in the *Golden Dawn Magazine*, alongside articles praising Adolf Hitler and other prominent Nazis. There is a long line of accusations linking Golden Dawn members to the widespread racial violence in Greece, as well as proven history of violence between Golden Dawn officials and other political candidates.⁹⁰ Recently, in response to widespread unemployment and poverty, the party has organized Greek-only food handout programs, which is to say that those eligible must be *ethnically* Greek.⁹¹ While the May 2012 elections saw that the party only received 7% of the popular vote, recent opinion polls indicate that support currently rests between 10%-12%.⁹² This is a substantial difference from a party that existed a few years prior in almost absolute obscurity. It does not seem incidental that Greece is currently in the midst of a crippling financial crisis, having spiraled around national bankruptcy for several years. Joblessness and poverty rates are at an all-time high, and much of the

⁸⁹ See Trilling, Daniel. “Greece’s People show the Politicians how to Fight the Golden Dawn”. *The Guardian*. May 06, 2013.

⁹⁰ See Vradis, Antonis. “Athenian Space Battles”. *Al Jazeera*. May 11, 2013.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² See Trilling, Daniel. “Greece’s People show the Politicians how to Fight the Golden Dawn”. *The Guardian*. May 06, 2013.

rhetoric in the political sphere places the responsibility squarely on legal and illegal immigrants alike. There has been a recent push towards tightening up border security and a focus on the deportation of illegal aliens, numbering over 10,000 in the last eight months.⁹³ As with the prior case, this exclusive prejudice is a reflex of profound economic fears: the Stranger becomes a source of economic destabilization. The only recourse, naturally, is the expulsion of the Stranger.

As a matter of course, I would argue that many instances of “homophobia” are instantiations of exclusive prejudice. In the United States, the recent controversy over the legality of “same-sex marriage” puts so fine a point on this. Over the course of the 20th century, there has been a gradual movement towards decriminalizing sexual acts between persons of the “same sex”. The vast majority of this decriminalization occurred between 1979 and 1990, although because this was traditionally a matter of State jurisdiction, the universal decriminalization of sodomy in the United States did not occur until a Supreme Court ruling in 2003.⁹⁴ In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that the issue of same-sex marriage is legally recognized in only eleven states. The reason that I associate many instances of this prejudice with xenophobia is the following: the rationale for this prejudice largely takes root in fear. The rhetoric surrounding the rejection of homosexuality often has a moral ground. That many of the common

⁹³ See Fontanella-Khan, James. “Europe Officials want Greek Party Banned”. *Financial Times*. April 16, 2013.

⁹⁴ Rayside, David Morton, *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions: Public Recognition of Sexual Diversity in Canada and the United States*, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 128.

objections to homosexuality are matters of religious concern is relatively uncontroversial, although I am hesitant to hastily classify all of these objections as “xenophobic”. The more interesting consideration is that sentiments in the social domain have often orbited claims of moral deviancy, often alleging promiscuity, as well as links to pedophilia and substance abuse. Since the beginning of widespread awareness of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, public opinion has often linked this to same-sex sexual practices, often called the “gay epidemic”. It has already been noted that the fear of the destabilization of community identity represents a substantial impetus for attitudes of xenophobia, and I suspect this is very much the case in the contemporary social climate of the United States. The legality of same-sex marriage would certainly involve an adjustment to the traditional view of the institution of marriage, broadening the scope of what is it is to be a married couple. This may imply to some a tacit acceptance of what is viewed to be the “gay lifestyle”, and may allow further penetration of the putatively associated behaviors into the social domain. This results in a redefinition of what may be seen as specifically American values. Another reason that I associate many instances of homophobia with xenophobia is because the primary method of responding to these fears tends to be through absorption. On a more gestural level, the suppression of same-sex unions, the criminalization of homosexual erotic acts, and the institution of the military “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”⁹⁵ policy until it was

⁹⁵ To be more specific on this point, the impetus for the institution of the DADT policy under the Clinton administration was actually a movement towards some modicum of equality for those who are not heterosexual in the military. One aspect of this policy was the a movement away from the outright

overturned in 2011, serve the purpose of supplying a virtual absorption. These are policies that attempt to suppress the existence of this “identity” in the public sphere, to push it to the periphery of public consciousness. In a more literal sense, the practice of “conversion therapy” aims at the absorption of this identity in a more acute fashion, eliminating the target identity of the Stranger and replacing it with one more palatable.

The degree to which homophobia and xenophobia coincide is more notable, still, on a global stage. In a number of countries, including Sudan, Yemen and Iran, homosexual acts are punishable by death. In these cases, we see that the method instituted to cope with the presence of the Stranger is extermination. In some locations, “corrective rape” is a relatively common phenomenon, in an ostensible attempt to modify the identities of women who self-identify as lesbian or bisexual, to absorb those Strangers into the normative populus.⁹⁶ Alongside the prevailing moral concerns articulated above, in some countries homosexuality is seen to be an artifact of colonial rule, an aberration of what is viewed to be national identity. The nauseating severity of the legal and social measures instituted to cope with the presence of Strangers does neatly illustrate how absorption, expulsion and obliteration play out on the terrain of real human affairs.

ban of homosexual individuals from participation in the military, and a prohibition from harassing those who are not open so, That having been said, the policy of barring or discharging those who were openly homosexual remained in effect under DADT.

⁹⁶ See Kelly, Annie. “Raped and Killed for being Lesbian: South Africa ignores ‘corrective’ attacks”. *The Guardian*. March 12, 2009.

This is by no means a comprehensive account of contemporary xenophobia. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive catalogue of the many and varied instances of this attitude, but to offer an orientation towards the shape of this phenomenon in tandem with real instances. There is a final instance, or pattern of instances, that is worth addressing in this context, as it represents one of the singularly widespread xenophobic trends of the 21st century. I conclude this chapter, then, with a few comments on modern Islamophobia.

On Islamophobia

I remember the morning of September 11th, 2001 with an almost eidetic clarity. I recall being seated at my desk in that first period geography class, when an announcement was delivered over the PA system: a plane has collided with the North Tower of the World Trade Centre. Shortly after, a CRT television what wheeled into the room courtesy of the audio-visual department, and we sat in rapt attention, watching as the tower burned for over an hour before collapsing. I recall returning home from school that day and turning again to the news as a miasma of smoke and ash engulfed Manhattan, punctuated by interjections of reeling reporters who choked back sobs and wild speculation as to the cause of this tragedy. For those of us in North America who remember that day, for I can do little but guess at the acuity of the event internationally, I think that we all felt the world shift a little in some enigmatic and incomprehensible way. The shape of our reality was not quite what we had, up until

that point, suspected. What nobody could have known in these moments, however, was how profound this shift would be. We could not have suspected that this would serve as a definitive moment of the new millennium, determining a new political trajectory for the 21st century.

We live in a political climate that bears out a disastrous equivocation in terms. Terrorism implies Islam, and Islam implies terrorism. In the wake of 9/11 we have witness the protracted execution of the “War on Terror”, which is a curious idea from its inception, as the enemy is conceived in a way that does not neatly correspond to geopolitical distinctions. Although the targets of these military operations are seemingly any and all terrorists, the reality is that almost every actual operation under that umbrella has played out in a predominantly Islamic nation, and the target communities have exclusively been Islamic insurgents. What is more unusual about this fact is that, according to reports by the United States’ Federal Bureau of Investigation, terrorist activity on the part of Muslims has accounted for only 6% of terrorist acts on American soil between 2002 and 2005, compared to the 5% committed by “communists” and the 7% committed by “Jewish extremists”.⁹⁷ In an interview for the series *Facing History and Ourselves*, Kwame Anthony Appiah notes that the distal cause of xenophobia is often a background social collapse, ecological or economic pressure, around which an “us/them” ideology is constructed, and narratives to justify behaviors

⁹⁷ Compare Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Terrorism 2002-2005*. Retrieval from: <http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/terrorism-2002-2005/terror02_05#terror_05sum>

that sensible people would otherwise find extreme.⁹⁸ While I have little doubt that the events of 9/11 are in no small part complicit in the production of contemporary Islamophobia, the narratives of the Muslim as terrorist and “Clash of Civilizations” seem to be products of an ideology which does not correspond to reality.

The nature of the fear that gives rise to Islamophobia is all too evident. Islam, moreso than almost any closed community, is seen as absolutely monolithic. The relationship of “Western” and Islamic nations is often characterized in the verbiage of a “clash of civilizations”, two absolutely discrete and discontinuous ways of life. The common sentiment is this: Islamic values are disjunctive on almost all registers. There is a profound moral divide. One of those most proximate sources of fear takes root in the conception of Islam as an inherently intolerant and aggressive creed: *jihad*, for instance, is a doctrinal dictate. For this reason, the threat of unmitigated violence, transgressive violence, feels very real. When I mention that this violence is “transgressive”, I refer to the suicide bombings associated with Islamic extremism. That individual persons are weaponized, that their hatred of our core values is so engrossing that it eclipses even their love of their own life, confronts us as deeply disconcerting. We rarely acknowledge that many Muslim scholars stress a more nuanced understanding of *jihad*: *jihad*, on best translation, means “struggle”, and this struggle has two foci. The first of these is greater *jihad*, the internal prong of the dictate, the struggle with oneself to maintain spiritual propriety and belief. Lesser *jihad* is the external prong, the struggle

⁹⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah, Interview, “When Does an ‘Us’ turn against a ‘them’: Antisemitism, Prejudice, and Xenophobia”, *Facing History and Ourselves*, 2012.

against detractors of Islam⁹⁹. While this has often been interpreted as the prescription that obligates military struggle or “holy war”, many contemporary commentators stress non-violent interpretations of lesser *jihad*. Some such interpretations include lesser *jihad* as activism, or the “*jihad* of the pen” found in written exegesis.¹⁰⁰ Despite this, the equation of Islam with violence and terrorism remains the most proximate source of the fear implicit in Islamophobia. Lending to this fear is the fact that Islam is often seen as being almost singularly unreceptive other ideologies and resistant to change. As such, diplomacy appears impossible, running contrary to that which fundamentally composes the substratum of Muslim identity.

A more distal, but equally robust, source of fear is the moral threat that Islam poses. A common refrain in the period following 9/11 is that these terrorists “hate our way of life” or “resent our freedom”. While there may be some legitimacy in noting that Islamic extremists likely do diverge in terms of values common in North America, it is troubling that the widespread critique of Islam is not limited the beliefs of Muslim extremists. In fact, the values of Muslim extremists seem to have a synecdochic character, representing a common stereotype in the social sphere about all, or most, Muslims. This equivocation was evident in the opposition to the planned construction of Park51, a Muslim community centre two blocks away from original location of the

⁹⁹ Heck, Gene W., *When Worlds Collide: Exploring the Ideological and Political Foundations of the Clash of Civilizations*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), p. 179.

¹⁰⁰ See Heck, Gene W., *When Worlds Collide: Exploring the Ideological and Political Foundations of the Clash of Civilizations*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), p. 179; Robinson, Cabeiri deBergh, *Body of Victim, Body of Warrior*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), p. 184; Samwini, Nathan, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations*, (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), p.155.

World Trade Centre. Newt Gingrich noted that the mosque would serve as a symbol of Islamic “triumphalism”, and that building a mosque at this site “would be like putting a Nazi sign next to the Holocaust Museum”¹⁰¹. This hyperbolic analogy demonstrates the degree to which Muslims – all Muslims – are associated with terrorists and extremists by some Americans. By contrast, it is certainly uncommon to hold that the Ku Klux Klan stands for all Protestants. Predominantly Muslim nations are often seen as being socially backwards, archaic, and oppressive. In nations that nominally focus on freedom and autonomy in politics and the superiority of democracy, it is shocking to believe that others may not hold similar values. In this manner, it is not simply that Muslim values are the privation of our own; they have an absolutely oppositional nature. The supposed Islamic disdain for freedom also captures a number of other core points of moral departure: Muslims are also racist, sexist, homophobic, intolerant of religious difference, and fundamentally barbaric. That Sharia law is the traditional moral code cannot do otherwise but send a shiver down our spine. This said, it seems easy to forget that the core scriptures of all Abrahamic faiths are disturbingly Draconian.

The apprehension of the moral threat posed by Islam is not exclusive to the United States or North America. This factor has been central to the policies instituted in recent years in many European nations. The reason for the palpability of this moral threat is because many European nations have a significant threshold of Muslim immigrants. Given the statistically high birth rates among these families relative to

¹⁰¹ See Wyatt, Edward. “3 Republicans Criticize Obama’s Endorsement of Mosque”. *The New York Times*. August 14, 2010.

other demographics, that this may turn into a bloc with a substantive base of power in the years to come is seen as a manifest threat. France, for instance, has a significant minority of Muslim citizens. Because French censuses have not collected data regarding ethnic extraction or religious affiliation for over a century, the actual percentage of the population that this minority represents is uncertain, which is surely an unsettling thought. As a vehemently secular nation, French legislation has banned conspicuously religious attire in public schools. Although the ramifications of this law is not limited to a curtailment of the practice of *hijab*, this is one of the more controversial aspects of this article as *hijab* is viewed by many Muslims as a core article of faith. As of 2010, a parliamentary act was passed by a vote of 246 to 1 in favor of banning public face-concealment, including niqabs and burqas, on the basis of the security risk and social impediment that such garments pose.¹⁰² Between these two items of legislation, following the election of former-President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007, we saw the institution of a new ministry as part of the French governmental system: the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development.¹⁰³ That these four terms should be associated with one-another is incredibly meaningful, indicating a renewed focus on assimilation rather than multiculturalism, and the apprehension and enforcement of an essentially French identity. The effect of the complex of these three instances is clear: naturalization, especially on religious ground, is necessary. To be a

¹⁰² See "French Senate Passes Face-Veil Ban". *Al Jazeera*. September 14, 2010.

¹⁰³ Todorov, T., *The Fear of Barbarians: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations*, Andrew Brown (trans.), (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010) p. 85-87.

French citizen, one must abide by the shared values of French society. French identity must take precedence over any other item of identity. The shift away from multiculturalism is not a specifically French phenomenon, but a trend that we see emerging in other nations. In October of 2010, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was quoted as saying that the multicultural “...approach has failed, utterly failed.”¹⁰⁴ At a meeting with the Christian Democratic Union, Merkel went on to suggest that there ought to be an increased expectation placed upon new immigrants to integrate with the broader context of German society.¹⁰⁵ In a country with a population of over four million Muslim citizens, this pronouncement came in the weeks following a magazine interview with Bavarian premier Horst Seehofer, during which he indicated that Germany should stem the flow of Turkish and Arabic immigrants due to their difficulties integrating.¹⁰⁶ To my thinking, the repudiation of multiculturalism reflects a belief that two “cultures” cannot cohesively exist in tandem. Without naturalization, there appears to be the insinuation that substantial Muslim populations will compromise the core values of national identity. To return to the context of the United States, we see this sentiment echoed in the 2006 remarks by Virginia representative Virgil H. Goode in a letter to his constituents, where he wrote,

We need to stop illegal immigration totally and reduce legal immigration and end the diversity visas policy... allowing many persons from the Middle East to

¹⁰⁴ See Siebold, Sabine. “Merkel says German Multiculturalism has Failed”. *Reuters*. October 16, 2010.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ See Connolly, Kate. “German Politician Inflames Immigration Debate”. *The Guardian*. October 11, 2010.

come into this country... I fear that in the next century we will have many more Muslims in the United States if we do not adopt the strict immigration policies that I believe are necessary to preserve the values and beliefs traditional to the United States of America.¹⁰⁷

The prevailing concern appears to be, firstly, that Muslims are resistant to Western values out of hand and secondly that, given sufficient numbers, they will have a suitable foothold in democratic nations to bring upon changes that are in opposition to the general values of ethnic nationals. In a sense, this may exploit a weakness in democratic politics: namely, that these counter-democratic and aberrant values can, with sufficient popular representation, contaminate the political discourse. The penultimate concern seems to be that, without naturalization or absorption into national identity, without expiating the essential Muslimhood of Muslims, we may see a shift towards the disturbing sensibilities of Sharia law.

While 9/11 was by no means the origin of tension and resentment directed at Islamic nations and likewise, for many of us who have the relative luxury of experiencing war and violence only in the most hypothetical fashion, it signified a violent birth into a new and uncertain era. That violence by the Stranger could occur on our own soil, and that the enemy could be latent in our own population, threw the actual degree of our own security into question. In the months that followed, the omnipresent reminder that the national terror-alert status vacillated between “orange” and “red” was an inescapable reminder of the fragility of our lives, and allowed that fear to fester. As I

¹⁰⁷ See Goldfarb, Zachary A. “Va. Lawmaker’s Remarks on Muslims Criticized”. *The Washington Post*. December 21, 2006.

have mentioned, the particularly insidious byproduct of fear is that it consents to all things, even when the palliative is more dangerous than the initial ill. In the months following the collapse of the Twin Towers, we witnessed the introduction of a plethora of legislative items without what would appear to be due deliberation. The content of the laws instituted, such as the “PATRIOT Act” which was passed 45 days after 9/11, conferred a greater breadth of power to police and governmental officials, with a less comprehensive threshold of evidence required to obtain the authority for this investigation. While either one of these changes, taken separately, might be vaguely justifiable in the context of a “state of exception”, the two together are a volatile cocktail: more penetrative power and less accountability. Among the abilities conferred to law enforcement officials were increased latitude in surveillance techniques, including wire-tapping and the seizing of private records, and the conferral of “covert entry search warrants”¹⁰⁸ in absence of the burden of proof necessary to obtain a conventional search warrant, both of which represent infringements to Fourth Amendment rights. The most alarming article of the PATRIOT Act, however, was a provision that allowed for the indefinite detainment of any alien whom the Attorney General determined to potentially represent a national threat.¹⁰⁹ This provision yields something of a juridical lacuna, a legal blind-spot, an interruption of prior rights for the sake of security. In a nation where governmental rhetoric has often been steeped in the libertarian values, and the threat posed by “terrorism” is perceived to be the disruption

¹⁰⁸ See USA PATRIOT Act (U.S. H.R. 3162, Public Law 107-56), Title II, Sec. 213.

¹⁰⁹ See USA PATRIOT Act (U.S. H.R. 3162, Public Law 107-56), Title IV, Subtitle B, Sec. 412

of American values, we cannot fail to apprehend the irony in the measures that are instituted to protect citizens from this threat. The shift towards panopticism and the investment in authoritative power to the exclusion of individual privacy and freedom were destructive to these “core principles” in a manner beyond accounting. The justification for the severity of such measures is neatly captured by the forced acronym of the “PATRIOT Act”: any Patriot, anybody who loves their homeland, any person who is innocent, should have nothing to hide.

Alongside such measures, in the wake of 9/11 we have seen a staggeringly increased focus on border security. Along with an increased burden of documentary evidence establishing one’s national identity, the body has been thrust into the political domain. From the strict guidelines imposed upon baggage, to the ubiquity of pat-downs and imaging technology, we cannot fail to apprehend ourselves as potential enemies at border crossings. This is true so much the more for those who are “visible minorities” in North America, who have in recent years become of focus of rigorous investigation and questioning at the border. The satirical characterization of the offense of “flying while Muslim” speaks to the profoundly real experience of many individuals who have experienced racial profiling and generalized suspicion in attempting to travel. These institutional measures represent investment in exclusion, limiting the movement of bodies to ensure that the Strangers are not allowed to walk among insiders.

The most profound expressions of the exclusion to my thinking are the attempts to absorb and exterminate the Stranger both within and without the confines of

national borders. Domestically, between 2001 and 2002, the United States saw a quadrupling of reported racial hate crimes on the basis of a perceived association with Islam (often seen as being equivalent with being of Arabic extraction).¹¹⁰ Among these crimes was the “retaliatory” murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi, in September 2001, in the days immediately following the events of 9/11.¹¹¹ That Balbir Singh Sodhi originally emigrated from India and was a follower of Sikhism only speaks to the degree to which all “visible minorities” were regarded with suspicion, and subsumed under the category of Strangers. While I by no means intend to characterize broader social movements on the basis of outlying cases, the fact of the matter is that the drastic increase in domestic violence with a racial dimension renders this even more akin to a paradigmatic case than an outlying case. In the realm of public opinion, while violence towards or the extermination of perceived domestic Strangers was by no means universally accepted, it was certainly a behavior that garnered a more substantive degree of public traction. Following 9/11, there was a disturbing trend of debate surrounding the status of citizenship for those with known or suspected ties to “terrorist” cells or individuals. In a manner similar to the currently-proposed Enemy Expatriation Act, which if instituted would allow the government to rescind citizenship without conviction, revoking

¹¹⁰ See Oswald, Debra L. "Understanding Anti-Arab Reactions Post-9/11: The Role of Threats, Social Categories, and Personal Ideologies". *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 35 (9), September 2005, pp. 1775–1799.

¹¹¹ Elizondo, Gabriel. "No Bitterness 10 Years after Sikh Killing over 9/11". *Al Jazeera*. September 6, 2011.

citizenship would imply a negation of the “right to have rights”¹¹². This debate represented a recapitulation that apprehension that being a “real American” is not equivalent to holding citizenship; it also implies an association with some cohesive American identity. If one were a real American, they would not be capable of such acts; this lack of shared value, this deviance, is strictly an attribute of the Stranger. On an international front, we have seen a similar phenomenon in the trajectory of military involvement in the Middle East and other predominantly Muslim nations. Because the target of military operations was often interspersed with civilian populations, the accumulation of civilian casualties has been tacitly accepted as collateral damage. The subtext is this: the lives of individual Strangers are not of equivalent value to the lives of insiders. To whatever extent the obliteration of Islamic extremists has become a political dictate, we have seen a corresponding push to absorb citizens of predominantly Islamic nations into the framework of “Western” values. Military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, in the years following the initial invasion, took on the character of being predominantly matters of humanitarian intervention and nation-building. The introduction of democratic values and the liberation of women from oppressive social regimes were a substantive portion of the North American media spin for these occupations. That this mode of intervention, to the exclusion of self-determination, is seen as having some degree of legitimacy is also an unambiguous statement about the

¹¹² Arendt, H., *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1968), p. 177.

status of the Stranger. Islamic extremists must be exterminated and moderate or benign Muslims must be absorbed into “Western” systems of value. Fundamentally, Muslimhood cannot be tolerated. The insider and the Stranger are simply not suited to being co-inhabitants of this world.

Chapter III: Re-Envisioning Communities

Closed and Open Communities

What I have been gesturing at in prior discussion is that the many visible communities may be characterized as “closed”. These are communities conceived of on the basis of common identity, which is in turn given shape organized around stereotypes. A closed community, in most cases, will have a low degree of permeability: either you have membership in this community, or you do not. We cannot choose to be “Black”, or choose not to be so. Likewise, we cannot will ourselves into or out of our gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or ability.¹¹³

The precondition for the revelatory force of identity is the existence of others with disparate identities; at its very core it requires exclusion, because identity is a comparative function. Within these communities, we discover a suppression of real difference and an appeal to a gestural conception of sameness. That we are inclined to say that this community is in any way “the same” refers to a qualitative judgment about the scope at which real differences are interpreted as being trivial. Those who are excluded from membership are viewed not only as *merely* different, but radically different. This is to say, among the ranks of those with membership in any identity-conferring community, all members are “other” with respect to one another. The

¹¹³ Some closed communities permit of a degree of permeability, as with social class or religious affiliation. In these scenarios, there may be other forces at work that limit the *de facto* permeability, e.g. the poverty cycle, acceptance of converts within a community, etc.

identities of those excluded, then, from a given community are constructed in an absolutely disjunctive fashion. They possess non-trivial differences, differences sufficient to render them a different sort of people altogether. For this reason, those excluded from a community are not simply “others”, but “Strangers”.

I have also discussed at some length the fictive of nature identity as such, which from its genesis implies some modicum of sameness over time. This is not commensurate with the lived experience of selfhood, which is best seen as a process of becoming. Selfhood is not idempotent; so much as we are different from all others in a near-infinite number of ways, we are also different from *ourselves*. Selfhood is the apprehension of an “I” at the centre of perceptual experiences. Not the same “I”, but a spatio-temporally numerically sequential “I”, for which every embodied state references a singular past state. Selfhood is the narrative that we construct to express the interior experience of these successive states; the manner in which we *feel* the ineffable connection between current and past iterations of the perceiver. Not only does the notion of identity fail to capture the lived experience of selfhood, but even if it were to have some degree of coherence, it would not be sufficient to disclose *who* a person is. *Who* a person is, in their absolute singularity, can be disclosed only through speech and action, through the experience of others. Identity, on the most generous interpretation, would only be suited to revealing some nominal quality of *what* a person is at a given point in time; in effect, however, to believe that communities can be constructed on the basis of identity is to misapprehend the disclosive force of the concept. To give

credence to the concept of identity, then, involves an illicit shift of *what* somebody is into the realm of *who* somebody is.

The focus on identity in the construction of communities is not equivalent to xenophobia in all cases, but this framework *is* a conceptual precondition of its genesis. The fact of the matter is that, not only does xenophobia have the capacity to articulate in devastatingly destructive fashions in the domain of human affairs, but it is predicated in fundamentally flawed presuppositions. While the existence of communities is primitive in the human experience, this mode of conceiving of communities represents an unnecessary and harmful addition to reality. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that many communities are, in fact, constructed in this fashion. What we are left with is the rather daunting task of imagining a manner in which communities could be constructed in an “open” fashion. In discussing the possibility of “open” communities, I am not imagining a community that is *absolutely inclusive*. The scope of such a community would be so broad as to be functionally irrelevant, and would inevitably spawn sub-communities. A “community of humans” is not precisely conducive to political action¹¹⁴ and, that aside, produces its own Strangers. What I envision by the term “open community” is one that does not produce given outsiders *of necessity*. It is a community from which some are excluded, for any community must exclude, but does not do so on the basis of “identity”. An open community is one in which members recognize one another as different, brought together by chance and circumstance,

¹¹⁴ By “political action”, I intend Hannah Arendt’s sense of the term, i.e. people working together.

endeavoring to work together. The outsider is different, but not *essentially* different nor *radically* different; they are no more different in kind than any two insiders. An open community, one which does not exclude any particular individual of necessity, cannot have cohesion on the basis of the resemblance of *who* the insiders are. It must be an associate despite these necessary differences. To articulate this as succinctly as possible: insiders are different selves who *happen* to associate, and outsiders are equally different *selves* who happen not to associate. I propose two models through which we might re-envision the structure of communities in an open fashion: communities of fate, and experiential communities.

I should say, lest it go unnoted, that these proposals are, in effect, rather distal possibilities. Because the self-identification of communities is in no small part a reciprocal function, given shape by the beliefs of insiders and outsiders alike, communities are often given an artificial cohesion due to external forces; persecution, oppression, and war, for instance, can have a powerful binding force. These solutions would require a restructuring about the manner in which we all think about identity and selfhood, and a movement towards a transnational, post-national, or cosmopolitan global politics. Suffice it to say, I am not alluding to the short-term possibility of ubiquitous open communities. I am suggesting a shape of communities that we can and, I think, *should* gradually work toward.

Communities of Fate

In *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, Etienne Balibar speaks of a “community of fate” as a “community without community”¹¹⁵. It is a community that does not presuppose “...a prior communal substance... [but] results purely and simply from the recognition by individuals and groups that they have been ‘thrown together’ by history, chance, or ‘fate’ on the same territory or in the same ‘polity’.”¹¹⁶ As Balibar mentions in the same passage, this is the kind of community that we see in shared public spaces; different people, with different beliefs and experiences, operating in a common geographic space. The limits of such a community cannot be “determined in advance”¹¹⁷, for it is a community which arises of the fact of “being with” or alongside one another. There is no natural cohesion in such a community: without the assumption of a shared identity we do not presuppose values and lifestyles common to all. Although the beliefs and values of members cannot “spontaneously converge”, neither can they “completely diverge without risking *mutual destruction*”¹¹⁸. A community of fate must accommodate different views and navigate conflict in a spontaneous fashion in pursuit of a common life together.

¹¹⁵ Balibar, E., *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, James Swenson (trans.), (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 186.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

On my reading, the most exciting comment Balibar makes about the nature of communities of fate is that they are “always ‘in the making’”¹¹⁹. Given the permeability of the limits of the community, the individuals included may be constantly fluctuating. New members mean new relationships, beliefs, conflicts, obstacles and solutions. This change demands that the manner of relating to one another and working together must be equally dynamic. It requires real political action.

This model of community has the characteristics I envision of an open community precisely because membership in a community of fate does not have bifurcating force. The proximity of this given set of individuals is not essential: it is equally plausible that they might live elsewhere. While such a community must have its outsiders, in a dynamic, changing community brought together on the basis of mutual reliance and shared spaces, those who live outside the confines of the community are not *radically other*, they are not Strangers. An outsider is not the “inverted self” or “counterrace”. In a community of fate, Balibar envisions a radical reconceptualization of citizenship, which accords with “*any place where individuals and groups belong, wherever they ‘happen’ to live and therefore work, bear children, find partners for every sort of ‘intercourse’*”¹²⁰. While an outsider or group of outsiders may certainly be the enemy, it is equally plausible that they might be friends, or even citizens. In any event, they are not enemies, friends, or insiders of *necessity*; a community of fate is characterized by the contingency of ending up in a certain place due to certain events.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

The elegance of this configuration of an open community is that it represents a liberation from the condition of pastness, from the apprehension of one fixed narrative which interrupts the potential shape of human relations. With this, we may be able to open ourselves to the possibility of a truly *political* rather than simply reactive community. We might see a liberation from the preconceptions through which we are coerced to act in ways that would not otherwise occur. Interactions within and between such communities are not by narratives associated with identity, but by narratives of dynamic human action and interaction.

The content of a community of fate does not resemble present distinctions on the basis of national citizenship; this model of community could only arise in a post-national, or at the very least, post-*nationalist* context. I say this because, as we have seen, being “American”, or being “Canadian” is not a mere function of citizenship. Our present vision of nationality often carries with it the assertion of a set of according values. It is not the case that every individual legally residing in America adheres to the social conception of what it means to be “American” as such. Nationality does not refer to the mere embodied state of living within a geographically demarcated region, but to being in a certain configuration. Nationality signifies a common historical narrative, a set of unifying myths and “codified relations”¹²¹ that is to some extent constitutive of *who* we are. As Appiah rightly notes in *The Ethics of Identity*, identification carries with it a moral weight. Identification obliges us to aid certain people over others, to *care*

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 18.

about certain people over others, specifically those with whom we identify.¹²² This is not to say that the existence of nations as such compels this configuration of necessity: were nationhood a simple name applied to a region, the implications would be relatively benign. Such as it is, it is the conflation of nationality with identity, the essence of nationalism, which is fundamentally divisive. For this reason the plausibility of the community of fate requires the absence of nationalism; it requires a freedom of movement unmitigated by the manifest barriers of borders and walls and conceptual barriers of identity. Instead, we can care about others in a manner that is freely given, in relation to *who*, rather than *what*, they are.

Experiential Communities

The community of fate represents an important model of constructing communal political units along the lines of geography. Given the ease of travel and communication, we are by no means limited to communities within a given geopolitical locus. I think there is a place, too, for the construction of more conceptual open communities drawn together by common interests or shared experience.

Before I proceed into a further exploration of what I intend by a “community of experience”, I will make an excursus by way of illustration into a brief analysis of the “queer community”, which I see as being transitional. It represents, in a certain fashion,

¹²² Appiah, Kwame Anthony, *The Ethics of Identity*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.), P. 68.

an interstitial position between a closed and open community. In the context of past idiom, the acronym “LGBT” served (and continues to serve to a lesser extent) to indicate the content of the membership of this group: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered. With the increasing visibility of a queer community in the social realm and the emerging prominence of “queer theory” in academic scholarship, the content of what is implied by the term and the classes of identity that it encompasses have undergone substantive change. The associated acronym has a number of permutations, often including the aforementioned four designations alongside a number of others: queer, questioning, two-spirited, intersexed, asexual, undecided, pansexual, aromantic, among other classifications. In many renderings, the queer community is also inclusive of “allies”, which typically consists of those considered cis-gendered, heterosexual, heteronormative supporters of issues affecting others in the queer community. That the inclusivity of what “queer” entails is a result of two primary factors: firstly, the intersectionality between various disciplines within critical theory has led to an increased awareness of different global perspectives of gender and sex, so we have seen an acknowledgement of the different cultural constructions thereof. Secondly, there seems to be an increasing apprehension that the fourfold “LGBT” distinction is not suitable to describe the breadth of human self-conception. “Bisexuality”, for instance, etymologically implies that one consents to the notion that there are only two “sexes”. Because of this, some individuals self-identify in the context of terms such as “pansexual” or “omnisexual” to capture the fact that they do not uphold a binary gender

distinction. The range of terms with which individuals identify is intriguing. On the one hand, it strikes upon real apprehension that a fourfold distinction is not suited to the task of the singularity of an individual's conception of gender and sexuality. It is counter-intuitive because, as previously noted, regardless of to what extent we carve out nominal distinctions and use increasingly specific language, we will never truly capture that singularity.

As I have mentioned, I raise the example of the queer community because it seems to me to be the best example of a globally visible community that straddles the gap between conventional models of closed communities, and the vision of an experiential community at which I am gesturing. Fundamentally, what it means to identify as "queer" has no fixed parameters. It does not refer, out of hand, to a capacity to be attracted to those of the same sex, nor sexuality as such, given the inclusivity of transgender, agender, genderqueer, two-spirited persons and so forth. It does not refer to a departure from traditional gender roles, inclusive of both cisgender and transgender individuals. As David Halperin writes in *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, "...queer identity need not be grounded in any positive truth or any stable reality... *there is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers*. It is an identity without an essence."¹²³ Halperin goes on to note that it is an identity constructed on the basis of its "oppositional relation to the norm"¹²⁴. This is certainly true, as the queer

¹²³ Halperin, D., *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.62.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

community is undoubtedly structured in binary opposition against the cis-gendered, heterosexual, heteronormative majority. In this manner, the social conception of the queer community is certainly in keeping with the structure of a closed community, and undoubtedly runs a similar risk of stereotyping and essentialist thinking. The reason I pick this example out as transitional, however, is that there are some features that I would like to see in an open community: the inclusion of many and varied voices, a changeable structure that adapts to new information and cultural conceptions, and the ability to share relevant experiences and offer support in a way that may not be possible or expedient in a geographically-limited community. By the last I mean that interaction with others who have had similar experiences with “coming out”, for instance, may emotionally reassure an individual or provide coping strategies.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of identification, I see the “experiential community” as an *ad hoc* association for the sake of a given purpose, with a discursive nature similar to that of the community of fate. By this I mean, I see these as communities formed by many different voices and perspectives coming together to grow and share experiences in a manner that may transcend the limits of the polity. Examples of the shape of the community of experience might be akin to support group for those with chronic depression or multiple sclerosis, those experiencing a period of bereavement, or those coping with substance abuse for instance. Such groups may exist within or between polities, but represent another loose form of community. This is an intentional community, not one arising of where one happens to be, but one that is sought. Such

communities are inclusive of different perspectives on similar issues, may offer support in times of distress, and spur us to reconsider previously held opinions. Such groups can offer the transformative experience of opening ourselves to new ideas and manners of conceptualizing our lives. On a more cheerful note, such a community might also include an ongoing communication between Star Trek enthusiasts, or researchers of Applied Ethics, seeking one another out to share common interests.

The community of experience serves as another model of a community which excludes, but does so in a contingent fashion. Although there may be some outsiders determined on the basis of their apathy towards Star Trek, this exclusion is rather benign. Such individuals are not excluded of necessity, they *happen* not to seek out such communities because they *happen* not to share a common interest, though this could very plausibly be otherwise. We all have the capacity to experience bereavement, or take up an interest in Applied Ethics. This configuration of community would also be highly permeable, with the capacity for insiders to join or part ways in a fluid fashion. Most importantly, although individuals may have similar experiences, such experiences do not disclose *who* a person is, nor should we make that commutation. While here, too, there are outsiders, the outsider is not the Stranger.

To express a final point on the importance of the open community, I would suggest that this mode of envisioning communities may be conducive to remarkable freedom of action in the political domain. In rejecting identity, we find a liberation from enacting long-standing communal narratives. We are free to encounter others for *who*

they are rather than the smoke screen of preconceptions and stereotypes. In tandem with this, we have the opportunity to act rather than *react*, and to set in motion a new constellation of events.

Concluding Remarks

In rejecting identity, we are rejecting the idea that essence precedes existence. We are rejecting the idea that there is some primordial woman or man or Muslim, some universal configuration in which we participate, and associated script we are bound to enacting. As Sartre writes in *Existentialism is a Humanism*, in stating that existence precedes essence, “we mean that man exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself.”¹²⁵ Our beliefs and values are not given to us of necessity, and our actions are not determined by mechanism. We are constantly changing, transforming through our relationships, and able to discover and rediscover ourselves and others. But with this freedom, writes Sartre, comes a certain responsibility:

If, however, existence truly does precede essence, Man is responsible for what he is... And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible for only his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men... If, moreover, existence precedes essence and we will to exist at the same time as we fashion our image, that image is valid for all and for our whole era... That is why I say man is condemned to be free: condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nonetheless free, because once cast into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Carol Macomber (trans.), (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), p.22.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-29.

It is precisely because we are not mere victims of mechanism, forced to *react* rather than act, that what we do with that freedom is so important. As we are free to act, and disclose *who* we are through action, we bear the responsibility for our own becoming. We have the capacity to reject past resentments, begin new narratives, and discover one another for *who* rather than *what* we are.

What I have not presented in this chapter is the groundwork for a Utopia. I do not suspect that the open community ensures an end to war, or an end to hatred. What I do suspect, however, is that a movement towards such communities may serve to interrupt the vacillation of reacting and revenge, as we are forced to rediscover our outsiders and reform the boundaries of our communities. Reconceptualizing communities in a more open fashion may allow for a more spontaneous, more diverse, freer mode of politics.

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