# Introduction: The Worm Inside the Apple



In a lecture he gave in Vienna in 1967, Adorno offered his audience remarks strikingly relevant to our times,[1] and this despite the vast differences which separate us from his period. Although fascism had officially collapsed, the conditions for fascist movements, he averred, were still active in society. The main culprit for this was the still prevailing tendency towards concentration of capital, a tendency which "still creates the possibility of constantly downgrading strata of society that were clearly bourgeois in terms of their subjective class consciousness, and want to cling to, and possibly reinforce, their privileges and social status." It is the same groups of bourgeois moving down who "develop a hatred of socialism, or what they call socialism; that is, they lay the blame for their own potential downgrading not on the apparatus that causes it, but on those who were critical towards the system in which they once had a status, at least in a traditional sense."

In these short lines, Adorno packed some of the key insights of critical theory. Fascism, for him, is not an accident of history. Nor is it an aberration. Rather, it works inside democracy and is contiguous with it. It is, to use a worn-out metaphor, a worm lodged inside the apple, rotting the fruit from within, invisible

to the naked eye. As an anthology on the Frankfurt School put it: "It was a major theme of the early Frankfurt School that no sharp line could be drawn between the extremity of political fascism and the more everyday social pathologies of bourgeois capitalism in the West."[2] This also means that fascism need not be a full-blown regime. It could in fact be a tendency, a cluster of pragmatic orientations and ideas which work from within the framework of democracies. Contained in Adorno's remarks is also the claim that capitalism deploys tendencies towards a concentration of capital and power (a rather unsurprising idea for a Marxist which even non-Marxists would have a hard time disputing). Adorno had not yet witnessed the spectacular way in which democratic electoral processes would be hijacked by concentrated capital. He was thus referring to the class dynamics which the concentration of capital created inside liberal societies. Such dynamics threatened to constantly downgrade the very same bourgeois classes who had previously contributed to and benefited from the capitalist system. Note that Adorno focuses on the bourgeois (a mixture of segments of the upper and middle classes) and not on the proletariat as the agent for this new fascism. Echoing a tradition in sociology that viewed fascism as the expression of fear of downward mobility,[3] Adorno suggests that the same class which had, and continues to have, privileges is the same one which, when it sees these privileges threatened, will support it. Loss of privilege thus seems to be a key motivation for endorsing anti-democratic leaders. (In the 2016 election, support for Trump tended to be higher among groups with high and middle incomes. People with very low salaries were more likely to side with Clinton.)[4] Desire to maintain privilege or the fear of losing privilege is, as Adorno suggests, a driving force of politics in general and of fascist politics in particular. The third and perhaps (at least for this book) most significant move contained in Adorno's succinct remarks suggests that identification with fascism finds its roots in a certain way of thinking about causes (how we think

about why things are the way they are) and a certain way of assigning blame and responsibility. The downgraded bourgeois class will not blame the very capitalist system of economic concentration which undermines its loss of status and privilege. Instead, it will transpose blame onto those who criticize that same system. Adorno is laconic, but we are left to understand that they will grasp their social world as if in a camera obscura, an inverted image of the outside world. Continuing the Marxist tradition of *Ideologiekritik*, Adorno identifies here a very important cognitive process at work in proto fascism: the lack of capacity to understand the chain of causes which explain one's social situation. Perception of the social world, Adorno suggests, can be fundamentally distorted. The bourgeois (and probably other classes) cannot properly identify the causes of their losses and thus cannot rally behind those who, without exactly defending their interests, at the very least question the system responsible for their downgrading.

In these short lines, Adorno thus makes a claim about the persistence of fascist tendencies in our societies, due both to economic processes of accumulation and concentration of capital and to certain distorted or incomplete forms of thinking, to be found particularly in the ways in which we build causality, make events intelligible, and attribute blame, pointing to what in another context Jason Stanley has called a flawed ideology.[5] A flawed ideology – as Stanley defines it in *How Propaganda Works* – robs "groups of knowledge of their own mental states by systematically concealing their interests from them."[6] What the *real* interests of a class or group of people are, of course, is not self-evident. Any judgment about this is based on certain presuppositions on the part of the researcher who makes distinctions between real and false interests, thus claiming a certain epistemic authority for herself. When trying to understand the social world, adopting such a position of epistemic authority seems inevitable. As a citizen, I do not believe the theories advanced by QAnon and

other conspiracy groups. Pretending their view of the world is the same as that of a piece of investigative journalism would amount to bad faith. Thinking, all thinking, contains erasures, displacements, errors, and denials. Recovering these denials and erasures remains the vocation of critical social analysis.

The idea of *Idiologiekritik* has been abundantly criticized, yet recent political developments suggest it is not one we can easily give up. Some have argued that *Idiologiekritik* is usually conducted in bad faith (criticizing others but not oneself),[7] or that it bestows too much authority on the researcher, or that, whatever choice people make, it is always a rational one because their thinking reflects their preferences. Indeed, sociological analysis should respect the reasons citizens have for holding their opinions and choices: it should not mock or dismiss an opinion, but, in an era where outlandish conspiracy theories flourish and obstruct democratic processes of opinion-making, we can no longer afford the luxury of assuming that all points of view are equal or equally knowledgeable; nor can we afford to ignore the manipulations of opinion that are engineered by an increasingly sophisticated political class, extraordinarily well versed in the various arts of the manipulation of opinion and rumor. The power of these arts of manipulation have become decoupled by the rapid transmission of information through social media.[8] Thus, against our will, we must return to the idea of *Idiologiekritik* because, when accounting for reality, not all ideas are equal.

An ideology will be flawed if it meets the following conditions: it contradicts the basic tenets of democracy while citizens actually want political institutions to represent them; its concrete policies (for example, claiming to represent the simple people and yet privileging policies which make home ownership very difficult) conflict with its avowed ideological principles or aims; it displaces and distorts the causes of a social group's discontent; and it is oblivious or blind to the flaws of the leader (for example, self-serving corruption or his indifference to the

welfare of the nation). It should be clear, however, that it is not only the supporters of populist proto-fascists who fall into this cognitive trap and blind spot. There are many illustrations of such cases. Jerome McGann has argued, for example, that romantic poetry denied the material conditions in which it was produced through evasions or erasures.[9] The French communists who believed in the Soviet communist regime during the 1950s, when Stalin's murderousness could have been known, are no less a cogent example of a flawed ideology.[10]

To pursue Adorno's thought, fascism continues to work from within the heart of democratic societies because those who are hurt by the logic of economic concentration cannot connect the dots of its causal chain and may actually oppose those who work to expose it, curiously creating antagonism between those who work to denounce injustice and inequality and those who suffer from them. This antagonism has become a key feature of many democracies around the world. The question of flawed ideology is particularly relevant to the present time because everywhere around the world, and especially in Israel, democracy is under the assault of what Francis Fukuyama calls "nationalist populism," a political form that undermines the institutions of democracy from within and which thus lets the most powerful actors in society – corporations and lobbies – use the state to meet their own interests to the detriment of the demos, which curiously feels alienated from the institutions that have historically guaranteed its sovereignty. As political scientists Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt claim, democracies do not die only through military coups or other such dramatic events. They also die slowly.[11] Populism is one political form taken by this slow death.

Populism is not fascism per se but, rather, a fascist tendency, a line of force which puts pressure on the political field, pushing it towards towards regressive tendencies and anti-democratic predispositions. An enormous amount of research has tried to explain the emergence of such fascist tendencies.[12]

Some explain it by the globalization of the workforce, which has left the working class in a precarious condition, others by a shift in cultural values to which populism is a reaction. False consciousness or flawed ideologies are also explained by the transformation of mediascapes, which in many countries have been consolidated and purchased with the explicit intent of changing the "liberal agenda" of the mainstream press. For instance, in France, the billionaire businessman Vincent Bolloré owns several French television stations, including Cnews, a 24-hour news channel that promotes a decisively right-wing agenda. Bolloré has been named as the funder of the campaign of the far-right French populist Éric Zemmour.[13] Another example is the Australian-born American billionaire Rupert Murdoch, who owns hundreds of media outlets worldwide – among them the propaganda machine Fox News in the United States – and has been accused of using these to support his political allies.[14] In Israel, in turn, the free newspaper *Israel Hayom*, financed by a now deceased casino mogul, wields enormous political influence. So the concentration of capital throughout the world has had the effect of forging formidable weapons to distort consciousness.

Along with this increasing control of information, the globalization of the economy has left the working classes in a precarious condition.[15] Bill Clinton's globalist policies, such as signing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), angered many working-class voters, with the president of the electrical workers' union quoted as saying "Clinton screwed us and we won't forget it."[16] The working classes no longer feel represented by the left and contest its very capacity to articulate their interests, a fact which reflects the implosion of social-democratic ideology throughout the world, and perhaps signaling the very exhaustion of liberalism.[17] The combination of these factors explains why, in many countries around the democratic world, we are witnessing the rise of fascist tendencies – not quite fascism yet, but a mindset that certainly predisposes one to it.

This book focuses on one aspect of this complex tapestry: the perception of the social world through flawed social causal frameworks – that is, false explanations of social and economic processes. "Flawed" may seem uncomfortably close to the word "false" and may appear to bring us back to the epistemological and moral pitfalls of *Ideologiekritik*. And yet, "flawed" should be differentiated from "false" because it does not dismiss and negate the thinking and feeling of citizens. It contains the possibility that, while not perfect, thinking is not false but simply flawed. It is not false in the sense that it contains the trace of a real social experience which must be recovered by the analyst. These traces produce reasons which must be both understood and reckoned with. I am attentive to these reasons, as made clear in interviews I conducted with people who subscribe to right-wing, populist, ultra-nationalist worldviews and tried to understand the inner coherence of their views in order to ask just where and how thoughts about our social environment become distorted. This book focuses on causal frames (how we explain our social world) and the ways in which they profoundly affect political cognition and behavior.

If we want to understand why some frameworks can come to distort our perception of the social world, why we are unable to correctly name a real malaise, we must push Adorno's thought to new realms and grasp more firmly than he did the intertwining of social thought with emotions. Only emotions have the multifold power to deny empirical evidence, to shape motivation, to overwhelm self-interest, and to be responsive to concrete social situations. Thus, this book follows the suggestion of the Swedish sociologist Helena Flam to look into the influence of emotions on macro-politics and "map out emotions which uphold social structures and relations of domination."[18] Politics is charged with affective structures without which we would not be able to understand how flawed ideologies slip through the social experiences of actors and shape their meaning. This is the broad theme of this book. It

takes Israel as its main case study with the hope that its findings can either be generalized or at least compared to those in other countries.

## Structures of Feeling

Raymond Williams, the great British literary theorist, coined the expression "structures of feeling" to designate the forms of thinking that were vying to emerge between the hegemony of institutions, the popular responses to official regulations and literary texts accounting for these responses. A structure of feeling[19] points to experience that is inchoate, what we may today call an affect, something that is beneath coherent meaning. It is a shared way of thinking and feeling that influences and is influenced by the culture and way of life of a particular group.[20] And the notion of structure also suggests that this level of experience has an underlying pattern, which means it is systematic. These structures may play an important role in shaping individual and group identities.[21] Politics shapes and is shaped by such structures of feelings,[22] whether they come in the form of fear, resentment, disgust or national pride, as studied in this book. Political actors are particularly powerful in shaping narratives which bestow emotional meanings on social experiences.[23] They address voters directly with narratives they forge with the help of consultants, experts, and advertisers. These narratives, shaped by political and media elites, may resonate with emotional habitus formed during one's socialization (for example, indignation at perceived injustice or disdain for 'lower' social groups are typically formed through family),[24] or they may give meaning to social experiences in process (such as downward mobility). Sometimes emotions sustain material socio-economic interests, and sometimes the latter can be overwhelmed by emotions[25] and can even contradict them, as when working-class people vote for leaders who

lower taxes for the rich, weaken trade unions, deregulate labor laws, and lower social benefits. Emotions play a crucial role in shaping and influencing voting patterns and other political choices of citizens.[26]

Emotions can turn into affects or less conscious modes of feeling. Such affects are not only based in one's social position or social experiences. They also pervade spaces, images, stories that circulate in the social bond, creating public atmospheres to which we respond beneath and beyond our self-awareness.[27] We respond to them by absorbing the key emotional associations which words, events, stories, or symbols create. Affect is a non-cognitive or pre-cognitive level of experience. It is "deposited" so to speak in public and collective objects or events, such as public speeches, national holidays, military marches, symbols, and policies of the state.[28] It can also be actively engineered by political marketers and the clients they serve. This symbolic and emotional material is both the effect of conscious manipulations by powerful political actors and a kind of raw energy circulating in civil society through social media, interpersonal interactions, and non-state organizations.[29] Such emotions have a particular stickiness when they come attached to stories which orient us in social space and shape our social identity and our understanding of the world. In this perspective, then, emotions are sometimes implicit in orienting one's sense of the issues that matter or explicit when they are manipulated by actors in the political field. They are neither fully rational (since they often disregard self-interest and ignore the real causes of events) nor irrational (since they express one's position in the social world).[30] Because emotions are eudaimonic – they express one's perception of one's well-being in a given situation – they do not fit neatly into the rational–irrational divide. In the analysis to follow, then, emotions are understood as responses to social conditions, responses that take the form of collective narratives that deliberately connect causes and effects in a specific way, assign blame, and offer solutions to

predicaments. Emotions, as Arlie Hochschild argued in her remarkable study of Louisiana Trump voters, are embedded in deep stories which need neither be true nor rely on any fact, only *feel* true.[31] That emotions guide our political orientations is true for the entire political spectrum, but some leaders, some ideologies, and some historical circumstances make this fact even more cogent, as is the case with contemporary populism. The predominance of emotional orientations may be the reason why, for example, Trump's popularity has changed very little throughout the years, no matter which new scandal he was involved in.[32]

Structures of feelings can be said to have a dual property: they can point to a social experience shared by members of a social group, accumulated through time, which may or may not be explicitly named and which may or may not become a part of the political discourse.[33] For example, at the turn of the twentieth century, Austrians envied the Jews who were disproportionately present in professions as medicine, law, and journalism.[34] That envy probably constituted an important element of the virulent ideological antisemitism which gave rise to Nazism, yet that affective experience, while grounded in the vertiginous social mobility of Jews, did not bear an explicit name – social envy. It took the circuitous route of a demonization of the Jews in pamphlets, newspaper articles, caricatures, rumors, and pseudo-scientific theories. It constituted a climate of opinion and a public atmosphere.

The other dimension of structure of feeling pertains to the public character of politics and policies and to their capacity to shape the affect of their recipients. It refers to the capacity of leaders, public media and government policies, official political actors, and heads of parties to shape emotions or affective atmospheres more or less consciously and more or less manipulatively by labeling events (past, present, or future) and by bestowing on them public interpretative frames. Political leaders often invoke their own sentiments in order to induce those

of their constituents as well as their identification. As Walter Lippman put it in *The Phantom Public* in 1927:

> Since the general opinions of large numbers of persons are almost certain to be a vague and confusing medley, action cannot be taken until these opinions have been factored down, canalized, compressed and made uniform. The making of one general will out of the multitude of general wishes is not a Hegelian mystery, as so many social philosophers have imagined, but an art well known to leaders, politicians and steering committees. It consists essentially in the use of symbols which assemble emotions after they have been detached from their ideas.[35]

These two types of frame – deriving from social experience and consciously crafted – sometimes become intricately intertwined and reflect the cognitive and affective meanings with which citizens and constituents interpret their social world. This process of assembling symbols and extracting from them, so to speak, their affective meaning is key to understanding how emotions and affects, once transformed in public speech and images, connect to flawed ideologies. A structure of feeling has thus a double property: it is a social experience shared by people who may have a common economic, cultural, and social experience; and it can also designate the ways in which this experience is named and framed by various groups that control the public arena, these groups being media, political actors, lobbyists, influencers, and politicians. Political structures of feeling consist of the successful encounter between the two. To be sure, a social experience can be one of general and vague malaise. To become politically relevant and operational it needs to be incorporated into a frame of meaning which recodes the malaise into a specific set of ideas and emotions.

Populism is one such (often successful) way of recoding social malaise. This book argues that, in the Israeli context,

populist politics recoded three powerful social experiences: one is to be found in the various collective traumas lived by the Jews throughout their history, including the birth of the state of Israel, which entailed a war against the British colonial powers and surrounding Arab countries. These traumas have been translated into a generalized fear of the enemy. The second powerful social experience is the conquest of land, which, since 1967, has increasingly become the object of intense ideological struggles over the nature of Israeli nationalism, while the land has become an economic resource.[36] The Occupation generates emotional practices of separation and even disgust between various groups in Israeli society. The third social experience on which runs the powerful emotion of resentment is the long-lasting discrimination and exclusion of Mizrahim, Jews who were born in Arab countries or whose parents or grandparents were born in Arab countries. This resentment in turn operated a radical transformation of the political map, tipping it to the extreme right. These three so-called negative emotions (fear, disgust, and resentment) are all transcended into the love of the nation and/or the Jewish people. These emotions are generated by narrative frames which are anchored in concrete social experiences. In other words, social experiences become translated into emotions and motivations, creating narratives which become operative in the political sphere. These narratives are invoked by political actors and are mobilized by them in their struggles to claim power and authority. Once these emotions are mobilized in the public sphere, they become imbued with what I would call surplus imaginary affects: emotions feed on social experiences as much as on the invocation of imagined narrative scripts – for example, of the enemy or of the true and authentic people – which in turn generate strong affective orientations. The deployment of emotions in the public sphere thus invites the analysis of the ways in which concrete social experiences are framed and recoded in public narratives which yield surplus

imaginary affects. Emotions are as much a response to reality as they are to imagined objects.

## Emotions, Character and Politics

This book aims to characterize Israeli populist politics by viewing it as a politics which blends four specific emotions – fear, disgust, resentment, and love – and makes these emotions dominant vectors of the political process. Despite its very unique problems and geography, Israel can be seen as paradigmatic of the nationalist and populist political style that has unfolded throughout the world. No doubt it is, in many ways, an outlier because it is a Jewish state tucked within a predominantly Arab area, with a significant Palestinian minority, thus creating a breeding ground for military conflict, which is absent or played in a minor key in many countries in which populism has become a dominant voice. Yet, this makes it also a prime case for the development of populist movements because, as the Israeli political scientist Dani Filc suggests, populism is a "political project supported by some common ideological premises that appear in societies where conflicts around the inclusion or exclusion of subordinate groups prevail."[37] To be sure, this book does not claim Israel is worse than other democracies in its turn to populism. In fact, the opposite is true. Given the considerable number of external conflicts and inner tensions this young democracy has faced, its institutions have been remarkably resilient for an astonishingly long time. (They are now threatened with collapse under the assault of the populist and messianic right.). Especially when compared to such countries as Poland, Hungary, the United States or Brazil, which have no enemies at their borders (the first two are even relatively homogeneous), we can only be impressed by the fact that Israel did not yet resort to a more muscular military democracy. And yet, Benjamin Netanyahu was among the

first leaders to adopt a populist style of governance. Choosing Israel is all the more justified in that Netanyahu forged bonds of diplomatic, political, and personal friendship with many anti-democratic leaders of the world, such as Duterte, Bolsonaro, Trump, Putin, Modi, and Orban.[38] These leaders share in common a distinctive political style and common interests:[39] they are hyper-masculinist (Netanyahu never had any known or visible feminist agenda in an era where all social democratic leaders are committed to this issue); they attack the rule of law and established democratic institutions; they foment conspiracy theories about a deep state (the very same state they are supposed to represent); they identify enemies threatening the borders or integrity of the majority group; they play social groups against each other; and, finally and most importantly, they claim to represent the people against the elites, a point which has often been made in the increasingly large literature on populism. Even though these leaders often control and overwhelm the party they claim to represent, their ideological platform is carried through a party apparatus. All of them distrust international law and organizations, many of them loathe the EU, and they all would like a freer hand to rule their country without a strong parliament or judicial system.

It is often said that the current Likud is an extreme version of its predecessor, the Herut party that was led by Menachem Begin. Yet, we forget that Herut had been viewed, at least initially, as a terror organization, outside the Zionist consensus. On December 4, 1948, a group of American intellectuals published a damning evaluation of the party of Menachem Begin (upon his visit in the USA). Their letter read as follows:

> Among the most disturbing political phenomena of our times is the emergence in the newly created state of Israel of the "Freedom Party" (Tnuat Haherut), a political party closely akin in its organization, methods, political philosophy and social appeal to the Nazi and Fascist parties. It was formed out of the

membership and following of the former Irgun Zvai Leumi, a terrorist, right-wing, chauvinist organization in Palestine. . . . The Deir Yassin incident exemplifies the character and actions of the Freedom Party.

Within the Jewish community they have preached an admixture of ultra-nationalism, religious mysticism, and racial superiority. Like other Fascist parties they have been used to break strikes, and have themselves pressed for the destruction of free trade unions. In their stead they have proposed corporate unions on the Italian Fascist model.

During the last years of sporadic anti-British violence, the IZL and Stern groups inaugurated a reign of terror in the Palestine Jewish community. Teachers were beaten up for speaking against them, adults were shot for not letting their children join them. By gangster methods, beatings, window-smashing, and widespread robberies, the terrorists intimidated the population and exacted a heavy tribute.

The people of the Freedom Party have had no part in the constructive achievements in Palestine. They have reclaimed no land, built no settlements, and only detracted from the Jewish defense activity.[40]

This letter was signed by such luminaries as Albert Einstein, Hannah Arendt, and Sidney Hook. In the view of these liberal Jews, the Herut party was a dangerous radical right-wing party. It wanted to annex more land, refused to recognize Jordan's sovereignty, and did not want peace with Arabs. Begin was even likened by Ben-Gurion (to the latter's discredit) to Hitler, and it was the fact that he joined the unity government in the wake of the Six Day War that started the process of legitimation of the right, which morphed into a moderate version of itself. Netanyahu inherited an ambiguous heritage when he became the head of the Likud party, which was founded in 1973 and which was then in many respects a moderate one, resembling the moderate right of its European or North American

equivalents. In the 1990s that party had achieved the capacity to rally the middle classes and be the party of liberals (defending free markets as well as the rule of law and human rights). Netanyahu forever changed that party into a populist one and in many ways took it back to the radical ideology of its predecessor, albeit through a different route.

Israel is a very good case study to understand populist politics for a few other reasons. As Yonatan Levi and Shai Agmon explain: first, "because of the longevity of its populist regime . . . Israel has been ruled by populist governments for at least ten years . . . It is, therefore, an instructive example of what a full decade of uninterrupted populist rule looks like."[41] In fact, according to the authors, the key attributes of populism – from the delegitimization of the press and the legal establishment to the politicization of state bureaucracy – have been present in Israeli politics for at least a decade.[42] Additionally, "Israel plays a central role in the emerging populist axis on the international stage – as evidenced by its tightening relationship with Brazil and India and the invitation it received to join the Visegrád Group, an alliance of Central European countries led by right-wing populists."[43] I would add another important reason: Netanyahu implemented neo-liberal policies yet has steadily enjoyed the support of a variety of downtrodden social groups[44] and, to this extent, is exemplary of the same conundrum which characterizes populist politics at large: it is a politics which has no compunction in lowering taxes for the rich, reducing the public sector, and increasing inequalities – and yet it enjoys the support of those most hurt by these policies. For example, house prices in Israel rose by a whopping 345.7 percent between 2011 and 2021, the highest increase in the world. During this period, Israeli wages increased by only 17.5 percent.[45] Clearly, this type of change would benefit only the very top echelons of society and hurts people of lower socio-economic status, as it makes it virtually impossible for them to find affordable housing. Despite this, Likud recruits its followers mostly from

the less wealthy sectors of society. This fact clearly indicates that, as has often been noticed by a wide variety of commentators and scholars, populism is able to be immensely attractive despite the ways in which it hurts the economic interests of its supporters.[46] It also suggests that populism is mostly a politics of identity: it aims to strengthen the identity of the majority group, to repair symbolic injuries (real or imagined), and to play various identities against one another.

Dani Filc has described what he dubs Netanyahu's post-populism, a politics built around three dimensions: a material one in the form of economic neo-liberalism, a political one in the form of authoritarianism, and a symbolic one in the form of conservative nationalism.[47] The three dimensions of Netanyahu's (post-)populism cohere and coalesce seamlessly around a core emotional style that glues citizens to beliefs and stories that become particularly "sticky," viewed as persuasive by a wide variety of people because they resonate with real social conditions and with powerful symbols and meanings at work in culture. The argument of this book uses Filc's triptych as its departure point; it does not aim to explain populism as much as to describe it through the prism of emotions. It argues that authoritarianism and conservative nationalism rest on four emotions: authoritarianism is legitimized through fear, and conservative nationalism (a view of the nation based on tradition and rejection of the stranger) rests on disgust, resentment, and a carefully cultivated love for one's country. This book studies these four key emotions, the intertwining of which is crucial to understand the shift to a populist politics. Privileging such emotions does not exclude the relevance of other emotions, as they are indeed contiguous with others (anger, for example, is closely intertwined with resentment, disgust with hatred). Yet, at least in the Israeli case, they seem to capture most concisely the affective structure of populism, which, despite being versatile, has a common ideological core – one that is differently inflected in varied political cultures.

This book offers a grid of analysis which can and should be modulated in other countries. To be sure, these same emotions may also be present in left-wing populism (with different contents), but I focus on right-wing populism because it is this version which has come to dominate Israeli politics and which is far more widespread in the world. It is the *combination* of these four emotions and their relentless presence in the political arena that might be a characteristic of populist politics. This is in line with findings such as those of Salmela and Von Scheve, who attribute the rise of right-wing populism to a combination of several emotions working together (in their case, this includes resentment, fear, shame, and anger).[48] Therefore, despite dedicating a different chapter to each emotion, fear, disgust, resentment, and love of one's nation should be viewed as forming a compact cluster. In real social life, they come enmeshed with each other and may in fact form a single narrative made of multiple narrative threads.

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In his *Politics,* Aristotle famously asked "whether the virtue of the good man and the excellent citizen is to be regarded as the same or as not the same."[49] In asking whether the virtues of the citizen and the virtues of a human being are the same, he invited us to question whether it is the same virtues that make particular people and citizens commendable. Inasmuch as virtue presupposes certain emotional dispositions (for example, we cannot imagine envy as a character trait of a virtuous person), Aristotle's is an invitation to think about the set of emotions which should or should not be cultivated in a good society. More specifically, he invites us to ask how, beyond the simple invocation of emotions in the rhetoric of certain leaders, some emotions come to redefine the horizon of thinking of a citizenry. Although Aristotle was not an unqualified supporter of democracy (he preferred a mixed form of government with democratic and oligarchic elements), we may

follow his example and view the worm inside democracy as promoted by a specific set of emotional dispositions cultivated by populist leaders. Martha Nussbaum started such an analysis in her magnum opus *Political Emotions*, asking which emotions should be privileged or discouraged in liberal democracies (she cites disgust as an example of the former and love and compassion as examples of the latter).[50] This book pursues her analysis by viewing emotions as part and parcel of what Pierre Bourdieu called the habitus, the set of dispositions which structure a matrix of thinking and acting.[51] But where Bourdieu was interested in the ways in which habitus reflected and reproduced social inequalities, this book explores the formation of specific emotional habitus or dispositions in the political sphere. This in turn invites the question: Which criteria should we follow to define an emotion as a populist one – that is, how should we differentiate between the emotions which are routinely exercised in many political regimes and those that are particularly at work in populist regimes? Surely democratic public life is routinely rife with emotions (indignation, compassion, hope are the most obvious examples), yet *some* emotions may and do take a democratic public sphere away from its vocation.

Jan-Werner Müller, one of the most prominent world specialists on populism, has suggested that populism is "a permanent shadowy effect of representative democracy,"[52] a diagnostic astonishingly congruent with that of Adorno. His striking formulation suggests precisely one of the key findings of this book: how difficult it is to extricate populist claims from democratic ones. This task is made all the more complicated when we deal with emotions. With a group of Israeli MA students – professional lawyers with law degrees – we drew up the following criteria to try and differentiate between populist and ordinary emotions at work in democracies: populist emotions divide the people and pitch groups against groups; they are geared to divide the citizens of the same country; they tend

to be animated by the perception of stark distinctions between groups; they engender or call for direct or indirect forms of violence, ostracism, censorship, or direct physical harm; they cancel the very legitimacy of positions different from their own; they are quick to perceive political rivals as traitors; they appeal to an imaginary core of greatness and authenticity of the nation which people are summoned to revere and love unconditionally; and they are often fed by narratives of victimhood and impending danger. Finally, these emotions, while aimed at inflaming the imagination of a people, often are used in an opportunistic way by the leader to promote or maintain his power. Indeed a key characteristic of such emotions is that they derive from the mistrust in institutions of the state and thus create a deep sense of alienation from the same institutions that are tasked with protecting democracy, while creating strong identification with and even love of a leader. This book does not claim it has exhausted the range of possibilities to understand the Israeli public sphere. It only offers an interpretative grid which may perhaps be applied to other countries, modulated and modified accordingly. The four emotions selected for this study constitute a matrix to explain how the political process becomes marred by anti-democratic populist impulses, what we may call fascist tendencies. How such emotions come to structure the field of vision of social actors in Israel is the theme of this book.

matter of discussion. It is a political issue that can and should be resolved locally: rights, citizenship, benevolence, help, charity, and respect, but cosmopolitanism is the horizon of such discussions.

## Jews and Universalism

Since the eighteenth century, Jews have played a decisive role in the promotion of universalism, because universalism is deeply ingrained in the moral views of several strands and commandments of Judaism and because it promised Jews redemption from their political subjection. Jews participated *en masse* in the great universalist movements of emancipation. Through universalism, Jews could, in principle, be free and equal to those who dominated them: in a universalist community, membership of a religious minority should not influence one's political status. This may be one of the reasons why Jews participated in disproportionate numbers in communist or socialist causes.[37] This is also why Jews were model citizens of such countries with universalist constitutions as France or the United States.[38] This history of Jews as promoters of the Enlightenment and universalist values is drawing to a close. We are the stunned witnesses of new alliances between Israel, ultra-orthodox factions of religious Judaism throughout the world, and the new global populism, in which ethnocentrism and even racism hold an undeniable place. A whopping 53.59 percent of French Jews living in Israel voted for the extreme-right candidate Éric Zemmour for the French presidency;[39] AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), a powerful but traditionally non-partisan lobby, supported Trump enthusiastically,[40] and, in a 2019 survey, 81 percent of orthodox Jewish Americans approved of Trump.[41] These numbers speak loud and clear. If the Jews and the working class were once what Marx called universal classes – they represented the point

of view of the destitute for whom emancipation would occur through universalism – they now represent groups largely affected by the ideology and the politics of the extreme right.

This is due, no doubt, to the ways in which the Israeli right has preferred to ally itself with populist leaders (who are less likely to give Israel a hard time in international organizations that adhere to international norms and laws). And it is no less due to the fact that the religion that has been institutionalized in Israel refuses to be a dynamic religion. It is in fact highly static and anti-modernist. Israel has enabled the formation and expansion of stringent forms of ultra-orthodoxy which feed into rigid and binary conceptions of identity and extreme religious nationalism. These oppose liberal civil society in the sense that, while they may foster a great solidarity between their own members, they do not foster and even dismiss what is conventionally thought of as fraternal relationship between different human groups.

It is the universalism of the Jews which must be renewed through an alliance between liberalism and dynamic Jewish religion, today represented mostly by conservative and reform Judaism and some strands of orthodox Judaism, all equally mindful of the universalist vocation of Judaism. Universalism is not a foolproof safeguard against the failures of democracy, but it is certainly one of the strongest buffers against the nativist claims of populism. The renewal of Israeli civil society will emerge only from an energetic dialogue between a dynamic Jewish religion which taps into the universalist dimension of Judaism and a more radically universalist political culture which extends full human rights to non-Jewish minorities. This is, undoubtedly, the true and only spirit of Zionism and of the civil religion it tried to implement in the land of Israel. Whether or not it will succeed remains a tragically open question.

# Notes



## Introduction

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