

The creation of high self-esteem as a voting incentive

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ABSTRACT: “The statesman’s task is to hear God’s footsteps marching through history, and to try and catch on to His coattails as He marches past” (Otto von Bismarck). Populist movements all across the globe somehow managed to catch it. Additionally, this happens in the most highly advanced and well established democracies of the world. What is even more intriguing is that the explanatory power of classical variables to account for this dynamics seems limited. On the other hand the role of emotions and the constructivist power of the mind by which they are created prove to be enormously insightful. Despite those observations there exists no systematic approach to the affective dimension. In contrast to investigations, that mainly focus on one single emotion, such as the *politics of fear*, here the interplay of the whole emotional game is regarded key to uncover the unseen, but felt reality underneath: The analysis reveals that the emotional negativity is mainly generated as a means to an end, namely to create at the same time a positive antidote and remedy. The strongest common denominator of this emotional logic is the technique of Altercasting, whereby the negativity is projected onto *alter* while what is positive is used to construct auto-affirmative identity-concepts of *ego*. This in turn led to the conclusion that self-esteem, which is hardly ever analyzed in these contexts, lies at the heart of the emotional constellation. Populist voters are therefore not primarily seen as opponents to democracy, but much more as seekers of a positive self-concept. Therefore the democratic system’s diminution could be understood as a collateral damage to something much deeper seated in the human psyche. The case study chosen here is the PiS party’s election victory in 2016, which, on the abstract level of rhetorical meta-frames, is regarded as a *pars pro toto* for what is observed globally.

KEYWORDS: populism, emotions, identity, self-esteem, dignity, collective narcissism, egoism, Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), conscience, altercasting

INTRODUCTION

Nearly all interpretations of populism include the affective factor only in a disguised or implicit way. Even though none of its interpreters would be willing to neglect this factor, few are those who approach it in a systematic way [...]. A concrete problematization of feelings, within the analysis of populism, is almost absent because many years they did not receive particular attention within the general context of sociological analysis. (Demertzis, 2006, p. 114)

Populist research focuses to a large extent on the measurable and quantifiable realm. Hard facts and numbers structuring reality are being used to shed light on the phenomenon, which causes a backsliding in the most highly advanced and well-established democracies of the world (cf. Puddington/Roylance, 2017, p. 1). This in turn is a “historical precedent” (Foa/Mounk, 2017, p. 13). However, the forces leading to such democratic recessions might “differ in significant ways” (Ulfelder/Lustik, 2007, p. 353) from factors that reinforced processes of democratization in the first place (cf. *ibid.*). The Polish PiS party’s election victory in 2016 has been chosen here as a case study as it matches this seemingly paradoxical pattern in significant ways. On the one hand, the numbers speak volumes as they run entirely counter to what materialist or cultural approaches assume to be the causes of populist success: the GDP has been constantly growing (cf. Eurostat, 2018a); the risk-of-poverty rate has been decreasing; so has been the Gini-coefficient measuring the income distribution (cf. Eurostat 2018b) and the corruption has been also shrinking in the years before the election (cf. Transparency International, 2018). Poland is regarded as the poster child of the post-communist transition and the green island in terms of a steady economic development. The cultural backlash thesis is questionable too, since a majority values the democratic system (cf. Bachmann, 2016, pp. 47-49). Cosmopolitan and post-materialist attitudes are mostly internalized (cf. European Commission, 2015a, 2015b) and, just before the election campaign, most people agreed to accept refugees (cf. Kowlaczuk, 2016). On the other hand, the party appears very aware of another dimension, how to exercise power over people. In 2016 the National Development Council (Narodowa Rada Rozwoju) reflected upon the question how to best influence the masses by shaping their mindsets, emotional realities and hence their perceptions as such. From the standpoint of democracy, this logic is reversed: Instead of taking the party’s own values and convictions as the starting point of further reflexions, the question aims at carving out the most effective factors of political influence, no means excluded. The committee expressed special interests in the instrumentalization of emotions and their power upon the human psyche: “Let me briefly reply to the question of the president [Andrzej Duda] [...] considering the elements, which would create patriotic attitudes, [...] I say we should be aware of the fact, that we are primarily talking about factors evoking emotions and emotional attachments. Intellectual reflexion comes only afterwards”¹ (Kancelaria Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2015, p. 54). This undemocratic approach remarkably resembles a statement made by Adolf Hitler in 1933: “[...] through

¹ Foreign-language quotations have been translated by the author.

a psychologically appropriate form [propaganda has to] find its way to the attention and then further to the heart of the broad masses.” “Its impact has to be essentially focused on the feeling and only in a very limited way on the so called mind” (Hitler in Frevert, 2017, p. 124). It sounds as if the idea originated from the same pen, doesn't it? Psychologists observe that, as different as the circumstances might be, on an affective level the psychological processes show certain parallels (Ścigaj, 2015, p. 78).

So, at which insights did the populist research arrive in the face of those socio-psychological techniques? What kind of forces are at work here? And why do they capture the *Zeitgeist*... again?

STATE OF RESEARCH

As Demertzis points out, the gaps in exploring the emotional dimensions of populism, let alone the interplay of thoughts and feelings, are still huge. **(1)** It is apparent that the investigations usually focus on merely one or very few emotions instead of considering the full emotional spectrum evoked by populist leaders. After all, it could be precisely this interplay that allows detecting a certain logic of emotional game played by the political string-pullers. Or to speak directly in the words of dark psychology, the techniques of manipulation won't come to light when extrapolating only single aspects of it. Looking at the complete emotional constellation could also help to find a core emotion as a hub and pivot, if there is one at all. **(2)** Most often the emotions analyzed in connection with populism are problematic or painful, one might also say negative. Dissatisfaction and negativity are prioritized in research. Far less attention is paid to pleasant and self-satisfying emotions, which, in contrast, are typical for the populist affirmative patriotism and in-group identification. **(3)** There are no clear methods to discover which emotions are actually involved in the phenomenon. In many investigations they are simply presupposed as already given. As Demertzis states, a clearly-structured deduction is still missing. **(4)** Since emotions have not predominantly been subject to social sciences, much more research is needed to develop an appropriate methodology at all.

Just to give some examples: While older research on populism almost entirely abandons the affective factor (Taggart, Connovan or Laclau), current approaches concentrate on single emotions—Ruth Wodak focuses on fear (“politics of fear”) (cf. Wodak, 2015); Nicola Demertzis assesses the impact of resentment encompassing anger, envy, jealousy and hatred (Demertzis, 2006, p. 8 ff.); Claus Leggewie defines resentment as a mixture of deep disappointment, pent-up rage and plain aggression as well as the feeling of powerlessness (cf. Leggewie, 2015). Similarly, Hans Georg Betz calls it a “politics of resentment” in which “anxiety and disenchantment” (Betz, 1993, p. 413) are being instrumentalized; de Vries and Hoffmann ascribe the populist's success to the fear of globalization (cf. De Vries & Hoffmann, 2016); another survey contrasts anger, fear and sadness and comes to the conclusion that anger correlates most with voting for populists (cf. Guillem et al., 2017). Finally, Nicole Curato observes anxiety and hope (cf. Curato, 2016), whereas Michael Kenny ascribes the feeling of nostalgia a leading role (cf. Kenny, 2017).

OWN APPROACH

The approach chosen here is a deductive one. The idea is to explore the emotional impact mainly from the perspective of its recipients. The material chosen are scientific as well as media/journalistic contributions commenting on the party's affective impact in the years 2015 until 2019. Speeches by the PiS, which directly mention concrete emotions, have been taken into account too. (An analysis of the PiS's speeches alone would not show the whole picture, since what is said and what is heard can differ. In addition, discourse theory still doesn't provide sufficient instruments to carve out the affective dimension, for its focus lies on the rationality of words). Emotions of any kind have therefore been the structuring categories. Thereby feelings and thoughts are closely intertwined; the former is inseparable from the latter. Therefore, in a second step, the feelings found have been assigned to the contexts in which they most often occur.

Of course, the Polish narrative differs from other populist narrations. The content is, in many cases, Poland-specific, but the form of those arguments is not. On a more abstract level, on the level of argument type populist narrations are very much alike. Those argument types, or more precisely meta-frames, are constantly repeated patterns, under which the *differentia specifica* can be summarized. Three such meta-frames could have been deduced from the narratives: (a) the technique of alter-casting, by which alter and ego or the in- and out-group are defined; (b) the idea of relative-deprivation; (c) and the technique of governance of time. All of them can be used to change people's perceptions of the situation and evoke the intended feelings. Let's have a look at the rules of the populist game, then.

“POLAND IN RUINS” (POLSKA W RUINACH) : ANGER, FRUSTRATION

Kaczyński's victory would not have been possible without the creation of a highly-effective 'anger industry' [...]. (Demos, 2017, p. 348)

Although the emotional response of anger emerges in various contexts, the very engine of this feeling is the so-called narrative of a *Poland in ruins*. The anger is hereby closely intertwined with frustration. But how exactly does this emotional *industry* work? And why would one describe Poland as ruined at all? The empirical evidence suggests the exact opposite: firstly, Poland earned its reputation as the *poster-child* of the post-communist transformation thanks to its steady GDP growth, which outperformed other EU member states, secondly, it obtained its nickname *green island*, and finally, it emerged from the global financial crisis mostly unscathed. So what exactly lies in ruins here? Where is the reason to become angry?

It seems we shouldn't look for it in the quantifiable, measurable realm but in words. For Kaczyński precisely knows how to *do things with words*. Nothing is impossible in our minds, there is no world that words couldn't create. The empirical data doesn't speak for itself. The contextualisation and interpretation make the difference, either creating a winner's cup out of the numbers or an old, torn, messy coat.

How did the PiS party clothe its own state? During the election campaign, Kaczyński

published his book *The Poland of our Dreams*. It illustrates the essence of how he perceives and constructs the dark Polish reality. The one and only positive estimation stated on the first page of the book is followed by various reasons for discontent and anger: “When I look at Poland, I see enormous differences to past times. [...] However, we cannot be ultimately proud of Poland as it is now, because [...]” (Kaczyński, 2011, p. 11). The remainder of the book concentrates on this “because”.

His arguments are very much alike. The underlying monotone ostinato is the meta-frame of *relative-deprivation theory*. It is defined as “the judgment that one or one’s group is worse off compared to some standard accompanied by feelings of anger and resentment” (Smith/Pettigrew, 2015, p. 1). And “[...] populist leaders can present situations of objective gratification under the guise of relative deprivation to manipulate the public. Such perceptions create feelings of injustice and resentment toward out-groups [...]” (Marchlewska, 2018, p. 4). This is exactly what the author does: He makes numerous (statistical) comparisons between Poland and countries that are better off regarding their developments and areas analysed. The argument goes like this: Nothing is truly good (enough) if it functions better elsewhere. He proceeds this way with almost every aspect of the Polish reality, including politics, the policy areas, and the polity itself: higher education performs poorly since the best Polish college, the Jagiellonian University ranked number 393 in the QS World University Ranking, lies far behind the Ivy League colleges; Poland’s capacity to close transactions is worth little since the “Doing Business Ranking” assigns Poland place 70 out of 183; surveys of the EU commission reveal deficits in Poland’s innovative capacity such as application for patents, export of modern technologies and so on. In addition, the liveability, health care, the justice and school systems are unsatisfactory since they function much better in countries such as Denmark, Sweden or Germany and others. Alongside this mechanical declination of negative comparisons, the author also reflects upon some positive developments. He does this, however, in a way that enables him again to highlight shortcomings and deficits. He states that the positive developments could have been *much better* than they are. The scales and standards have simply been set far too low, and what could have been possible has been wrongly, misleadingly, and deliberately classified as “imposybilizm” (Kaczyński, 2011, p. 11). Setting far higher (counterfactual?) standards allows him to depict all good in an insufficient and disgraceful light. His argumentation reads as if Kaczyński translated Paul Watzlawick’s psychological *Pursuit of Unhappiness* into a political novel.

There is nothing wrong with desiring a country to improve on every level. However, the way this analysis proceeds is unscientific, as it looks only at what lies statistically above, ignoring variables that lead to this outcome and blending out metareflections about comparability. The writing lacks contextualization. Finally, how can a multi-layered complex reality be merely simplified and reduced to assaults against one’s political opponents (see below)? It is a very selective and unilateral perspective always reaching the same conclusion: a state in bad shape. There is reason to believe that this is a deliberate degradation and intentional deconstruction of Poland’s achievements, turning them into ruins and ashes. It is not without reason that Kaczyński is called “a doctor for self-made illnesses” (Kalukin, 2017).

This sort of relative-deprivation thinking is complemented by the second meta-frame of *Altercasting*, which adds a personal and, hence, intentional dimension to it. Altercasting describes the social constructivist idea of imposing a role onto someone, to redefining alter's identity through a certain behaviour of ego. It is "a technique of interactor control in which ego uses tactics of self-presentation and stage management in an attempt to frame alter's definitions of social situations in ways that create the role which ego desires alter to play. In effect, in altercasting ego tries to induce alter to take on a new identity [...] by treating alter as if it already had that identity" (Wendt, 1992, p. 421). Kaczyński frames two such players—on the one hand, the victim, which is the Polish nation, on the other hand, the perpetrators, represented by many other groups. The structure of these relationships is a priori defined as an asymmetric, antagonistic, and hostile one. This concept has been thereby used by the author in a rather unusual way: First it is applied retrospectively, secondly, while the definition implies a superiority of ego or at least its subjectivity and hence agency, it is here identified with the role of a victim, a rather passive figure, an object to the wrongdoings of alter. However, it is precisely this role that allows the victim-ego to frame its alter in the most horrendous way. While this relative-deprivation perspective is devastating enough, it becomes even more toxic by linking the *Poland in ruins* narrative to alter's intentions and motivations:

Kaczyński accuses these various groups of having deliberately and willingly undermined Poland's developments. He holds them responsible for all the grievances mentioned earlier in the statistics. He takes the deprivation literally, meaning that someone intentionally robbed Poland of its opportunities, betrayed the state by denying that to which it was entitled by reverting it to an unbearable, ruined status. Now think yourself deeply enough into this kind of story, into this unfairness of being subordinated to a foreign resentful will—isn't it quite effective to create a feeling of rage, frustration and anger? Fortunately, the anger doesn't float in a blind vacuum—it can start hitting its targets thanks to the assignment of roles: In regards to the transition process since 1989, it is the "III republic", the "elites", the "establishment", the "post communists" (Kaczyński, 2011, pp. 154ff; Kotras, 2018), who could have led Poland out of its legacy much more successfully than they chose to do. The neglect on every level of the ramshackle state is their fault—whether it's the democracy itself (ibid. 11), the media (ibid. 52), the clientelism (ibid. 51) or the rule of law (ibid. 79). These are just the transition foes. There are numerous others mentioned in other contexts (see below).

The author's framing of ego, the Polish people, reflects the way ego has been treated by alter, who not only left a ruined state behind but also a ruined people: Under all the circumstances mentioned, it is not "worth" (Kaczyński, 2011, p. 12) much to be a Pole (cf. ibid. ff). The Poles have been robbed of their dream of a meaningful self-realisation as individuals and as an entire nation. In such a state it is impossible to feel proud as a citizen or as "valuable" human beings as such. Circumstances, which would allow developing these feelings and perceptions, are yet to be created and established (cf. ibid.). The *Poland of our Dreams* has to be "strong", "rich", "modern" and "safe", which it is not as shown by the statistics (ibid. 11ff). This rhetorical framing converts the seemingly "Haves" into discontented "not Haves" (Marzecki, 2017, pp. 51ff). The

Poles are not only portrayed as people, who have been deprived of their possibilities and potentials but also of their pride and the feeling of self-worth.

“THE GOOD CHANGE” (DOBRA ZMIANA): HOPE AND ENTHUSIASM

This is a rhetoric of wistfulness, of regret and anger about all the good, one does not possess [...] at the same time it is a rhetoric of hope, of dreams, of change, of evolution and reform. (Marzecki, 2017, pp. 51)

In a nutshell, this captures the importance of considering the interplay of the different emotions involved in populist rhetoric. None of them stand alone; none are an end in themselves. The *Good Change* narrative functions as the counterpart of the *Poland in ruins* narrative. The anger and frustration generated first is now being answered with what generates hope, peaking with enthusiasm.

To frame Poland's situation as an intolerable “state of emergency” (Kalukin, 2018, p. 41) allows for a sharp contrast with what Kaczyński means by the *Poland of our Dreams*. After darkness comes the light, a light that appears the brighter and warmer the more gloom there was originally. In his book as well as in his speeches Kaczyński frames all endeavours of his party and political programmes as this light that finally illuminates and enlightens Poland's ruined reality (cf. Kwiatkowski, 2017, p. 2). It is this picture of darkness, destruction, and brokenness which enables him to speak in contrast about visions and dreams.

Here the meta-frame of *Governance of time* is at work: For the future, id est the time to come, this concept means an occupation of future possibilities. It is to represent mere possibilities and options as certainties and logical necessities. It means to rob the future of its unpredictability, treating it already as hard facts. Kaczyński's narration is best contrasted with the PO's (Platforma Obywatelska) narrative: The PiS party's opposition essentially relied on a narration of continuity. Both Bronisław Komorowski as well as the party Civic Platform as such emphasized during the presidential and later the parliamentary campaign the continuousness of Poland's development: the intention was to maintain and to increase the success of the past. The present situation has been therefore interpreted as the fruitful outcome of former endeavours. Poland's international status as the green island was highlighted—an island yet to grow and prosper even more (cf. Borowiec, 2016, p. 188).

Kaczyński's and the PiS's narrative fundamentally differ from this idea of continuity. Their framing of a ruined status quo as diametrically opposed to the bright future the party foresees, lets the political programme appear as a true turning point, a critical juncture in Polish history. It enables the party to speak of visions and dreams contrary to what the present can offer: “For this an appropriate political leadership is essential, one that actually has such a vision of a *Poland of our Dreams* and one that has the determination to realize it” (Kaczyński, 2011, p. 11). Now this concept of *Good Change* is a very vague and broad one. In fact, it simultaneously means everything and nothing specific at the same time. It refers more or less to every idea of the PiS: Whether it's domestic or foreign policy, cultural, educational, social, agricultural poli-

cy, provided it's the PiS's policy, it is the Good, bright Change (cf. Kwiatkowski, 2017, p. 11). But the content of "Good Change" is not so much the point, much more than that it is the framing to realize a vision, a dream, a state seemingly never experienced by the Poles before—a state, in which it is finally worth to be a Pole, a valuable citizen of a proud nation. Visions and dreams can function as important variables to change the conscience and perception of a society (cf. Rupnik, 2016, p. 81; cf. Kwiatkowski, 2017, p. 11). They can do so, just as ideologies do (cf. Gourevitch, 1978, p. 895). Finally, contrary to the discourse of continuity, the break with the past and the upheaval towards the envisioned future triggered emotions of "hope" (Zawistowska/Skowrońska, 2017, p. 119), "enthusiasm" and "euphoria" (ibid. 120).

REFUGEE POLICY: FEAR

It [election victory of the PiS] may read as a triumph of fear over reason and gut feeling over expert knowledge [...]. (Demos, 2017, p. 310)

Fear is certainly very closely associated with recent populist movements—probably even more than any other emotion. Modern populism is very often understood as a Politics of Fear—the fear of refugee flows, of a geopolitical destabilization, of a loss of autonomy to detached elites and so on. In the case of Poland, "fear" (ibid. 331) resulting from "insecurity" and "threat" (Pasamonik, 2017, p. 16) is also mentioned countless times. The debate probably the most representative of the rhetorical creation of this emotion is the refugee policy from that times. How does this "constructivist potential of scaremongering" (Pasamonik, 2017, p. 27) work? The meta-frame of *Governance of time* can, of course, function the other way round too: The Politics of Fear is perfectly suited as an example, for fear (like hope) is an emotion that mainly refers to the future and, more precisely, to negative future scenarios. In order to evoke fear, the time yet to come has been constructed in the darkest and most frightening way possible. Of course politics needs to make predictions about the unknown, but it is a very different thing to govern time in a way that projects only the darkest possibilities into future, that ignores facts, data and historical experiences that would allow the creation of more moderate or even positive scenarios, and finally to present these ideas of Armageddon not as mere possibilities but rather as unquestionable certainties, logical necessities and the truth. "This debate was characterised by emotional narratives, stirring up fears of Muslim refugees, and a systemic disregard for facts and data" (Demos, 2017, p. 331). To act that way is to take creations of a subjective imagination as rational arguments. The let us enter the boundless world of imagination and see what the friends of fantasy have envisioned for the future: "It can begin with a sudden increase in the number of foreigners, then they will not abide by our law and customs, and simultaneously, they will impose, in an aggressive way, their own sensitivity and demands in the public sphere" (Wciseł, 2016, p. 23). The presence of refugees has been systematically linked to "dangerous illness" (Wciseł, 2016, p. 24), terrorism (cf. Kosowska et al., 2017), "destabilization and chaos" (Bielecka-Prus, 2018, p. 12), "impossibility of integration" (ibid., 13), "economic and cultural dangers" (ibid. 24), rape and

abuse and other such negative traits. Furthermore, the party's speculations on the number of refugees to be received significantly transcended the quota calculated by the EU (cf. Wciseł, 2016, p. 24).

(Altercasting) As in the case of the “Poland in ruins” narrative, the construction of alter and ego is here similarly based on an antagonistic relationship, in which the will, the intentions, and the needs of alter work fully against those of ego. While ego longs so much for the Poland of our Dreams, in which security and stability is a condition sine qua non, alter is attributed to be the perfect personification of a nation's destruction and destabilization from within. Refugees are drafted as “a terrible devil” (Pasamonik, 2017). The way they are being characterized is best described as both “demonizing” (Bielecka-Prus, 2018, pp. 13, 22) and “dehumanizing” (Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, p. 467; Bilewicz et al., 2017, p. 89): they are regarded as “primitive”, “sexist”, “criminal” “intellectually and emotionally retarded” and “parasitic” (Bielecka-Prus, 2018, pp. 13, 22). The idea of such an out-group, which would undermine the condition of possibility of a secure and stable Poland, creates strong emotions, especially fear.

REFUGEE POLICY: SAFETY, SECURITY

Why would anyone choose to vote for a party which describes the present as a ruin and the future as a doomsday scenario, if the party lacked any plan for salvation or an antidote to the catastrophe? Is it the anger and fear created in the first place or the hope and feeling of security provided as an answer that matter more? This way the supply creates its own demand—the evil is created in order to be answered with the appropriate remedy. Fear serves hence as a means to an end, to provide emotions of “safety and security” (Wciseł, 2016, p. 28). The party “magically provide[s] total care and protection” (Covington, 2018, p. 2). Creating problems allows for suitable solutions too: “[...] we inspire fear of refugees, to raise at the same time the love towards the government, which protects against these dangers” (Pacewicz, 2016).

ENEMY IMAGES: AGGRESSION, CONTEMPT, HATRED

Since the new government took office in 2015, a sudden rise of the “language of hatred and contempt” is being observed (Winiewski et al., 2017). These emotional sensations stem most often from the various enemy images evoked in the party's narratives. Perhaps the most important point to be made here is the arbitrariness of those images (cf. Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, p. 462). It appears that anyone and anything might be framed as the party's adversary—be it individuals, groups, nations or entire state associations. Those enemies and the narrations about them are “exchangeable” (ibid.). It is not that much about the content but much more about the form, i.e. to have an enemy at all, that seems to matter. Anyone who doesn't belong to the in-group is a potential enemy, that's why the concept is also referred to as a “hyper-enemy-image” (Stępińska, 2007, p. 255). Only to mention some of them: refugees, migrants, Muslims, homosexuals (cf. Winiewski et al., 2017); furthermore the elites in Brussels (cf. Bachmann/Skwarek, 2007), then the Germans (Loew 2018); the Russians; the post-communist elites at

home—a term, used by the PiS in a way that comprises almost the whole spectrum of its opposition (cf. Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, pp. 462-463); or individual figures, standing representatively for entire groups such as Angela Merkel, Donald Tusk or Lech Wałęsa (Stoll et al., 2016)—they all have been used as targets of the enemy-frame. The use of those images depends on the party's needs, it is “cyclical” (Loew, 2018, p. 474). This arbitrariness is also characterized by a form of irrationality—gut feeling trumps facts. Thus, for example, the party and closely-related publicists call persons engaged in the cultural, political or the media sector “(post-)communist”, even though they were either yet unborn or far too young for having ever served in the People's Republic—such allegations happen “often without any proof and with reference to dubious sources” (Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, pp. 462-463).

(Altercasting) Time and again, the emotion associated most commonly with enemy images is hatred. That is why this framing is also referred to as “hate speech” (Bilewicz et al., 2017, p. 89; Pacewicz, 2016; Ścigaj, 2015, p. 78; Pasamonik, 2017). The emotional sensation of hatred can thereby take somewhat different shapes dependent on the way alter is framed. It makes a big difference to allege that one's enemy is either highly intelligent, coldblooded, calculating and cunning, which qualifies him for a very scheming kind of wickedness and malignity or if one ascribes dullness and imbecility to the adversary, implying a narrowness of his human abilities to think and feel.

This latter framing makes use of the technique of “dehumanization” (Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, p. 467; Bilewicz et al., 2017, p. 89). The principle here is simply to deny alter's humanity, to rob him of what makes human beings human—by stating, for example, that alter is incapable of “sublime human emotions” (Ścigaj, 2015, pp. 80, 83). Instead, the opposite is attributed to him, id est only to feel in a primitive, animalistic kind of way (cf. *ibid.*; Saryusz Wolska, 2018, p. 467; Bilewicz et al., 2017, p. 89). The same goes for the capacity of rational thinking and reasoning. Alter thereby appears parasitic—an attribute already closely related to the sensation of disgust. This is exactly the direction this framing is leading to: the emotional constellation is one in which hatred is felt along with “contempt” (Winiewski et al., 2017, p. 9; Müller, 2017, p. 24) and “disgust” (Bilewicz et al., 2017, p. 90). To feel that way towards another human being is possible due to this refusal to see a coequal humanity in alter. This leads to a “desensitisation” (*ibid.* 84) of ego. It also leads to a diminution of ego's capacity to experience empathy even to a point of a total lack of it (cf. *ibid.*, p. 89; Ścigaj, 2015, p. 83; Loew, 2018, p. 467). This in turn results in measurable alteration in the brain (cf. Bilewicz et al., 2017, p. 90). The enemy-frame and thus the changes of one's perception change the very brain structures of that person. That's the point where thoughts and feelings lead to changes on a cellular level. It is as if by choosing these beliefs, the ego dehumanized himself by robbing himself of his own empathy and compassion inserting oneself a “cold heart” (Müller, 2017, p. 24).

In the other case, hatred is of a different quality: here it takes the form of “aggression” (Krzyżak, 2018; Ścigaj, 2015, p. 83). Of course, aggression is not exclusively observed here, but this constellation is one in which it often appears. The context is one in which “wiliness, arrogance [...] [and] appalling sobriety” (Loew, 2018, p. 467) are attributed to alter. Here, the enemy's own aggressive endeavours and behaviours evoke

a similar kind of counter-aggression. The enemy's cold-hearted intelligence paired with the unemotional soberness let him appear as an even-more-dangerous aggressor.

SELF-CONCEPT: FEELINGS OF SUPERIORITY AND DIGNITY

I don't exist without my enemy. (Stępińska, 2007, p. 256)

As the arbitrariness, the cyclical usage and the aberrations from truth suggest, the enemy-framing is not so much a matter of content as it is a matter of form and framing, which appears more important. But for what reason would one so desperately need a whole army of foes?

Enemy-images can effectively serve the purpose of one's own in-group "collective identity formation and internal integration" (Loew, 2018, p. 466). "Every social group needs for its survival [...] a positive self-image and mutual acceptance of their common identity" (Skarżyńska, 2017, p. 39). Only that in this special case, the degradation and devaluation of the out-group is used for self-enhancement of the in-group. Feelings of hatred, disgust and aggression are simultaneously linked to emotional sensations of one's own self-esteem, dignity, and confidence. This is a typical attribute of (collective) narcissism, which will be discussed below. So, ego's identity only becomes possible due to alter. Without the latter, the former ceases to exist: There's no such thing as superiority without defining what, in contrast, is inferior (refugees, homosexuals etc. pp.) If there were no foes and no Poland lying in ruins, one couldn't stylize oneself as a heroic collective, fighting the just fight against dark forces. Who is the hero without his danger? The pathos and emotionalism would otherwise dissipate. Here, identity formation takes the form of Lévi Strauss's binary opposites, in which A and B function as opposing pairs, both possible and thinkable only in relation to one another, such as darkness and light.

Ego is hereby in two ways an antithesis to alter: (1) In the first case ego is framed as the victim, living in a ruined state, in which to be a Pole is of no worth (see above). As the picture of an intolerable status quo has been answered by Kaczyński and his party with hope, visions and dreams, the same is done with the individual itself—reshaping him rhetorically from a worthless victim to a dignified man. First, the enemy robbed the Poles of their dignity and feeling of self-worth, now they are about to win it back. This resistance to opposing forces is framed as the "rise of one's knees" (Kotras, 2018, p. 144)—a metaphor that only makes sense against the background of having been forced to one's knees in the first place. No ego without its alter. This idea of fighting back and defending one's rights is linked to the feeling of one's own dignity and worthiness. The emotions evoked in this powerful picture of righteously *rising from one's knees* and revolting against any subordination are associated with sensations of "dignity" (Bierzyński, 2018), as well as "self-esteem" and "self-confidence" (ibid.). Self-determination, "self-appreciation" (Janicki & Władyka, 2017, p. 19-20) and the feeling of being "taken seriously" (ibid.) also emanate from this kind of framing. People feel "proud" of their self-worth (cf. Bierzyński, 2018) and experience a deep sense of "meaning in life" (Janicki & Władyka, 2017, pp. 19-20). This fight for dignity can't

be overestimated enough: “This, what for the elites sounds absurd—the *rise from one’s knees*—was for the normal person the best thing, politics could have offered him. The lack of esteem [...] is an experience of many millions of Poles. With the feeling of lacking self-worth, even if objectively unjustified, one can’t discuss. This feeling has been effectively satisfied by the PiS” (Bierzyński, 2018). It is a paradox, that on the one hand dignity is considered the “leitmotiv” (ibid.) of the party, but on the other hand “there exists no reflexion upon what the PiS exactly means by that” (Janicki/Władyka, 2017, p. 19). But then again, it fits into the pattern of empty phrases, expressing nothing and everything at the same time.

The self-enhancement occurs here in a roundabout way—first, it takes the form of victimhood, of having been wronged, to be followed by the fight-and-hero-metaphor that entails feelings of one’s own grandeur. To see it clearly: Kaczyński himself denies the Poles dignity and worthiness, and illustrates this fighting and reconquering as the way to win it back. This rhetorically-constructed dignity-deficit is necessary, otherwise the attempt of “restoring” (Gdula, 2018) wouldn’t make sense. In this framing the value of an individual is not intrinsic, it is not independent, instead it derives from the identification with a certain role. Something that exists unconditionally at any time cannot be fought for. In addition, it is the fight itself, i.e. the process or act that creates those exuberant emotions, not so much the outcome. Would one feel like a hero, like a fighter against the evil, like the proud national warrior when being allowed to retire 2 years earlier—or does the idea of fighting against this malevolent, infiltrated post-communist opposition, that betrayed Polish interests, make one feel that way? Also, the programme 500+ for example is not only seen as a mere subsidy, but much more as an act of restoring the people’s dignity and reconquering the worthiness once lost due to malevolent acts of previous governments (cf. Bierzyński, 2018). Again, the deciding factor is not the specific content of the narrative, but the frame itself. This frame is once more characterized by rhetorical emptiness for the idea of *rising from one’s knees* can be applied to any kind of action, no matter what as long as it meets the criteria of having been (relatively) deprived by antagonistic forces, whose wrongdoings are now to be erased.

(2) In the second case, the emphasis is less so applied to fighting one’s way out of victimhood and standing up to outer and inner aggressions. Instead, the frame focuses more on the description of ego’s character traits as fundamentally opposed to those of alter. The dehumanization and demonization allows stylizing ego all the more “idealized” and “glorified” (Skarżyńska, 2017, p. 42). The humanity denied to alter is ascribed all the more to ego (See: Affirmative patriotism).

“PEDAGOGY OF SHAME”: SHAME, HUMILIATION

In the rhetoric of the current government the feeling of shame is contrasted with the feeling of pride [...]. (Szkudlarek, 2018, p. 38)

What initially might look like Polish-specific, namely the so-called “pedagogy of shame”, is, in reality, a very common populist strategy. Donald Trump, for instance,

equally used shame as a political instrument: “Let us not our great country be laughed at anymore” (Convington, 2018, p. 258). Nonetheless, his rhetoric and that of other populists is not named the way it is in Poland. The antidote to this populist shaming is even less original or Poland-specific, for the emotion of pride, especially framed as national pride, is likely one of the most common and well-known characteristics of populist movements. In fact, the emphasis mostly lies on the pride narrative, much less on the correlation of both opposing emotions. Here again, the logic of creating a deficit to offer the appropriate remedy applies. In the context of (populist, national) pride, the role of shame should not be overlooked or underestimated, as “shame and guilt [serve as] [...] political instruments of power” (Szkudlarek, 2018, p. 39)—some even go so far to call it a “war of shames” (Czapliński, 2017).

Now, it may be frustrating, but at the same time it is consistent and reasonable, to come again to the conclusion that the “pedagogy of shame” does not mean or refer to anything specific. It is an empty frame like the others mentioned before, applicable to many things, depending on where it serves best. Here, language is no longer about logic or rationality, it’s about usefulness for one’s own needs.

Shame is thereby a very delicate feeling because it “is held to concern not your actions but who you are, that is, your deficiencies and inadequacies as a person [...]” (Czapliński, 2017, p. 89). To shame and embarrass someone because of their identity is toxic—the synonym is also to mortify, which, in turn, means to deaden something or someone. Here it was Kaczynski’s own choice to mortify the national and individual identity by inducing people with the feeling of shame, telling them that to be a Pole is of no worth and value under the given circumstances. It is a wicked game to play, because no experience as terrific as it might be justifies shaming someone for his/her identity to the point of a total deconstruction of one’s worthiness as a person or as member of a nation. So, what does this particular human conscience project to the world? What kind of perception is being created here? While the *Poland in ruins* narrative refers to the State’s condition, the “pedagogy” or “politics of shame” refers to the human condition. Rhetorically it is a short way from a Poland in ruins to a shameful Polish identity. The analogy makes it: Poland’s grandeur has been profoundly deconstructed and so has the worthiness of the individual. The destructiveness pervades every atom of the Polish reality. The state has been robbed of its potential just as the individual has been robbed of its dignity in consequence (see above). People are “deprived of respect” (Czapliński, 2017, p. 90)—self-respect in particular. So, on the one hand, this shameful identity is due to the poor state condition, in which any kind of healthy identity development, not to mention the flourishing and thriving of people’s lives, has been disabled and prevented from blossoming. On the other hand, the politics or pedagogy of shame also describes how the Polish identity has been represented by the previous governments (mainly) in the context of the cultural and educational (especially historical) policy as well as the foreign policy. It refers to all negative portrayals of Poles throughout history. The right to define what is “negative” is thereby reserved for the PiS. The party simply imputes harmful intentions to those, who portrayed such pictures of the Polish identity. They suspect with almost logical necessity that those identity constructions were meant to inflict damage on the Poles. This, in

turn, allows them to hold previous governments responsible “for any attempts to trigger feelings of guilt and negative thinking about oneself” (Kotras, 2018, p. 143). It is a twisted argumentation laden with allegations. In Poland exists a proverb: *Każdy sądzi według siebie*, meaning: everyone judges according to themselves... In the second case, the emphasis of the same mechanism is applied to the alleged inability of the previous governments to vouch for Polish interests abroad and instead to be consensus-oriented. This inability to stand up for one’s self-interest reflects weakness and smears “Poland’s good name” (PAP, 2017) abroad.

AFFIRMATIVE PATRIOTISM: PRIDE, SELF-CONFIDENCE, SELF-WORTH

We should enable the Poles to be proud of their own history. (Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, p. 456)

(Governance of time) The emotional sensation of pride evoked against the background of national patriotism is likely the most common denominator of populist movements. And yet this poses something of a paradox—for this pride stands within a very disproportionate relationship with knowledge about the nation and its history that populist voters possess. There’s insufficient space for this observation to be discussed further here, but it’s worth noting that it allows the idea that the emotion, again, outperforms the information or the narrative. If populists could emotionally influence their voters by creating proud identities and sublime self-perceptions around narratives of brushing one’s teeth or tying one’s shoelaces, who knows what they’d tell you. Either way, Polish national pride is derived from its national history. This history administration thereby frames the dark and negative aspects of the past as “shameful”, whereas the positives are labelled “proud” or “respectable and honourable”. This asymmetrical historical construction is summarized in the question “Westerplatte or Jedwabne?” (Nowak, 2001). Do we choose honour and pride or disgrace and shame? The question is absurd, since one cannot exclude what feels uncomfortable and pain does not equal shame, but absurdity has never been an argument here, so the answer in favour of the selective auto-affirmative historical conception, is as follows: “One cannot create a community of shame. To be proud of the shame is absurd” (Nowak, 2001).

(Altercasting) In order to create this community of pride, the party makes use of three different topoi, in which the Poles are depicted exclusively in a positive manner—in opposition to the enemy images. (1) The first image used to construct this exceptional self-identity is that of a “merciful Samaritan” (Kobielska, 2016, p. 367): This frame mainly refers to the Second World War, when Polish families helped Jewish ones—one of the most well known examples here is the family Ulm (*rodzina Ulmów*). (2) The second narrative focuses on the Polish history of suffering and burden. Against the background of Poland’s exceptionally hard fate, the martyrology is used to portray the Polish identity as exceptionally strong, the Poles are seen as chosen people (cf. Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, p. 453). (3) However, the most popular narration by far is that of the Polish national heroism (cf. Kobielska, 2016, p. 369). This topos idealizes and stylizes the Polish identity as a heroic one. The party’s rhetorical accomplishment

lies here in allowing its supporters to identify with character traits one only knows from the most brave figures of myths and legends: this comprises “glory and honour” (Górlkowski 2015: 24-25), “bravery” and “courage” (Stelmach, 2017, p. 111), “the willingness to self-sacrifice” (Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, p. 453); “morality” and “humanity” (ibid., 458), the indefatigable struggle for human ideals such as freedom, dignity and self-determination (cf. Żychlińska/Fontana, 2016, p. 243), the “unconditional love” (ibid., 249) for ideals of that kind and the “romantic” picture of a noble, proud person, who is willing to pay with his own life for what he believes in (cf. Paruch, 2015). This narrative is mainly inspired by the Warsaw Rising (Aug-Oct 1944).

The logic of this “patroneurosis” (Waloch-Matlakiewicz, n.d.) or “autoaffirmative patriotism” (Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, p. 452) is, strictly speaking, terribly flawed, for it works like this: Some people did something admirable in the past (mostly in a difficult situation). Those people were Poles. I am a Pole. Therefore I am admirable. To take credit for things one never did is already an achievement in itself. But, why care about logic if it makes one feel so fine: Giving credence to the analogy between those sparkling characters and charismatic personalities awakes emotions of “pride and dignity” (Wesołowski, 2018; cf. Hall, 2018). People, who first felt ashamed of themselves are now given the possibility to feel the opposite: they are “proud” (Czapliński, 2017, p. 88) of who they are. Pride is by far the emotion observed most frequently—populist nationalism equals a “semantics of pride” (Saryusz-Wolska, 2018, p. 451). This positive, self-affirming attitude produces “good self-esteem” (Górlkowski, 2015) and “satisfaction in the emotional sphere” (Cegielska, 2017, p. 12). The “flagging” and self-satisfying collective behaviour leads to “feelings of self-confidence” (Ciesla, 2016, p. 27). Looking behind the curtain, one could wonder if that this self-aggrandizing masquerade isn’t exactly the opposite of what heroism signifies.

SELF-ESTEEM—THE CORE VARIABLE OF THE EMOTIONAL CONSTELLATION

Self-esteem is hardly ever analyzed in these contexts [...]. (Salmela & Scheve, 2016, p. 20)

The emotional logic of populist rhetoric reveals that negative emotions and the narratives by which they are generated strongly serve as a means to an end. The problem or deficit, is created to be then answered with appropriate positive antidotes. Populists frame reality in ways to which only they can offer the necessary remedy. They see problems others don’t see and magically conjure up solutions others don’t possess. Yet, whereas the focus of populist research mainly lies on the negative emotions, here they are seen in a slightly different light: The negativity, which is anyway ascribed to alter, is not regarded as an ultimate end. Even though playing the blame game by projecting one’s own aggressions and discontent on others might be satisfactory for some; and the construction of alter serving as an outlet for externalized anger, hatred, fear and frustration might be helpful for those capable of such interpersonal interactions, what really satisfies those hungry emotions is the positivity they lack and for which they so desperately long. After all, what all those emotions seem to have in

common is that they are, in one way or the other, flattering statements about the ego: either *ex negativo* by using alter as the projection surface for all the ugliness or directly by constructing ego's identity (sometimes in a roundabout way) as an alternative draft comprising much of the beauty humanity has to offer by drawing analogies between the people and idealized historical figures and glorified role models. Populists offer splendid feelings about oneself. They answer the identity question with what evokes feelings of self-worth. They allow people to feel valued and valuable—or even more: they make people value themselves through the identification with attributions of strength, singularity, honour, courage, bravery, morality, selflessness, humanness, dedication, also superiority etc. The material of which populist identity is made is quite tempting: it offers feelings of pride, self-confidence, honor, dignity and worthiness. Since this identity is mainly based on feelings, it could be also referred to as an Emotional Identity (cf. Sokalski, 2022).

Consequently, what follows is that there must be a pressing need for this. The need of a positive self-image and the related feeling of self-esteem logically arise from a lack of those qualities. If people felt good about themselves, they would not so blindly gravitate towards mantric self-affirmation. There is a desire to feel worthy about one's identity. For this reason, this analysis arrives at the conclusion that the core variable lying beneath this auto-affirmative identity discourse is self-esteem and self-worth—or to be more precise, the lack of a healthy and truly-felt self-worth. Kaczyński must be aware of this lack when saying: “It is a fight for the dignity and the feeling of self-confidence” (Gazeta Prawna, 2015). Or: “we will strengthen [...] the self-esteem” (PAP, 2017). Finally, the PiS party's election campaign has been contextualized as follows: “This was a revolution in the name of regaining the feeling of self-worth” (Bierzyński, 2018). It follows that low self-esteem and a low feeling or lack of self-worth lying at the heart of the emotional game possibly correlates closely with votes for populist parties.

MAKE EGO GREAT AGAIN—COLLECTIVE NARCISSISM

[...] national collective narcissism [...] is a robust predictor of adopting populist views. (Marchlewska, 2017, p. 159)

The validity of the hypothesis of a correlation between a low feeling of self-worth and the vote for populist parties can (currently) be proven only indirectly: For, what has been already investigated does not equal that feeling, instead it is the way to compensate for it – a practice that populist's have chosen, too. Studies analyzing the relationship between the voting tendency (for populist parties) and narcissistic dispositions observe a surprisingly high correlation. This kind of psychological disposition reveals to be a very robust predictor. It could be proven for all cases analyzed (Poland, Great Britain and the USA) (cf. *ibid.*).

To do it the narcissist way is really a special kind of human condition. Notwithstanding, this practice is exactly what the examination of emotions has brought to light: “Every social group needs for its survival [...] a positive self-image and mutu-

al acceptance of their common identity” (Skarżyńska, 2017, p. 39). The way populist movements create their self-image and the group’s cohesion works through the degradation of alter, which serves the purpose of self-enhancement (cf. Cichocka et al., 2017a, p. 368). Ego projects onto alter his own disagreeable weaknesses and emotional incompetence (ibid., p. 367), which in turn enables him to evoke feelings of “superiority” (Skarżyńska, 2017, p. 39), uniqueness, self-exaltation (cf. Marchlewska et al., 2018) or “self-enhancement” (Bilewicz et al., 2017, p. 72). Personal aggressions resulting from the inferiority complexes are externalized onto enemy-images and out-groups, which are being instrumentally used as targets of one’s own negativity: feelings of hatred, aggression, dissatisfaction, fear, disgust and frustration. In contrast, the self-image, or the in-group’s image, is portrayed as the more appealing and shiny (cf. ibid.). The absurdity of this kind of dark psychology consists of linking hostile feelings to emotional sensations of dignity, self-esteem, pride etc. Those foe-figures created are so indispensable because they “make people feel better [about themselves]” (Ciesla, 2017, p. 16). The question of who ego is cannot be answered without reference to alter. One’s own strength results from imaginations about alter’s ugliness, weakness and unworthiness. The emotional logic is hence one in which what is bad, destructive, and dark is needed to be able to provide the antidote. That is why the enemy is necessary to create one’s own identity (cf. Stępińska, 2007, p. 256). In Poland this is also known as: “Xenophobia without refugees and anti-Semitism without Jews” (Koć, n.d.). Xenophobia, a common tool in populist discourse, correlates with a negative self(!)-assessment (cf. Cichocka et al., 2017b). Similar observations have been made in conjunction with hate speech: “Surveys reveal that people with a low self-esteem tend much more to hate speech. [...] Violence and prejudices can be used, to strengthen one’s own self-worth and self-confidence about the personal identity” (Bilewicz et al., 2017, p. 86).

This is appalling and, at the same time, tragic, because it comes down to the formula that hurting people hurt people. At the heart of narcissistic practices lies a wound unhealed. It is an identity-wound. Under all the layers of human cold and hardness, identity—the core discourse topic of populism—is accompanied by feelings of unworthiness, “insecurity” (Skarżyńska, 2017, p. 40), an instable feeling of self-worth (cf. ibid. 49) and “individual weaknesses” (ibid., p. 53). “Inferiority complexes” (Loew, 2018, p. 494) and a destabilized identity lie at the core of the self. There’s emptiness inside. It is interesting to observe that Laclau, by analyzing the populist style, comes to the conclusion that populist speech is “a discursive production of emptiness” (Laclau, 2005, p. 67). As shown, many of the frames used by the party are rather meaningless, sort of blank like mathematical variables into which any number can be inserted, it’s a vague manner of speaking avoiding clarity. As if inward emptiness would be expressed outwards. Rhetorical vacantness follows the intrapersonal vacuum. To conclude, vulnerability itself has to be distinguished from the way the problem is finally resolved. Measuring low-esteem in these contexts could bring further insights into the phenomenon’s dynamics.

DEMOCRACY IS IN DANGER, BECAUSE THE SELF IS IN DANGER

To return to the very beginning and the observation of a global democratic recession due to populist movements, there's a further hypothesis to be derived: What if it's not so much about democracy but much more about the self? After all, it can be reasonably assumed that this phenomenon is also quite subjective in its nature. A very personal dimension is involved in this collective movement. "Group narcissism [...] is extremely important as an element giving satisfaction to the members of the group and particularly to *those who have few other reasons to feel proud and worthwhile*" (Cichocka et al., 2017, p. 465). It is "using the group to satisfy personal needs" (ibid., p. 466; cf. Cast & Burke, 2002). The personal compensation is relocated on the community level, which functions as a substitute. The identification with the group compensates for what lacks intrapersonally (cf. Loew, 2018, p. 493). It's not that populist voters don't care for democracy, it would be more appropriate to conclude that they simply care about themselves. Democracy only falls victim to this egoic game, in which the political realm is used for an emotional self-regulation (cf. Tracy & Robins, 2004). The Polish case is once again key for understanding dimensions lying beyond classical categories: One of the most extensive post-electoral surveys reveals that the PiS party won in almost every social class—typical cleavages such as low and high income, education, the rural-urban classification are obsolete here (cf. PAP, 2015). The cleavage didn't run along the lines of standard measurable indicators. On the other hand, no one, no matter what position, is exempt from feelings of an insecure identity. Maybe this dividing line lies somewhere within the inner universe of the individual. And so the backsliding or backlash might be more of a collateral damage than the core purpose of its voters. The idea is compatible with what social constructivism suggests: reality can be constructed—and so can be the populist voter. Instead of assuming that populist voters value (for example) xenophobic attitudes, reversing the logic allows for prioritization of the feeling that people get in the first place. The feeling can be the cause of the attitude as its effect. The value follows the feeling—and if hating others is part of feeling better about oneself... so be it.

Finally, populist leaders are often perceived as "prone to brazen, dubious, and sometimes aggressive behaviours that suggest *outsized egos*, scant respect for others, and a degree of contempt for social norms [...] [They have] intempered and unprincipled mindset[s]" (Howe, 2017, pp. 23-24). It is as if they suggested to the masses that which they already practice on an individual level. Thereby those outsized egos are both, they're sharp-eyed and blind at the same time (typical for narcissism): as shown at the beginning, those leaders are aware of the manipulative techniques, which they intentionally and purposefully apply to wield power over people (there is much more evidence, which cannot be discussed here). On the other hand, the attempt to escape from the real problem by which they are driven, leaves them death for facts and other reality-perceptions in the sphere of reason and mind and emotionally blind to the self-denial and the way they exhibit it outwards by playing twisted worlds and creating their dark dimensions. Perhaps, the time is ripe to ask another question about democracy in this post-truth world, one beyond numbers and values, namely: By which

conscience am I governed?

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