PART II

The Populist Mind

Cognitive Aspects of Populism

7

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERVERSITIES AND POPULISM

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Aquí *está . . . peleando para sobrevivir a las perversidades de la incertidumbre.*
[Here it is, fighting to survive the perversities of uncertainty]
—*Gabriel García Márquez,* Doce cuentos peregrinos, prólogo

If you were omniscient, how would you know?
—*First corollary to Gödel's incompleteness theorem; apocryphal*

Gabriel García Márquez, the shaman of magical realism, knew that uncertainty, in literature and in life, has its perversities. Here, we explore some facets of uncertainty, the human desire to escape from it, and its implications for populism (see also Kruglanski et al., this volume). Populism, rooted in the Latin term *populus*, is concerned with 'the people,' often a demographic majority, struggling against an élite or ruling minority (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Populism is psychologically attractive because it supports fragile group identities, licenses a sense of high morality, and gives permission to think less (Hogg & Gøetsche-Astrup, this volume). What is perverse is that populism can hijack otherwise harmless or even adaptive psychological inclinations and capacities and abuse them for ideological gain. We begin with a look at the role of uncertainty in the inductive sciences, including psychology, and then discuss some of the elements of inductive reasoning and their role in the acceptance of populist beliefs.

Uncertainty in Enlightened Science

A basic perversity of science is that while its goal is to demystify nature and to reveal its laws and regularities—what Heraclitus called the *logos*—the project must

remain forever incomplete (Popper, 1962). Some problems are too difficult to be solved, such as predicting 'Black Swan' events, that is, very rare occurrences with a high impact on life and society (Taleb, 2007). Other problems are recognized as unsolvable in principle, such as finding the perfectly executed game of chess (Steinitz, 1889), a game where "white is to play and win," as the saying goes (Adams, 1939). Today we know that indeterminacy (Heisenberg, 1927), incompleteness (Gödel, 1931), and chaos (Lorenz, 1963) lurk at the edge of knowledge.

Mature sciences acknowledge their epistemic limitations (Fiedler, this volume). Once the hopes that theoretical questions could be settled by verification (Ayer, 1936) had died, Popper (1962) argued that rational science can all but move *toward* truth by testing hypotheses, rejecting them, and replacing them with bolder ones. The history of science may *look* like a march away from ignorance, myth, and falsehood, while its future cannot reveal the ground that remains to be covered (Meehl, 1978). The unknowability of the remaining distance between conjecture and truth is a matter of irreducible uncertainty, which leaves the question of scientific 'progress' open.

If Popper thought he had slain inductivism, the recent resurgence of Bayesianism falsifies that hypothesis. Still, the logic of Bayesian belief updating (e.g., Wagenmakers et al., 2018) shares some common ground with Popper's falsificationism. Both view epistemic certainty with skepticism. Bayesians have no need for evidence if they believe a hypothesis is certainly true or false. A prior probability of the hypothesis of 1 or 0 entails a posterior probability of 1 or 0. According to legend, the Reverend Bayes declined to publish his treatise on probability because, despite being a triumph of mathematics, it failed to find an inductive proof of the existence of God. Bayes realized that the only way he could be certain of God's existence was to assign it a prior probability of 1 (Stigler, 1986). Certainty requires faith. Strong evidence can at best yield beliefs held with 'moral certainty.' The door remains open for the erosion of such beliefs (Lindley, 2006). Only faith can close this door. Likewise, populist assertions often demand faith to protect themselves from evidence.

While Popperians reject the idea that truth can be verified, they struggle to defend the logic of falsification. A lack of evidence for events of type 'X' does not imply no X will ever be observed. When an X appears, the hypothesis that X cannot occur is falsified. If falsification works only when proofs of existence refute hypotheses of non-existence, learning reduces to a counting of anomalies (or beans). Few scientists would be content with exclusively showing that there is *not* nothing.

The uncertainties pervading science extend to everyday cognition. It has been claimed that ordinary people think like scientists or that scientists think like ordinary people. The former claim—which unsurprisingly has been more popular among scientists—feeds the populist imagination, as it suggests that scientists set a standard that the folk fail to meet (Ross, 1977). If the folk think like scientists, it remains to be seen *which* scientists. As some Bayesians have claimed that we

are in the midst of a revolution in the Reverend's name (e.g., Olshausen, 2004), it has become trendy to assume that ordinary people are naïve Bayesians (e.g., El-Gamal & Grether, 1995). How do the folk then still depart from rigorous scientific thinking? Our presumably elitist hypothesis is that 'the people' wish to diminish uncertainty more so than most scientists do (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949). The pursuit of certainty is a robust psychological tendency, disrupted only by exceptions, as when people deliberately remain ignorant of information (Bar-Tal & Magal, this volume). Leaving data on the table is not necessarily irrational or unethical (Krueger et al., in press).

We propose that uncertainty aversion compromises inductive reasoning in a way that presents an opening for populist penetration. As a result, groups, societies, and the individuals they comprise find themselves in a world that betrays their hopes of freedom and dignity (Ditto & Rodriguez; and Gelfand & Lorente, this volume). Enlightened societies cultivate a respect for evidence and a tolerance for uncertainty. When these efforts flag, the quality of reasoning is reduced and the quality of life suffers. We now review some cognitive and motivational factors affecting, and impairing, reasoning about uncertainty. Along the way, we ask how populism progresses by capitalizing on the perversities of uncertainty (Krekó; and Marcus, this volume).

Ellsberg's Perversity

Elias Canetti (1960/1962, p. 15) asserted that "there is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown." If Canetti was right, people should be willing to pay for opportunities to avoid uncertainty. Indeed, Ellsberg (1961) showed that people prefer a risky bet (with a high probability of losing) to an uncertain bet (with an unknown probability of losing) even when the latter has a higher expected value. This preference is perverse because it violates the 'sure-thing principle' enshrined in subjective expected utility theory (Savage, 1954). To rationalize the preference for certainty, one would need to assume that it carries its own utility (Loewenstein & Molnar, 2018). Such a rationalization risks being circular or running afoul of *Hume's Guillotine* (1739/1978). From the finding that most people are averse to uncertainty, it does not follow that they should be. Alas, when choosing between Ellsberg's bets, multiple times people prefer the one that is more uncertain on individual trials (Samuelson, 1963). What they fail to realize is that backward induction would commit them to also prefer the uncertain bet on a single trial.

Belief Conservatism and Liberalism

In an apparent opposition to Ellsberg's (1961) research, Edwards (1968) found that most people are belief conservatives; they fail to reduce uncertainty when the evidence gives them an opportunity to do so. In a class demonstration, we

told students that they would draw a chip from a large urn containing chips of four possible colors. Students agreed that the frequency distribution of chips were perfectly unknown at the outset. The unconditional probability of drawing a red chip, p(red), was .25. Then, a drawing produced a red chip, and students estimated the conditional probability, p(red|red), that the next drawn chip would also be red. Over 70% of them retained their original estimate of .25 (see Figure 7.1). In contrast, Bayesian calculations following Laplace's (1814) "rule of succession" reduce to (k + 1)/(n + c), where k is the number of 'successes' (here: 1 red), n the total number of draws (1 draw), and c the number of possible categories of outcome (4 colors). The result is that p(red|red), is 2/5 = .4 (Heck & Krueger, in press).

If students were averse to uncertainty, why did they not reduce it using the available evidence? They seemed to care more about a second-order certainty. If they were certain about their prior estimate of p(red) = .25., they may have been uncertain about the ability of a small sample to compel an adjustment. Backward induction, however, shows that a sample of 100 uniformly red chips forces a significant shift in estimates; and so does a sample of 99 or 98 or 97. There is no positive number in an all-red sample where updating falls to zero. By analogy, some populists believe with secondary certainty that governments engineered the COVID-19 pandemic to control the people. They dismiss data to the contrary because these data would, at first, reduce instead of enhance the experience of certainty.

In the research literature, the evidence for belief conservatism was soon marginalized by the narrative of *focalism*, or the idea that people overestimate what

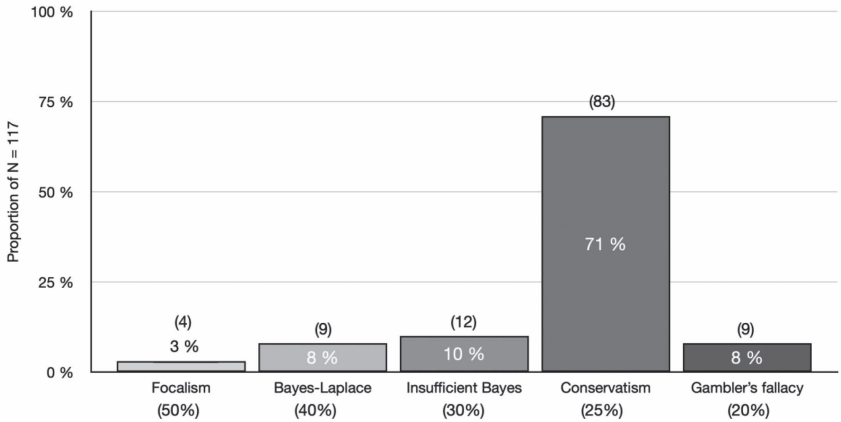

FIGURE 7.1 Frequency distribution of the selected posterior probabilities of drawing a second red chip. The absolute majority indicated conservatism, with small minorities choosing perfect non-regressiveness (focalism), optimal Bayesian updating, insufficient updating, or reverse updating (gambler's fallacy); N = 117.

the evidence teaches them. The claim that a salient or 'focal' stimulus dominates judgment because it dominates perception is raised to unify explanations of a variety of familiar biases (Kahneman, 2011). Respondents fail to ignore salient but arbitrary 'anchors,' fail to modulate the impact of biased samples 'available' in memory, and fall victim to the base-rate fallacy when there is 'representative' case information. This base-rate fallacy is striking in tasks where the conditional probability of a feature given a category, p(feature | category), is high, while the prior unconditional probability of the category, p(category), is low. Bayes's Theorem (Figure 7.2) shows that if the former probability is .9 and the latter is .1, and if the prior unconditional probability of the feature, p(feature), is .18, then the conditional probability of the category given the feature, p(category | feature), is .5. Complete base rate neglect yields p(category | feature) = .9. While uncertainty aversion is consistent with this base rate fallacy, it is also consistent with full conservatism (yielding p(category) as the estimate).

The previous example may be more readily visualized by replacing 'feature' with 'symptom' and 'category' with 'disease.' We now see that the base-rate fallacy describes (and perhaps explains) the frequently occurring overdiagnosis of rare diseases. A sniffle more likely hints at the common cold than at COVID-19. The base-rate fallacy can be further compounded by collapsing two base rates into one, as when President Donald Trump claimed COVID-19 *was* the sniffles (Montanaro, 2020).

The clash of base-rate neglect with conservatism raises the question of what makes a stimulus focal in a way that a red chip drawn from an urn is not. We submit that both inductive conservatism and representative thinking reflect a false state of certainty. By respectively under- and overestimating what the evidence teaches them, respondents retain a higher-order certainty. With this false sense of certainty, they are overconfident in the accuracy of their judgment (Moore, 2020).

The populist imagination has little interest in coherent statistical reasoning. Its rhetoric exploits a familiar suite of biases by using vivid images, extreme anchors, and assertions repeated ad nauseam (Cooper & Avery; Crano & Gaffney; and van Prooijen, this volume). On the flipside, when scientific evidence is presented with properly calibrated estimates of uncertainty, a populist strategy is to dismiss the evidence, noting that scientists have failed to reach perfect agreement or that the views of individual scientists have changed. In July of 2020, for example,

$$P(A|B) = \frac{P(B|A) \text{ x } P(A)}{P(B)}$$

FIGURE 7.2 Simple Bayes Theorem with the unconditional probability of A (e.g., a category), P(A), the unconditional probability of B (e.g., a feature), P(B), and their interacting conditional probabilities, P(A | B) and P(B | A).

the White House undermined the country's chief expert of infectious disease by listing changes in his assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic over the previous months. No list of the White House's own past predictions was offered. Evidence-neglect became policy.

The Woes of Rationalism

A respect for uncertainty is central to the scientific mindset. The Enlightenment saw the rise of both empiricist and rationalist schools of thought. Empiricism looks to evidence, knowing that beliefs may change; rationalism, by contrast, focuses on derivable truth, which, once detected, may be expected to remain. Hume, Locke, and Bishop Berkeley, as well as other philosophers from the British Isles, championed empiricism, while continental philosophers from Descartes to Spinoza and Kant favored rationalism.

There is an affinity of uncertainty aversion in rationalist thought. Rationalist deductions reveal what is implicit in premises and first principles, but they are handicapped in discovering anything new. Thus, rationalism appeals to those who fear uncertainty. The problematic implication—exploitable by populism—is that certainty seekers are vulnerable to making *category errors* (Ryle, 1949). They are liable to accept categorical imperatives where none can be deduced, as in domains that have been moralized by populist demand (Cooper & Avery; Ditto & Rodriguez, this volume). Certainty seekers find comfort in what they consider to be obviously 'good, true, and beautiful,' neglecting to ask whether they are treating rationalistically what should be treated inductively (Baron, 2012). Populism is not sufficiently explained by appeals to the populace's basic instincts; populism must also appeal to the yearning for final answers to moral and empirical questions. Yet, a premature closing of questions of value or fact suppresses dissent. If dissent occurs, it is vulnerable to sanction (Tetlock, 2003). Populism is liable to be a punitive ideology.

Induction and Parochial Morality

A particularly troubling feature of populism is the '*parochial morality*' arising from the 'us-versus-them' mindset (Krekó, this volume). The classical Enlightenment encourages concerns about humanity and all its individual members. This perspective is implicit in rationalism. *Liberté*, *egalité*, and *fraternité* are to be enjoyed by all. Yet, a century of social psychological research has shown that people think in terms of nested categories. Early theorists realized that thinking without categories is impossible (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1969). Learning from experience requires categories to which experiences can be generalized. Without the categories of dog, cat, or bird, a new pet remains an alien creature (Rosch, 1975). Yet, most humans find the category 'human' too diffuse to be useful (Singer, 1981/2011). They rather break down humanity into subcategories. These subcategories form

patterns of inclusion and exclusion anchored on the self. The self, by definition, belongs to all ingroups and to no outgroup. In contrast, an individual other person can be a member of many ingroups and many outgroups (Krueger & DiDonato, 2008). Social categorization, in other words, is egocentric.

Populism focuses attention on selected categories, stressing the contrast between 'the élite' and 'the people.' This distinction exploits our natural tendency to categorize, and it activates the sense that all virtues, the good, the true, and the beautiful, reside in the ingroup. Progressive 'social justice' movements leverage categorical perception when offering criteria for the separation of the oppressors (the élite outgroup) from the oppressed (the ingroup of the people). Individuals finding themselves on the 'wrong' side of the categorical must choose between accepting the moralized implication or find ways to claim the status of an 'ally.'

People prefer ingroups to outgroups on a variety of inferences, attributions, and tasks. Power differentials are not necessary for this to occur (Tajfel, 1970). Whereas advocates of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and its offshoots (e.g., Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994) postulate a motivational drive to view the ingroup more positively than the outgroup, such a motive is not necessary. Most people have positive self-images and they project their own attributes more strongly to ingroup members than to outgroup members (Robbins & Krueger, 2005). Given a positive self-image, such *differential projection* yields more favorable perceptions of the ingroup than the outgroup. The implications for parochial morality are dramatic. People will not only perceive their ingroups as being more moral than outgroups, but also more willingly volunteer for costly ingroup-serving action (Krueger, Ullrich, & Chen, 2016).

Consider the case of two groups at the brink of war. Each individual must choose between cooperating with the ingroup by enlisting and defecting from the ingroup by literally defecting. The choice partly depends on predictions of what others will do given one's own choice. A cooperator will recognize the signal value of her or his own choice (Krueger, 2013). If I cooperate, she or he might say, most ingroup members will probably also cooperate. Yet, my decision to cooperate tells me little about whether outgroupers will volunteer for *their* cause (Krueger, DiDonato, & Freestone, 2012). The tragedy is that from the point of view of humanity, the valuations of the available actions are reversed. If all cooperate with their parochial ingroup, there will be war; if all defect, it will be a war where no one shows up (Krueger & Acevedo, 2007). However, the desirability of collective defection depends on the context, as overthrowing tyrants would never happen. In short, the power of projection to mobilize mutually beneficial cooperation within groups begets disaster when projection fails to extend beyond group boundaries. Given differential projection, populism can mobilize a crowd by accentuating group boundaries. Umberto Eco (1995) suggests that the defining source of energy of "Ur-fascism" is a "natural fear of difference" (p. 12). Rhetoric and propaganda extolling the ingroup's virtues and the outgroup's depravities fuel the fire without having to start it (Forgas & Lantos, this volume).

Projection Reduces Uncertainty

As an element of inductive reasoning, social projection, defined as "the tendency to expect similarities between oneself and others" (Robbins & Krueger, 2005, p. 32), reduces uncertainty. Projection was first treated as a matter of false consensus (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977). People should, it was believed, ignore their own actions when predicting those of others, much as they ignore the significance of a chip's color drawn from an urn. But why would inductive conservatism be rational in the social domain? Dawes (1989) and Hoch (1987) clarified that it is not. Indeed, Hoch found that social predictions would be even more accurate if people projected more (see also Krueger, 1998). A recent study discovered a striking exception to this general pattern. Heck and Krueger (in press) showed that self-threat made people project at optimal Bayesian level. Respondents appeared to achieve optimal uncertainty reduction due to self-protective motives that have little to do with well-calibrated statistical reasoning. Populist rhetoric can exploit this mechanism by highlighting ego threats and threats to the ingroup (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997). When gullibility trumps skepticism, the prospects of such interventions are particularly good (Krueger, Vogrincic-Haselbacher, & Evans, 2019). People then pervert Popper, thinking that a proposition—however absurd—can be accepted until it has been refuted. Skepticism is confused with closed-mindedness and cheerful acceptance of the absurd with open-mindedness.

With a boost from populism, social projection can balloon into an *illusion of unanimity*. Floyd Henry Allport (1924) coined this term to capture the perverse experience of perfect consensus or 'oneness' individuals can find in a crowd. Allport, who like Popper (1957) was a methodological individualist, sought to refute the then-popular French crowd psychology (LeBon, 1895; Tarde, 1890) by showing that uniform and moblike behavior can arise as an emergent property from numerous co-acting individuals (Vallacher & Fennell, this volume). Allport's ironic conclusion was that individuals in a crowd become *more* like themselves. The crowd does not wake up to a mind of its own; being in a crowd merely facilitates existing inclinations. Personal uncertainty provides additional motivating force (Van den Bos, 2009). People *like* being swept up in a crowd, as any visitor to a professional football match can confirm. As a "wild beast"(Tarde, 1890/1968, p. 323), the crowd can be a happy creature. Individuals might even experience a fusion of their ego with the crowd, finding themselves willing to make sacrifices that an uncrowded ego would never accept (Swann & Buhrmester, 2015). Following Allport, we submit that methodological individualism can account for the emergence of populist ideologies. We see no need to postulate a separate kind of psychology for the masses.

Ingroup Projection and Self-Stereotyping

As differential projection accentuates intergroup boundaries, projection to superordinate social categories compounds the exclusion of the outgroup. As most

people tend to project their own attributes—which they evaluate positively—to both the parochial ingroup and to the superordinate group, the failure to project to the outgroup begets ingroup favoritism (Krueger & Clement, 1996). The mental isolation of outgroups in a society polarized by populist ideologies deepens (Golec de Zavala et al., this volume). Once an outgroup is perceived as different from and inferior to the ingroup and the overarching society, it is easy to infer further differences and to find opportunities for de- or infra-humanization (Haslam, 2006). The perceived similarity between the ingroup and the general society confirms the impression that 'We are the people—but they are not!' Populist exploitation of this type of inductive reasoning is most likely when the ingroup is the majority because the correlations between group attributes and society attributes are high inasmuch as the group makes up a large proportion of society. Accordingly, it is easier to persuade majority groups that they legitimately represent all of society than minorities. Disliked or feared élites, like 'the government,' 'the intellectuals,' or 'the bankers,' are easy outgroup targets; they are by definition small and thus readily differentiated from the totality of society.

We have emphasized the bottom-up variant of inductive reasoning (projection) in order to highlight the egocentric basis on which populism can build. Now we consider the inverse direction of induction, namely top-down inferences from the group to the individual. Inasmuch as perceivers lack individuating information about group members, they will assume that these individuals share the attributes of others in the group (Krueger & Rothbart, 1988). As noted earlier, there is a rational justification for such category-driven induction (Dawes, 1990). It is problematic only when base rates (e.g., stereotypes) are not neglected *enough*.

People also stereotype themselves. The bar for self-stereotyping is higher than for other-stereotyping because people tend to have larger samples of individuating information about themselves than about others (e.g., Fiedler & Juslin, 2006). Though emancipated from early crowd psychology, social identity theory retains an emphasis of the collective experience and its psychological representation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When activated, social group identities can overshadow individual identity. Self-categorization theory, re-aligning itself with classic crowd psychology, assumes that a state of *depersonalization* prevails when people focus on their social group membership. A person in this state sees her- or himself as an interchangeable expression of the group (Oakes et al., 1994). Hogg's (2007) *uncertainty-identity theory* traces the standard psychological effects of social categorization directly to the experience of personal uncertainty (Hogg & Gøetsche-Astrup, this volume).

Deep states of depersonalization may be rare, and self-stereotyping, the measurable footprint of depersonalization, elusive (Krueger, Acevedo, & Robbins, 2006). When the self is involved, top-down induction is weaker than bottom-up induction, and it is more context dependent (Cadinu & Rothbart, 1996). Self-stereotyping is more likely when ingroup–outgroup categories are salient,

when the ingroup is comparatively small, and when it is perceived to be under threat (Van Veelen, Otten, Cadinu, & Hansen, 2016). Populism can manufacture these effects to elicit self-stereotyping. For instance, if members of large ingroups are less likely to experience threats to their existence, this can be helped. The imagery of threat often takes the form of outgroups growing faster than the ingroup and outgroups moving into the ingroup's geographical or cultural space (Marcus, this volume). During the 2015 refugee crisis, the German right-wing party AfD talked of an 'invasion,' a populist piece of rhetoric seen in other countries as well. Xenophobic imagery triggers the experience of threat (hence the reference to 'phobia;' Aydin, Krueger, Frey, Kastenmüller, & Fischer, 2014) as it raises the prospect of finding oneself in a minority (Craig, Rucker, & Richeson, 2018). Canetti (1960/1962) anticipated this dynamic. "The adversary in war," he wrote (p. 68), "is the growing crowd of one's neighbors. Their increase is frightening in itself." But there is more. Epistemic uncertainty can be reduced and (self-)stereotyping can be boosted further if one gives in to essentialism, as we will show in the following.

Essentialism

Infants readily attribute essences to natural kinds, believing them to be physical, unobservable, and immutable (Berent, 2020). Though no essences have ever been found, the assumption that they exist affords natural kinds their extraordinary inductive power. Rothbart and Taylor (1992) argued that humans make a category error when treating social categories as if they were natural kinds. It is easy to see how the essentialist assumption contributes to the sanctification of ingroups and the demonization of outgroups. If, for example, Jews could escape persecution by converting to Christianity during the Middle Ages, this was no longer an option when 'modern' anti-Semites began to construe Jewishness in racial terms (Arendt, 1951). Replying to a letter from the aged president of the Weimar Republic, von Hindenburg, Hitler, then chancellor and not yet "*Der Führer*," rejected Hindenburg's demand to reinstate Jewish war veterans as civil servants, lecturing the aged president on the irrelevance of personal merit and the all-importance of keeping the Jewish (i.e., corrupting) essence at bay (Hubatsch, 1966, pp. 375–376; see Jewish Virtual Library, 2020, for an English translation).

Populism stokes tribalism by seeking to convince people that they—much like feared enemy groups—share an essence, and that personal identities must be subordinated to anti-élite goals. In *Ur-fascism*, Eco (1995, p. 14) diagnosed that "individuals have no right, and the People is conceived as a quality, a monolithic entity expressing the Common Will." Appeals to ethnic essences among majority groups are resurgent, although religious identifications also play a role. To populists in Ankara, a true Turk is a Sunni Muslim; in the United States, a true American is a white Protestant Christian; in Germany, the concept of the *Bio-Deutscher* conjures images of organic food (Fetscher, 2015).

Combining threat with essence, populists find it convenient to alert a group to its precarious state. Unless the wagons are circled and foreigners (*invaders*) are kept out, expelled, or disempowered, the future is grim. The populist mind equates a threat to a treasured ingroup with a threat to the self. Remedial action smacks of revenge, a righteous righting of past wrongs (Petersen et al., this volume). Hirschman (1991) noted that the conservative variant of populist rhetoric appeals to a lost golden age, which is to be restored. In Germany, some Bio-Deutsche call themselves *Reichsbürger*, asserting that the German *Reich* was never legally abolished, that it continues to exist, and that the Reichsbürger are its rightful citizens. Which Reich they have in mind is anyone's guess. To openly call for the return of the Third Reich remains a political taboo. The Weimar Republic has little appeal because it was a rather open society. This leaves the Wilhelmine Empire, that is, the 'Second Reich.' As the old nostalgic phrase puts it, "*Wir wollen unseren Kaiser Wilhelm wiederhaben. Aber den mit dem Bart*" ('We want to have our Kaiser Wilhelm back; but the one with the beard.' To wit, Wilhelm I, 1871–1888). A contemporary expression of this clichéd nostalgia is the assertion (expressed with a sigh) "*Früher war sowieso alles besser*" ('Everything was better in the olden days').

Progressives are not immune to essentialist and radicalizing rhetoric. If Marx and Engels (1848) directed their ire at the bourgeoisie, contemporary discourse has discovered the "intersectionality" of whiteness and maleness as a target (Carbado, 2013). At minimum, this rhetoric produces *false alarms* (Green & Swets, 1966) by committing a category error in that a class of oppressors is construed too broadly. At worst, it prepares the ground for a new kind of racism and sexism that commits the sins it purports to condemn.

A free society is open and pluralistic. It neither demands assimilation beyond the acceptance of basic norms of conduct, nor does it, like Marxist ideology or its contemporary incarnations, seek to assign obligatory identities to individuals. When one of the authors (JIK) was naturalized as a citizen of the United States, the presiding judge addressed the group of about two dozen new citizens by acknowledging their contributions to American society. He did not ask that individual heritages be surrendered. Instead, he noted their enriching quality. This judge, himself the descendant of Armenian immigrants who had escaped genocide, knew how to touch a crowd with solemnity and wisdom; he was not a populist.

Comedian Trevor Noah has a less subtle touch. During the 2018 FIFA World Cup, he delighted in France's triumph because many of the French players were of African. France's victory, he declared, was also a victory for Black Africa. Monsieur Araud, the French Ambassador to the United States, took a different view. He explained to Noah that all players on the team were French citizens, and that the French Republic does not define citizenship in racial terms (Allen, 2018). The point is clear, and it is no less valid because racism exists in France.

Moralism

We have identified processes of social projection, self-stereotyping, and essentialist thinking as building blocks that populist agitators, be they reactionary or progressive, can exploit. By fostering a false sense of consensus and common purpose among 'the people,' populism threatens open societies by closing individual minds. Having noted the dangers of parochialism, some further reflections on morality are in order. Solomon Asch (1952) recognized that the practice of and the research on social behavior are imbued with moral implications. His insight lay dormant during the heyday of social cognition research, when the search was on for basic processes underlying interpersonal and intergroup behavior (Markus & Zajonc, 1985). With the recent rise of moral psychology, the moral dimension of social psychology has reclaimed center stage.

The line between morality and moralism is fine, if it exists at all (Nietzsche, 1887/1996). Moral psychology has focused on people's interest in blame and punishment and neglected the study of ethical values central to the Enlightenment (e.g., freedom, autonomy, excellence). The difference between descriptive (e.g., people value freedom) and prescriptive (people ought to value freedom) norms has become blurred (Malle, Guglielmo, & Monroe, 2014). As a result, descriptive accounts of folk morality can spawn prescriptive obligations and permissions, a conclusion that falls victim to Hume's Guillotine (1739/1978)—what *is* may not be what *ought to be*.

Some basic lines of research have energized moralist agendas without perhaps intending to. Consider the Implicit Association Test (IAT). Once presented in published form (Greenwald, Schwarz, & McGhee, 1998), the IAT exploded into an aggressive measurement paradigm (Fiedler, Messner, & Bluemke, 2006), crowding out conventional and well-established methods for the study of prejudice while providing lucrative business opportunities and consulting contracts to its practitioners. The declaration 'We are all biased' has become an article of faith, which no one can deny without exposing themselves as biased.

Although the critical literature on the IAT has grown, a simplistic understanding still prevails (Fiedler, this volume). According to this essentialist view, the IAT bypasses conscious corrections of deep bias. People are claimed to be biased without realizing it. When confronted with their test score, they are invited to conclude that their true preferences have been revealed, and that these preferences are blameworthy. In a less moralistic climate, such a conclusion would be recognized as an accusation of a thought crime (Orwell, 1948). If the IAT fails on statistical grounds (Blanton, Jaccard, Gonzales, & Christie, 2006), so it fails on conceptual grounds (Fiedler & Grüning, in press). The dystopian endpoint of the IAT—which presumes to plumb unconscious thoughts that *might* be predictive of transgressions yet to be committed—is dark. It is the installation of a "pre-crime" unit that swoops in to arrest future offenders (Dick, 2002). If this is a dystopia to the liberal mind, it is a utopia to progressive legal scholars who demand an

alignment of the criminal justice system with the presumed discoveries of the implicit cognition paradigm (Kang, Bennett, Carbado, Casey, & Levinson, 2011).

Conclusions

There is no comprehensive social-psychological research program for the study of populism—yet. We have identified some cognitive-motivational building blocks of populism, focusing on the role of inductive reasoning and the aversion to uncertainty. We have suggested that an essentialist epistemology and a penchant for moralism provide opportunities for populist ideas to take hold. Demagogues and self-anointed 'thought leaders' can leverage these psychological principles to advance their goals. Yet, charismatic leaders are not necessary for a populist atmosphere to emerge. If our exposition is pessimistic, it is because we have not found an answer to Popper's (1945) dilemma, which is how an open society can check its enemies without, like populism, betraying the social values it is trying to preserve.

What remains rather uncertain is *why* people are averse to uncertainty. We have accepted uncertainty aversion as a psychological primitive without exploring its origins or the origins of individual differences therein. Any serious effort to do so would go beyond the charge of this chapter. We therefore settle for three brief notes. First, Aristotle taught that the experience of perceptual recognition is pleasant. Contemporary research traces this hedonic effect of recognition to the fluency and effortlessness of mental processing (Unkelbach & Koch, 2019). Populism can leverage lazy, fluent, and recognition-prone reasoning to lull people into a false sense of certainty. Second, a state of perceptual uncertainty entails a state of behavioral uncertainty. If the percept is not clear, we do not know how to respond. Populism, *in extremis*, tells us what we see and what to do. Third, since Frenkel-Brunswik's (1949) pioneering work, measures of individual differences related to uncertainty abound. We consider the construct of 'intellectual humility' promising (Leary et al., 2017). This construct combines the epistemic with the moral. An enlightened society, we submit, comprises more individuals endorsing attitudes such as "I question my own opinions, positions, and viewpoints because they could be wrong" (Leary et al., 2017, p. 795) than a benighted society does. But how can a civic attitude of intellectual humility be fostered if the forces of uncertainty aversion are arrayed against it? An open society must continually engage with this question. This is hard work, and it yields few rewards in the short term.

The assumption that people will, ultimately, bend in the direction of the rewards presupposes a fundamental rationality. This may still be too optimistic. Reviewing *Mein Kampf*, George Orwell (1940) argued that Hitler had

> grasped the falsity of the hedonistic attitude to life. Nearly all western thought since the last war . . . has assumed tacitly that human beings desire

> nothing beyond ease, security and avoidance of pain. In such a view of life there is no room . . . for patriotism and the military virtues.

If Hitler's view of human nature was not staked on hedonism, one might—politely—call it a tragic view. A person's or a group's fate is tragic if it will be fulfilled regardless of the best efforts to attain a better outcome. A tragic fate is not pleasant, but it is certain. For some populists, this may be enough.

We have argued that most of the elements of inductive reasoning with which humans are equipped are not themselves irrational. However, they can be exploited in such a way that the resulting beliefs are populist, intolerant, or fatalistic. The challenge is not so much to change basic patterns of social perception and inference, but to change the inputs people receive in their social and political ecologies. What are options of change? The cultivation of certain attitudes, such as intellectual humility, holds promise, as do interventions involving belief inoculation (McGuire, 1964), although such interventions must be carefully justified, lest they be misused paternalistically (see Kozyreva, Lewandowsky, & Hertwig, in press, for a review and discussion). Ultimately, it is to be hoped that people learn the difference between 'facts' and 'evidence.' Facts are final, but evidence performs an eternal dance with expectations and hypotheses. Reflecting on the evidence keeps the mind in an elastic state, and finding consensus is accepted as a possibility. The assumption is that evidence matters, even if it cannot establish ultimate truth. Unfortunately, when people bring conflicting certainties to their encounters, they will often point to their own facts, and declare the facts of others fake. Inductive reasoning can either perpetuate this process or expose it; it is populism's tool and its potential conqueror alike.

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