Each year The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) outlines in its report the main trends in the fields of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in Europe. ECRI's report raises alarms about an increase in xenophobic populism and the discourse on racist hatred that has continued to make its mark on the contemporary political climate in Europe in 2018. The report points out that xenophobic discourses and hate speech are often the first step toward acts of xenophobic violence. "It (xenophobic populism) fuels an anti-immigrant rhetoric, which often results in racist hate speech, breaking taboos and inciting further expressions of hatred."[1]. The report not only highlights the anti-immigrant sentiment spread in Europe, but points out that xenophobic populist discourses fuel Islamophobia, antisemitism and anti-black racism too: "Islamophobia is still prevalent in most member states…(and) In many member states a dangerous "normalisation" of Islamophobic prejudice can be observed."[2] And about strengthening of antisemitic hate, we can read in the report that: "Jewish people in Europe continue to be confronted with antisemitic hatred, including violence. Extremist groups, especially Neo-Nazis and Islamists, pose particular threats to the safety of Jewish communities and their members across the continent."[3] Also persons of African descent who were born in Europe, or have lived here for a long period of time, are facing increasing hate: "Members of Europe's Black communities continue to suffer from negative stereotypes, prejudice, hate speech, and also violence. Their social marginalisation is often exacerbated by discrimination in various fields of day-to-day life."[4] In addition to all this, the report stresses how Xenophobic discourses based on the "us" and "them" ideology sow the seeds of divisions along identity lines, and therefore threaten basic principles of Europe's democratic societies: tolerance and inclusion.[5]

This is what we read in official reports, which have been signalling for years the increase in these feelings of racial and xenophobic hatred, and which continue to record it in an objective language. During my recent sabbatical year (2018) in Italy I witnessed in some ways this progressive increase in such collective feelings. I witnessed a growing pervasive hatred in everyday conversations and an inclination towards growing violence.

Some people complain that "they take up all the spaces in kindergartens", "it was different before, now there are all "these " people", "they shouldn't come, they steal our work" (said by a worker married to a migrant). These are sentences I heard daily on the street, in shops, among acquaintances. And these sentences, little by little, pave the way for violence; they

open the path to violence quite unconsciously, with no awareness of the dangers or the gravity of the evil to which others or they themselves will be exposed.

And so we come to the chronicle of one November weekend: a weekend of everyday racism. To make it clear what kind of phenomenon I will analyse, allow me to recall some events that have been denounced as chronicles of a weekend of the current racism.[6]

On Saturday evening, November 9th, outside a famous disco of Ancona, a 22-year-old man, born in Italy of an immigrant family, is a victim of violent racist aggression from the disco's bouncer and three customers. After insulting him with very violent racist slurs, they beat him and stabbed him.[7]

On the Sunday evening of November 10th in Savona, a group of eight quite young men attacked two shopkeepers, a husband and wife of Bengali origin, who had been in Italy for many years. Eight young people entered the couple's shop and began to take the goods, pulling things off the shelves and throwing them on the floor. When the shopkeeper objected, they grabbed a chair from the nearby bar and hit him over the head, angrily[8].

On Monday November 11th, new racist aggression took place in Florence. Two hooded young men kicked and punched a 28-year-old Nigerian peddler, and escaped[9].

The week in question ended with news that brings us back to the mood before the Second World War, the so-called "Liliana Segre" case.

Liliana Segre is senator for life. She was deported in 1943 because she was Jewish, and survived the Auschwitz extermination camp. From 1990 she went to school assemblies and conferences to tell young people her story, also on behalf of the millions who shared the same story and who have never been able to communicate it. She is the first signatory of the motion for the organization of a parliamentary commission against hatred, racism and antisemitism. From November 8th she will be escorted in her every move by two carabinieri. The decision was taken by the prefecture of Milan which considered Segre to be in danger due to repeated and daily antisemitic threats received via the web and a recent banner against her, carried by an extreme right-wing group[10].

In other words, what is happening today, in 2019 in Italy, 70 years after the proclamation of the republican, democratic constitution, which states that "All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions."[11]? What happens is that Senator Liliana Segre needs protection by an armed escort because she is Jewish.

I have outlined this series of events because I believe that it is the manifestation or the symptoms of a phenomenon that I will call an affective epidemic, a phenomenon I will try to investigate through this contribution. This affective epidemic reinforces the feelings of radical exclusion and discrimination of non-citizens, foreigners, and those who are perceived to be radically different in religion, culture, ability and race. Such feelings risk destroying our capacity for living together as equal and free citizens and dissolving basic values of liberal democracy. However, the link between this affective epidemic and democracy is more complex and perhaps ambiguous.

I do not here intend to perform a political, sociological or media-based analysis of the public communication of what is happening. Such studies already exist in their respective disciplines.

I would like, however, firstly, to give a general outline of a description of the socio-political function of negative affects. I will do this through the Spinozist analysis of the imitation of affects, starting from the Spinozist systematic of "sad passions", first of all, hatred. Secondly, I will attempt to present the ambiguous link between these epidemic affections and democracy, always in light of Spinoza's theory.

Spinoza and the imitation of affects

The mechanisms of imitation of affects are rooted in the imaginative identification, from which proceeds the (imaginative, I would say virtual) recognition of the other as "similar". At the same time, this imitation produces an effect of classification and grouping (national, social, sexual, etc.), which excludes the other as "totally other". All this opens up to a phenomenology of antipathy, destruction and dehumanization. This mechanism, triggered

only by sad affections, does not show us the causes of the existence of the state, but the causes of its dissolution.

Furthermore, the phenomenology of sad passions places politics at the ethical turning point of the individual, at the dividing line between active becoming and passive becoming.

Before continuing the analysis, I will recall some basic concepts of Spinoza. To indicate the world of affectivity, Spinoza uses two terms: *affectus* and *passio*. The term *affectus* / feeling indicates a change in the state of the individual's *vis existendi* (force of existing), in the interaction with the outside world. *Passio* is a derived concept in that it indicates the passive aspect of the change, the impulses that our mental system undergoes in encounters with the outside world.[12] All *affectus*/feelings are not passions; there are active feelings as well. However, all the passions suffered by the soul are *affectus*. *Affectus* is therefore a transition towards an empowerment (active affects) or a weakening (passions) of our power of being. The power of being, or *Conatus* when it refers to the mind and body, is called desire, and, Spinoza notes, this is nothing but the very essence of the human being (Eth. III, P. IX, Sch. G.II, p 147). It follows that desire, i.e. a human being's essence, is the basic root of affectivity.

An increase in this power is joy; a decrease is sadness (Eth. P.XI and Sch., G. II, p. 148-9). This joy and sadness transcribe in the mind the variations of the *conatus* connected to the affections of the body in its relations with other bodies. It is to be noted here that such joy or sadness do not imply knowledge of truth, but only the immediate, unconscious reaction of refusal or acceptance of the affections of the body, which is why they are inadequate ideas, or the ideas of imagination. Joy and sadness are felt through external "things" to which we refer our feelings imaginatively. These feelings show themselves spontaneously in the forms of love and hatred (Eth. III, P. XIII, Sch. G.II, p. 150).

This mechanism gets terribly complicated when the "external causes" to which we refer our feelings of love and hate are "res nobis similis", that is to say, other people. "Ex eo quod rem nobis similem et quam nullo affectu prosecuti sumus, aliquo affectu affici imaginamur, eo ipso simili affectu afficimur." (Eth.III, P.XXVII, G.II, p. 160)

(From the fact we imagine that a thing which is similar to us and for which we have felt no

feeling, is affected by a certain feeling, by that itself (eo ipso) we are affected by a similar affect)[13].

There are two crucial points in this proposition.

First of all we are dealing here with a process of imaginary identification. It is an imaginary process because we burden ourselves with the feelings of another person, without having a previous emotional relationship with this person. The only condition is that it is someone like us. Here a tendentially universal identification process is at work[14], but before we think this identification, we imagine it, as the definition of commiseration tells us.[15] The definition tells us that this feeling runs to someone we "imagine being like us".[16]

Who is this being whom we judge similar to us? And further, how do we judge who is similar to us?

We know that Spinoza doesn't give a formal definition of the human being. The "human" issue emerges explicitly in the Ethics only in the fourth and fifth part: dedicated to human servitude and human freedom[17]. Already in the TEI Spinoza explains that the aim of his research is to acquire a stronger human nature (naturam aliquam humanam sua multo firmiorem) (TEI, G.II p. 8), so as to enjoy it with other individuals (ut ille cum aliis individuis, si fieri potest, tali natura fruatur) (Ibidem). And in the preface to Part IV of Ethics, almost taking up the purpose of the research already expressed in TIE, he grounds his research in a desire: we desire (cupimus) to form a certain idea of the human being: an idea that can be considered as an *exemplar* of human nature.(Eth. IV, praef. G.II, p. 208). As P. Macherey[18] pointed out, the use of the verb *cupio* is central here. This research too is rooted in a desire (which we must not forget is the very essence of each individual). This desire arises from a situation that is common to all beings, and more particularly, to all human beings, expressed in the *Appendix* of *De Deo*: all human beings are born ignorant of the causes of things (omnes homines rerum causarum ignari nascuntur)(Eth. I, Appendix, G.II, p. 78)

And this is the human servitude: The human being believes to be a kingdom apart, separated in Nature (imperium in imperio). This belief is based on the universal idea of Human Being, which, according to Spinoza, is nothing more than a general imaginative

idea, which differs from common rational notions (Eth. II p. XL sch). Resuming here the interpretation of Gilles Deleuze, [19] we remember that the common notions, far from being formal axioms, express the relationship of convenience or discrepancy of bodies and therefore of minds, since the mind is the idea of the body (Eth.II prop. 38, coroll. G.II, p. 119)[20]. All bodies are in accordance (conveniunt) with each other in movement and rest, and therefore they have something in common. The "human" individuals, whose bodies are extremely complex, are in accordance with each other to the highest degree, that is to say they have greater and specific common properties due to the similarity of the internal law which regulates the proportion of movement and rest of each individual body. It is only in this sense that the term species or human nature can be understood, according to Spinoza.[21]

So, what is the idea of human being to be considered as an exemplar of human nature that can help us to acquire a stronger human nature? We need to remember what Spinoza says in Eth. IV def 8 (G.II, p. 210): the essence or nature of man is the virtue or power to do certain things that can only be known thanks to the laws of his nature. As Macherey rightly notes[22], it follows from here that in every human individual there is an effort to be and act as an adequate cause of his actions: this power, referring to both the mind and the body, is expressed in desire that is, as we have already said, the essence of the human individual. The *exemplar* that can help us in the acquisition of a stronger human nature, will therefore be a path of acquisition of power as the Scholium of the proposition 39 Eth V (G.II,p 305) indicates: in this life we make an effort that the body of childhood changes, as far as its nature (vis existendi) allows and agrees, in another that is much more able to act and that relates to a conscious mind to the highest degree. The path cannot be a lonely one. In fact, because of our impotence we could not exist or be happy without the union with what strengthens us (K.V. II, 5.5, G I, p. 41). [23] We have always been *in alio et per alium,*(Eth.I def. 5, G II, p. 45) we are in Nature, limited and / or enhanced by the relationship with other individuals, with the bodies of other individuals, with other human individuals. Since all human beings are born in ignorance of the true causes of things and therefore in the impotence to regulate and control the affects (humanam impotentia in moderandis et coercentis affectibus servituten voco) (Eth. IV, praef, G.II, p. 205), the judgment on who is similar to us starts immediately from the basic datum of this ignorance. We judge most often what is similar to us not on the basis of common notions, but on the imaginative representation of what we believe to be similar us.

Imaginatio implies a different order and connection of images that is heterogeneous in relation to the order and connection of the intellect's ideas. There is a specific order of imagination that expresses[24] itself in memory and in the ability to produce words and symbols. Using these words and symbols, we remember things and form ideas that are similar to things. This association arises according to the order and association of the modifications of the human body (Eth. II, XVIII, sch. G.II, p. 106-7).

From the "Imagination's" order follows that we have as many different ways of associating emotions and images as we have different body constitutions. The same object can be seen by two different individuals in two different ways.

Thus, everyone will move from one image to another according to the way his habit has ordered the images of things in his body (Ibidem). A soldier, for example, will immediately, upon seeing the tracks of a horse, go from the thought of the horse to the thought of the rider and thence to the thought of war, etc. A farmer, on the other hand, will go from the thought of the horse to the thought of the plough, the field. And so, each one, according to how he is used to connecting and making connections between the images of things, will go from one thought to another.

With words, images and symbols we get used to associating and finding similarities. And so we begin to imagine that an "individual is like us" when he presents the characteristics that our instinctive inclination accustoms us to recognize.

The identification process can therefore find its limits in the mechanisms of imagination that operate by simple association.

Secondly, the imitation of affects is also an automatic, involuntary process that occurs without the subject being aware of it, as the wording "ex eo quod … eo ipso" indicates. The imitation of affects is an involuntary phenomenon that doesn't occur because of pre-existing emotional ties, but because of a real or imaginary similarity of which Spinoza gives a physiological demonstration. Any perception of a body implies the nature of our body and the nature of the external body together. If the nature of the external body is similar to the nature of our body, then the idea of the external body, which we represent and imagine, also implies the affections of this external body. Consequently, if we imagine someone like us

affected by some affection, this imagination will express an affection of our Body analogous to this affection: and, therefore, those affections will be produced in us by transference without our awareness and without previous emotional ties to that external body (Eth. II, Prop. XXVII, dem. G.II, p. 160)[25]

Here, at this point, feelings circulate among those who imagine themselves as similar, as if they didn't belong to anyone in particular. We no longer know who loves whom and who hates whom, in a complicated game where feelings reach a maximum of instability. We are in the presence of a collective "fluctuatio animi" (emotional instability) where feelings seem to start to live a life of their own!

This mechanism brings into play two passions, piety (commiseratio) and emulation (aemulatio) (Eth.III, prop.XXVII, sch., G.II, p. 160).The first is a form of shared sadness, which also arises without having direct affective relationships. Piety is therefore not a form of love. But it can be at the base of an affective ethics and can foster the development of reason: since, with regard to others, the passion of piety can automatically raise an obstacle against the feeling of hatred.

The second is an affective imitation with respect to the desire of another: Let us remember the definition of desire: "Cupiditas est ipsa hominis essentia quatenus ex data quacunque ejus affectione determinata concipitur ad aliquid agendum" (Eth.III, Def. Aff. 1, G. II, p. 190) (Desire is the actual essence of human being, in so far as it is conceived, as determined to a particular activity by some given modification of itself.)[26]

Sharing the desire of others entails sharing the impulse to do something. So besides sharing the joys and sadnesses of others, we are driven to adopt their rules of behavior. This is why we tend to cry together, to flee together, to love and to hate together. It is here that Spinoza identifies the genetic mechanism of a common life, for those who imagine themselves similar, and who are "infected" by the same passions. The imitation of affects explains the crowd's passions, the collective passions, the political emotions. It is the genetic cause of the formation of the group, the nation, the society and the State.

The passionate genesis of political society

The space of what is really common to human individuals, the space outlined by the common rational notions, is reason. The formation of the political body that Spinoza briefly outlines in Ethics is part of the human path from servitude to liberation. It is the path of acquisition of that stronger human nature of which Spinoza speaks in the TIE and which is a common good. It is the common path of foundation of a society capable of allowing the greatest number of human individuals to reach that degree of perfection (TIE G.II p 8). The "common" space where human beings agree is reason. But human beings are not born rational, even if they can become rational. If all humans lived under the guidance of reason, they would live in perfect harmony and would not need to form a political society.

The humans, as already mentioned, are subject to passions; their initial state of powerlessness and ignorance cause them to oppose each other. Each individual exists by natural right, and the right of each is measured by his power. By natural right, everyone judges what is good or bad, what is useful or harmful to him; everyone "takes revenge, strives to preserve what he loves and destroy what he hates: "seseque vindicat et id quod amat, conservare et id quod odio habet, destruere conatur" (Eth. IV p. XXXVII sch 2, G.II p. 237). Even these destructive passions can become collective and be shared. In fact, Spinoza identifies the genesis of political society in human impotence, in the need that human individuals have to live together to be of mutual help (ibidem). And this being together collectively does not only happen under the guidance of reason, quite the contrary. Reason is one of the paths that humans may embark upon. Passions can be the genetic cause of the political society, in particular the fear of loneliness that is inherent in all human individuals, because no one can survive alone.

As reported by A. Matheron,[27] there is a paragraph, and only one, in the *Political Treatise* where Spinoza puts into play the collective passions in order to make explicit the genesis of political societies.

"Quia homines, uti diximus, magis affectu, quam ratione ducuntur, sequitur multitudinem non ex rationis ductu, sed ex communi aliquo affectu naturaliter convenire et una veluti mente duci velle, nempe (ut art. 9. cap. 3. diximus) *vel ex communi spe, vel metu, vel desiderio commune aliquod damnum ulciscendi*. Cum autem solitudinis metus omnibus

hominibus insit, quia nemo in solitudine vires habet, ut sese defendere, et quae ad vitam necessaria sunt, comparare possit, sequitur statum civilem homines natura appetere, nec fieri posse, ut homines eundem unquam penitus dissolvant".(TP, 6,1, G.III p.294)

(Inasmuch as men are led, as we have said, more by passion than reason, it follows, that a multitude comes together, and wishes to be guided, as it were, by one mind, not at the suggestion of reason, but of some common passion—that is (Chap. III. Sec. 9), *common hope, or fear, or the desire of avenging some common hurt*. But since fear of solitude exists in all men, because no one in solitude is strong enough to defend himself, and procure the necessaries of life, it follows that men naturally aspire to the civil state; nor can it happen that men should ever utterly dissolve it.)[28]

Here Spinoza tells us that the political association is formed through an affective process, in which some precise affects are at work: – the common hope (spes) and the common fear (metus), – *solitudinis metus* he specifies in the second part of the paragraph almost to wanting once again to stand out from the Hobbesian position, – and finally the common desire of avenging.

Spinoza uses the term *affectus*, but here he takes into account only passions, the passive affects. The first two, *spes* and *metus* (hope and fear) are joy and sadness in relation to things we imagine in the future (Eth.III, prop. XVIII, 2.sch,G.II, p. 155). We are in the sphere of uncertainty. But when this uncertainty disappears, when we are sure of what is happening to us, hope becomes confidence and fear becomes despair. As the preface of the TTP lets us know, *spes* and *metus* are the passions that often drive the human being to confusion, and dispose the mind to the most extreme credulity, by disregarding the indications of reason. We are used to consider fear as negative and hope as good, as a theological virtue or as a principle to help us survive. For Spinoza, however, fear and hope are just two sides of the same coin: both are passions characterised by future uncertainty.

These kinds of passions cause a weakening of self-awareness and a feeling of insufficiency. Fear as a passion generates a special need for security, and thus plays an important part in the political and social sphere. So, from a political point of view, fear is the foundation, not just for autocracy, but for almost every regime: one cannot rule unless one induces fear. However, although hope and fear cannot be good in themselves (Spes et metus affectus non

posse esse per se boni,(Eth. IV, p. XLVII, G.II, p. 245), they are, however, useful, and therefore "as we must sin, we had better sin in that direction. For, if all men who are a prey to emotion were all equally proud, they would shrink from nothing, and would fear nothing; how then could they be joined and linked together in bonds of union?" (Eth. IV, p. LIV sch.G.II,p 250)

But let us now focus on the last passion that can bring together human beings by nature and form a multitude that is led as if it were a single mind.

Before seeing where the reference to Article 9 of Chapter 3 of TP takes us, let us dwell on this desire for revenge.

The term desire, as we have already seen, indicates the essential impulse to do something. Yet, what should one do? Take revenge for an imaginary offense suffered in common. – Revenge is the effort (conatus) to return the evil done to us; but revenge is a derivative of anger, that is, the effort to hurt whom we hate, (Eth.III, prop XL, cor 2, sch.G.II, p. 172) We are therefore under the power of hatred: hatred is a sadness accompanied by an external cause. This hatred has become a common passion; we are faced with a community that was formed sharing a common hatred and therefore a common sadness. It is a hatred that developed without each individual of the community necessarily having a previous emotional relationship with "these others".

Before summing up our analysis of the connection of the sad collective passions, we follow Spinoza's reference to paragraph 9 of Chapter Three. Let's read:

"Tertio denique considerandum venit, ad civitatis ius ea minus pertinere, quae plurimi indignantur. Nam certum est, homines naturae ductu in unum conspirare, vel propter communem metum vel desiderio damnum aliquod commune ulciscendi; et quia ius civitatis communi multitudinis potentia definitur, certum est, potentiam civitatis et ius eatenus minui, quatenus ipsa causas praebet, ut plures in unum conspirent."(TP, 3,9, G.III, p.285)

"Thirdly and lastly, it comes to be considered, that those things are not so much within the commonwealth's right, which cause indignation in the majority. For it is certain, that by the guidance of nature men conspire together, either through common fear, or with the desire

to avenge some common hurt; and as the right of the commonwealth is determined by the common power of the multitude, it is certain that the power and right of the commonwealth are so far diminished, as it gives occasion for many to conspire together."[29]

It is not necessary here to recall the masterful analysis that Matheron makes of indignation[30]. I just want to emphasize three points:

Firstly: Even if indignation arises from something that offends our sense of humanity, justice or our moral conscience, Spinoza is drastic: indignation is always bad. Indignation is necessarily evil. "Indignatio est necessario mala. Indignatio odium est ". Indignation is evil because indignation is a form of interpersonal hatred, similar to contempt. As interpersonal hatred, indignation is the cause of the dissolution of the political body. Spinoza says that hatred between people can never be good. Therefore it is not a matter of distinguishing between a good and an evil form of indignation.

We can therefore think that this association, guided by feelings of hatred, indignation and revenge, carries within it the seeds of dissolution, not only of the tyrannical state, but also of the association itself. Indignation, and therefore hatred, plays a double role here: decomposing and recomposing the political body continuously.

Secondly, the formation of the political body based on common hatred entails that the political body is produced in the cycle of sad passions. Now we have already said that sad passion is a diminution of power, power of being, power of acting and power of thinking. In other words, as noted by G. Deleuze, sadness does not make people more intelligent, quite the opposite, it makes people foolish. And sure enough, those who want to hold power as complete domination arouse sad passions in the people, and use them to their own advantage.

Thirdly, even if this "community" is an association of individuals that exercise its power as *una veluti mens* (as if they were a single mind) and forms a *multitudinis potentia* (a strength of multitude), it is the most distant from the democracy that Spinoza defined in the TTP, since this political body arises among human beings fully deprived of the use of reason, and led exclusively by passions.

According to Spinoza, the definition of a democracy is “coetus universus hominum, qui collegialiter summum jus ad omnia, quae potest, habet” “the union of all people who, in common (collegialiter), have full right over what is in their power.”(TTP, XVI, G. III s 191).In the democratic order, both a reflected common consent (communi consensus decernitur) (th.IV p.XXXVII, Sch. G.II. p. 239) and one mind (mens una) are fundamental elements. We want to highlight that this mind is one, not just as if it were one (una veluti mente ducuntur)(TP, 2,16 G.III p. 281). This mind can be one mens una , because it expresses itself in the common sphere of reason.But because a common consent involves all people, and one mind consists of all elements of society, the ability to use judgment becomes a core problem. Indeed, the ability to use judgment is a necessary condition for arriving at a reflected common consensus.

This multitude, or people, which form a political body by sharing common sad passions, doesn’t think. It cannot think, because sad passion blocks the power to act and think. It feels together, but it doesn’t think together. It is led by a mind, as if this mind were one: as if, but it is not, one mind. It is led by a totally passive mind, a mind enslaved by the passions.

It is easy to assume that this new political body allows itself to be led by the dominating mind of an absolute ruler. It seems that Spinoza answers the question Étienne de la Boétie had already asked himself and that later surprised Jacques Necker: Why do people sacrifice their lives and their own interests for the interests and ambitions of other individuals? Why do people accept the authority of others when this harms them more than it helps? Because they share common sad passions, when they should share common ideas.

Conclusion

The mimesis of passive affects also too easily brings into play the cycle of hatred and its derivatives: derision, contempt, anger, revenge (Eth.IV XLV, G.II, p.243). The society generated in this way is institutionally precarious and will easily become a world of appearance and reciprocal detestation. Although this mechanism of sad and hateful emotional passivity operates continuously and represents a steady drift of all human societies, it is possible to trigger another kind of cycle.

It is possible to develop a political association based on liberating passions and constructive images.

The mechanism could also put other feelings into play, and leave room for pity or compassion and all those passions, which are indeed sad, but which may indirectly become good: humility, repentance, shame (Eth. IV, LIV, sch. G.II, p.250). Because “He who is moved to help others neither by reason nor by compassion, is rightly designated inhuman, since (III. XXVII) he seems different from a human being” (Et. IV p. L, sch.G.II p. 247)

However, this path is more difficult and slower. This is the “perardua” way that leads us to reason and liberation, to the freedom that according to Spinoza is defined as rationality. It is the way that leads to the formation of the citizen who, by subjecting himself to the precepts of reason, understands that the interest of his individuality coincides with the collective interest of the state and lives according to the political community rules (Eth. IV, prop. LXXIII, G. II p. 264), the rules of the Free State, which for Spinoza is based on reason.

A State founded exclusively on negative passions, on the feeling of hatred and revenge, carries in itself the germ of its destruction. Its subjects – not citizens because citizens are guided internally or externally by reason – do not live according to the common political rules, but they live following their discordant individual passions, and sooner or later they will fight each other and disrupt the community with the same ease with which it was compacted.

Let us return to the growing feeling of xenophobia which seems to dominate in many of our democratic societies and which has spread so easily. The theory of imitation of Spinozian affections helped us to make clearer how and why negative feelings can spread so easily, even in the most civil and democratic societies. In addition, this theory sheds light on the danger these feelings pose to the strength of the State. By compacting the common feeling of hatred for the “different” for the “foreigner”, the human individual loses the capacity of growing to be “citizen” of a Free State, as he becomes unable to submit the action of the rulers to careful examination, meticulous criticism and accurate judgment. Therefore he cannot engage in a common practical action based on this judgment. In other words, he is unable to build a democracy that is at the same time a free state. He becomes only a subject, a human individual who lives with others – most often against others- closed in his

own singularity, dragged by his passions.

As we have just mentioned, the danger is twofold: for political subjects who can very easily be enslaved in an authoritarian way, but also for the State holding. Spinoza's theory of affects makes us understand that hatred against "others" can spread out easily in our society, but with the same ease this hatred can pour itself out on classes and groups within society and the State, and finally against the authorities.

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Endnotes

[1] ECRI, "Annual Report On Ecri's Activities, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018" Strasbourg, June, 2019, p. 7.

[2] Ibid. s. 10.

[3] Ibid. s. 11.

[4] Idem.

[5] Cf. ibid. p. 8.

[6] Cf. Cronache di ordinario razzismo: http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/un-lungo-week-end-allinsegna-del-razzismo-e-non-solo-sui-campi-di-calcio/

[7] Source: https://picchionews.it/cronaca/aggressione-razzista-al-mamamia-di-senigallia-calci-pugni-e-poi-una-coltellata-coinvolto-anche-un-buttafuori

[8] Source: https://www.ilsecoloxix.it/savona/2019/11/11/news/savona-paura-sotto-i-portici-banda-di-tappisti-minaccia-di-morte-e-ferisce-negoziante-1.37888569

[9] Source: https://corrierefiorentino.corriere.it/firenze/notizie/cronaca/19_novembre_12/picchiato-due-ragazzi-col-cappuccio-sottopasso-cure-b307eb08-0529

[10] Source: https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/11/07/news/scorta_segre-240463251/

[11]Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana: Art. 3. “Tutti i cittadini hanno pari dignita` sociale [XIV] e sono eguali davanti alla legge, senza distinzione di sesso [292 , 371 , 481 , 511 , 1177], di razza, di lingua [6], di religione [8, 19], di opinioni politiche [22], di condizioni personali e sociali.” https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione.pdf

[12] Cf. Ethica III, def.III and Explicatio in Spinoza *Opera,* im Auftrag der heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften herausgegeben von Carl Gebhart, Heidelberg, 1925, b. II p.139. Carl Gebhart’s edition will be referred with G. number on the volume and page numbers. Spinoza’s works used in the text are referred by the following abbreviation: K.V.

Korte verhandeling van God, de mensch, en deszelvs welstand; TEI: Tractatus de Emendatione intellectus; TTP: Tractatus Theologico-Politicus; TP. Tractatus politicu; Eth. Ethica; Ep, Epistolae.

[13] My translation.

[14] Cf. P. Macherey, *Introduction À l'Ethique de Spinoza, La troisième partie*, Puf, Paris, 1995, p. 218.

[15] Eth. III, P. XXII, sch. G.II, p. 157.

[16] Pierre-François Moreau in his article "Imitation Of The Affects And Interhuman Relations " in *Spinoza's Ethics: A Collective Commentary* by M. Hampe,Michael Hampe,Ursula Renz and Robert Schnepf, Brill, Leiden, Boston 2011, p. 168-69 notes that the expression "res nobis similis" does not explicitly refer to humans. Belonging to the "human" is not relevant here to judge the "similarity".For an analysis of the "common notions" see M. Gueroult, *Spinoza* 2. L'âme, Paris, Aubier-Montaigne, 1974, p. 381 and ff.

[17] P. Macherey, *Introduction À l'Ethique de Spinoza, La quatrième partie*, Puf, Paris, 1997, p. 9.

[18] P. Macherey, Introduction IV, op.cit. p. 22.

[19] Gilles Deleuze, *Philosophie Pratique*, Les èditions de minuit, Paris, 1981, p. 127.

[20] Cf. Gueroult op.cit. p. 339.

[21] As Alexandre Matheron observes in his « L'anthropologie spinoziste ? », in *Revue de Synthèse,* 89-91, 1978, Spinoza does not define humanity as such, and as P.F. Moreau (cf. *État et religion*,Edition de l'ENS, 2005, p. 5) argues Spinoza doesn't give precise distinction between humanity and animality. The theme of Spinozistic anthropology is therefore problematic and controversial. However, as Andrea Sangiacomo ("What are human beings? Essences and aptitudes in Spinoza's anthropology", in *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 2, 2, 2013, p. 78-100) claims, the problem finds light considering that according to Spinoza

humanity exists inasmuch as individuals can agree with each other and adapt to each other to live and work together. This is because Spinoza wants to give a non-anthropocentric interpretation of human beings. In this way we discover at the heart of the Spinozistic doctrine an extremely exact and original conception of the human individual, cf. Paola de Cuzzani, "Une anthropologie de l'homme decentré", in *Philosophiques, 29, 2002, p. 7-21.* On the problem of the human species in Spinoza, see also J. Busse, *Le problème de l'essence de l'homme chez Spinoza*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2009.

[22] cf. P. Macherey, Introduction IV, Op. Cit. p. 45.

[23] Cf. Pascal Sévérac, *Spinoza : union et désunion*, Paris, Vrin, 2011, p. 14.

[25] See also Emanuela Scribano, "La scoperta della simpatia dalla fisiologia alla socialità", in *L'Uomo, il filosofo, le passioni,* a cura di Carlo Borghero e Antonella Del Prete, casa editrice Le Lettere, Firenze, 2016, pagg. 63-75; and Macherey, Introduction III, Op. Cit. p. 216-7.

[26] English translation by Elwes: Benedictus de Spinoza: *Ethics: Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*, translated by R.H.M. Elwes, The Floating Press, Aukland, 2009, p. 226.

[27] Cf. A. Matheron, « L'indignation et le conatus de l'État spinoziste », in *Puissance et ontologie*, ed. Myriam Revault D'Allones et Hardi Rizk, Ed. Kimé, Paris, 1994, p. 154.

[28] Benedict de Spinoza, The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza, translated from the Latin, with an Introduction by R.H.M. Elwes, vol. 1 Introduction, Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus, Tractatus Politicus. Revised edition (London: George Bell and Sons, 1891). 15.4.2020. https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1710, p. 316.

[29] Idem p.205.

[30] Cf. A. Matheron, Indignation, Op.Cit. p. 153-165.