ERIK ERIKSON ON NEGATIVE IDENTITY & PSEUDOSPECIATION – EXTENDED AND PARTICULARIZED BY TA-NEHISI COATES

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One can feel challenged in this chilling time when sundry variations of ultra-nationalism have become quite discernable in the USA, Europe, the Middle East, and parts of Africa. They have often taken the form of a rhetoric of fear and hatred toward "undesirables." In this time of trouble in an increasingly nuclearized world, it is well to turn to Erik Erikson. His related concepts of "negative identity" and "pseudospeciation" need to be addressed more fully than they have in recent decades. Much is to be gained by both academic discussion and public debate over these two Erikson concepts. They signal elements in his "Way of Looking at Things." More immediately, they help us address the crude and dangerous ultra-nationalisms of our time.

Sensitive to the intimate relationship between the inner self and the outer social circumstances, Erikson, began in the mid and late 1940s to shape his most central concept - identity formation. It is well to refresh ourselves on the qualities he assigned to identity, for without that recall, one can hardly come to grips with his concepts of "universal specieshood" and "pseudospeciation", both of which emerged from it. In *Childhood and Society* (1950), perhaps his most innovative book, Erikson displayed a marked cross-cultural perspective, comparing psychological development in several countries and cultures. While "officially" pledging fealty to Freudian psychoanalysis, Erikson was more attentive than Freud had been to ways the social circumstances of a society impacted the inner psyches of its members.

Most importantly, *Childhood and Society* introduced the concept of an eight stage human life cycle that was anchored in a struggle to garner and sustain personal identity. There is profit in recognizing here that Erikson's concept of identity was initially formulated more than three decades before in his still unpublished

"Manuscript von Erik." It is the story of his *Wanderschaft* amidst a troubled adolescence. Identity was characterized in this narrative as a personal sense of sameness and historical continuity through which life seemed to cohere.[3]

The "Manuscript" captured young Erik's thoughts and tensions at the time. Identity was cast within what later came to be called the stages of the human life cycle. Indeed, it became central to these stages. The life cycle involved a person moving toward and sustaining a viable sense of identity. Long before he had even heard of Freud, the "Manuscript von Erik" essentially represented the beginning of an intellectual process that left us with *Childhood and Society*. The initial "Manuscript" centered on a tension between one's inner subconscious drives and the needs of society, and this became the essence of his premier book. It is no service to scholarship that "Manuscript von Erik" has never been published and made readily available to scholars.

Each of the eight stages in Erikson's delineation of the human life cycle is to be construed as a polarity - a positive and hopeful disposition counterpointed by a pole that reduced the vibrancy of everyday existence. The first stage underscored the pole of trust that (hopefully) overshadowed the opposite pole - mistrust. The next stage, infancy, featured the polarity of autonomy on the one hand and shame on the other. There followed "initiative" vs. "guilt", "industry over a sense of inferiority, the all important quality of "identity" over "role diffusion" during adolescence, "intimacy" rather than "isolation" in young adulthood, "generativity" over "self-absorption" during midlife, and finally a sense of "integrity" over "despair" in old age. Unfortunately, this life cycle is all that most teachers and their students have known about Erikson, to his often vocalized regret.

Erikson often invoked one of several of the eight stages in framing his thoughts and clinical perspectives. But as he did so, we find a very important departure from the traditional therapeutic focus on pathology and deficiency. Even the most troubled patient had discernable talents and emotional strengths, Erikson insisted, and these strengths had to be expanded and encouraged. As he underscored this point, Erikson came to recognize an underlying human commonality ("universal specieshood"), and he felt that it was attainable. We simply needed confidence in our inherent capacities to throw off hatred and contempt for "the other" (i.e.

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[3] See Friedman's *Identity's Architect*, 1999, Ch. 4-5 and Erikson's *Childhood and Society* ([1950] 1995).

"pseudospeciation"). Asked whether there could ever be a loving and humane society, Erikson often cited Franklin Roosevelt's America, which he felt had welcomed him warmly from totalitarian Europe. He referenced other warm, welcoming societies throughout the world and through the centuries, and felt that this testified to "a wider human consciousness." For Erikson, "Universal specieshood" was no utopian abstraction.[4]

This is not to say that Erikson discounted twentieth century hatred, violence, and degradation – the building blocks for what his friend, Daniel Aaron, called *The Century of Total War*. Erikson elected to focus on the authoritarian structure of the German family. It had prompted Hitler's appeal to delinquent youth, he insisted. If we take a close look at Erikson's inquiry into Hitler's childhood and adolescence in several of his writings, find a direct outcome of the perturbations involved in Hitler's image of himself.

Erikson investigated the creation of a nauseous Reichs-German national imagery perhaps best of all in *Childhood and Society*. There Hitler's destructive urges and histrionic hatred towards Jews was characterized as somewhat of a projection of Hitler's developmental, familial and social conditions. They failed to generate a stable and positive identity. Erikson ([1950] 1995, p. 297) illustrates how his Oedipus complex, the love for his young mother, and the hate for his old father had "[…] assumed morbid proportions." It was this conflict, which drove Hitler to love or to hate, to preserve human life or to destroy people and the things that sustained them. Erikson's portrayal of German fatherhood spoke to how "[t]he average German father's dominance and harshness was not blended with the tenderness and dignity which comes from participation in an integrating cause" ([1950] 1995, p. 301).[5] Here Erikson underscored the cultural and social context in which Hitler was raised. The authoritarian and repressive relationship between father and son had a strong impact on Hitler's identity formation during adolescence. By not identifying himself with the image of his father, an image that featured elements of a typical "German father", Hitler had transformed his personal, psychological conflict into a social one. Attune to

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[4] See Friedman, *Identity's Architect*, pp. 220-29 on the life cycle; pp. 20-21 on Roosevelt's America; pp. 116-33, 150-56, 199-208, 260-68 as a clinician; pp. 277-79 on Luther's voice; pp. 347-389 on Ghandi; pp. 412 - 414 on Jefferson; pp. 447-55 on Jesus at the Galilee.

[5] See also Erikson's following passage ([1950] 1995, p. 299): "When the father comes home from work, even the walls see to pull themselves together (*´nehmen sich zusammen´*). The mother – although often the unofficial master of the house – behaves differently enough to make a baby aware of it. She hurries to fulfill the father's whims and to avoid angering him. The children hold their breath, for the father does not approve of 'nonsense', that is, neither of the mother's feminine moods nor of the children's playfulness."

the mutual father-son conflicts among German youth, Hitler fashioned a motto – "Youth shapes its own destiny." By this he meant that youths advocated freedom from the experience of humiliation and devaluation practiced by their authoritarian fathers, who had not only "betrayed youth and idealism," but had, made youth seek "refuge in a petty and servile kind of conservatism." This juvenile experience generated a strong sense of unity as well as loyalty to the gang leader. It gave birth to the "Reichs-German" character structure – a "peculiar combination of idealistic rebellion and obedient submission". (Erikson, [1950] 1995, pp. 309-301-302).[6]

Indeed, once eradicating the controversial figure of the father, Hitler presented himself as a heroic and "unbroken" adolescent who had chosen a career apart from civilian happiness, financial tranquility, and spiritual peace. As a gang leader, Hitler kept the boys together by demanding their admiration, by creating terror, and by shrewdly involving them in crimes from which there was no way back" (Erikson, [1950] 1995, p. 304). Since adolescence is a phase of role experimentation, role projection, but also identity confusion and conflict, Erikson called attention to the perils of an "all or nothing *totalistic* quality of adolescence, which permits many young people to invest their loyalty in simplistically over-defined ideologies" (Erikson, [1950] 1995, p. 204) and develop an over-identification with specific social groups as members or leaders.[7] German youth identification with Hitler's negative identity had anticipated a Machiavellian plan in which "God no longer mattered […] Parents did not matter […] Ethics did not matter […] Brotherhood, friendship did not matter […] Learning did not matter […]. What mattered was: to be on the move without looking backward. 'Let everything go to pieces, we shall march on. For today Germany is ours; tomorrow, the whole world.' At this point, Hitler offered a simple radical dichotomy of cosmic dimensions: the German (soldier) versus the Jew". (Erikson, [1950] 1995, p. 309).

Besides giving "political expression to the spirit of the German adolescent," Erikson observed, Hitler was restoring the collective pride of place or homeland for a

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[6] Compare with Adorno's concept of fascist character (1950, pp. 751-752): "There exists something like 'the' potentially fascist character, which is by itself a 'structural unit'. In other words, traits such as conventionality, authoritarian submissiveness and aggressiveness, projectivity, manipulativeness, etc., regularly go together. [...] The potentially fascist character has to be regarded as a product of interaction between the cultural climate of prejudice and the 'psychological' responses to this climate."
[7] Compare Erikson ([1950] 1995, p. 236): "The adolescent mind is essentially a mind of the *moratorium*, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult. It is an ideological mind – and, indeed, it is the ideological outlook of a society that speaks most clearly to the adolescent who is eager to be affirmed by his peers, and is ready to be confirmed by rituals, creeds, and programmes which at the same time define what is evil, uncanny, and inimical."

dispossessed German people, who, "without work, without food, and without a new integrity," became more attentive to Hitler's imagery" – which rested on paranoia. (Erikson, [1950] 1995, p. 317). Erikson postulated that in such a period of collective anxiety and identity crisis, "the rage aroused by threatened identity loss can explode in the arbitrary violence of mobs, or it can - less consciously serve the efficient destructiveness of the machinery of oppression and war". (Erikson, 1975, pp. 20-21). Along with Hitler's emotionally nationalist rhetoric and his deliberate projection of his own negative identity onto outsiders, Erikson saw in Hitler the socio-psychological consequences of post World War One German shame and humiliation. Indeed, Hitler at this point evidenced a mindset that Erikson referenced as "pseudospeciation". *It was a propensity* that allowed Hitler to degrade and eliminate all persons and communities that could conceivably be considered enemies or potential enemies.[8] Erikson depicted the "pseudospeciation" as a deeply rooted propensity in relatively homogenous groups to deny the fact that humankind is "obviously one species." People seemed disposed to irrationality by ignoring this fact. They preferred to "split up into groups (from tribes to nations, from castes to classes, from religions to ideologies) which provide their members with a firm sense of distinct and superior identity – and immorality." A "pseudospecies" invented for itself a special as "superior to all others, the mere mortals." "Pseudospeciation" tended to harden "mutual differentiations" among groups "into dogmas and isms which combine larger and larger human communities into power spheres" of exclusiveness that simply became new "examples of 'pseudospecies'". (Erikson, 1969, p. 431).[9]

For Erikson (1985, p. 213), "pseudospeciation," when "fueled by historical and cultural experience, creates a false sense of unique and defining qualities in groups and ignores the genetic integrity of the human species." Hitler's hostility and profound hatred towards the Jew "is clothed in the imagery of a phobia." Erikson described the danger emanating from it as "a weakening infection and a dirtying contamination. […] His constant preoccupation is with the attainment of what is white, and the phobic avoidance and extirpation of everything black, in others and in himself" (Erikson, [1950] 1995, p. 308). Hence, while vilifying, dehumanizing, and demonizing Jewry, Hitler was ready to hate, to torture, and to kill. For Erikson, Hitler

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[8] See also Erikson (1985, p. 215), **"**The total victory of this mentality in an enlightened modern nation was exemplified in Hitler's Germany".
[9] See also Friedman, *Identity's Architect*, pp. 379-380.

was prepared, emotionally, to destroy buildings and whole cities. While pressing along this path, Hitler simultaneously longed for the elimination of mentally and physically "defective" peoples so as to prevent the propagation of "defective" offspring. Initially Hitler sought sadistic forms of punishment for Europe's Jews. But no later than by late January of 1939, he wanted them destroyed so that they would cease to poison Aryan blood and the Aryan soul. He also turned on Poles, Russians and other "venomous" peoples who had no place in the expanding Third Reich. For Erikson, Hitler led "a highly organized and highly educated nation" which had surrendered "to the imagery of ideological adolescent" (Erikson, [1950] 1995, p. 310). The Nazis had finally enabled themselves to launch one of the most diabolic and gruesome *Massenverbrechen.*

In moments of great historical change threatening technological and political shifts, socio-economic uncertainties, and anxious hatreds and fears of that which was different, Erikson felt "the idea of being preordained the foremost species" often surfaced in the collective imagination. Perceived as a threat to national identities[10], "it then becomes a periodic and often reciprocal obsession of man that these others must be annihilated or kept 'in their places' by periodic warfare and by stringent legislation or cruel local custom". (Erikson, 1985, p. 214). The current international political panorama that Erikson did not live to see, has been inhabited by hate mongers like Steve Bannon in the United States, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, and most recently the Neo-nazi party AFD [*Alternativ für Deutschland*] in the German Parliament. This new "leadership" would have disturbed Erikson enormously. He would have called upon his earlier analysis of Hitler and other rightest demagogues and seen the commonality then and now of "demons" within the self. Embedded in a discourse of fears – fear of immigrants, fear of refugees, fear of Islam, fear of terrorism, fear of economic uncertainty – then and now – we are witness to a social and cultural aversion to the "*unheimlich* Other." Indeed, Erikson (1975, p. 21) had appropriately noted that some historic periods lacked the basics for many to forge positive identities. This shortfall was brought on, Erikson had argued in his day, by three conditions – *fears* aroused by new information; anxieties prompted by the decay

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[10] The portrayal of the "Other", especially the "Muslim", as a menace to Western values and democracy has been suggested by a group of French public intellectuals. It is worth pondering Pierre Briançon's recent article "J'accuse: Leftist intellectuals turn right" (a delineation of how ideological bedfellows in France are uniting against globalization and the euro). Philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, a former left-wing radical and now member of the French Academy, describes a purported waning of France's traditional republican culture and the country's current 'unhappy identity'.

of existing ideologies; and the *dread* of an existential abyss devoid of spiritual meaning.

Over the years, especially after Robert Coles toured the South with him intend on understanding Southern race relations, Erikson became much more aware than he had been of the damaging effects of racism upon minority children. His readings of African-American novelists like Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and especially Ralph Ellison's exploration in *Invisible Man* (1952) of "faceless faces, of soundless voices" among African-Americans had more immediacy for him now. He looked with a jaundiced eye at claims of special ethnic or national virtues. These were repellant forms of "pseudospeciation," he proclaimed. Already in *Childhood and Society* (1950) Erikson tried to illustrate how racial caricatures of exploited minorities contributed to the formation of a negative psychosocial identity. For him, "the Negro […] is only the most flagrant case of an American minority which by the pressure of tradition and the limitation of opportunity is forced to identify with its own evil identity fragments, thus jeopardizing whatever participation in an American identity it may have earned." The black identity reflected the "unavoidable identification with the dominant race […] established in both groups and association: light-clean-clever-white, and dark-dirty-dumb-nigger." (Erikson, [1950] 1995, pp. 220; 217-218). This Manichean racial dichotomization (good versus evil) suggested "that the unconscious evil identity" of blacks was composed of everything which aroused negative identification (and the wish not to resemble it) consists of the images of the violated (castrated) body, the ethnic out-group, and the exploited minority." Therefore, Erikson ([1950] 1995, p. 218) saw a "cruel cleanliness training" and a forced integration into the white man's psychosocial set of doctrines to guarantee the "whiter identity's never-ending colonization of the black body." Afro-American writers of note like Erikson's friend, James Baldwin ([1963] 1993, p. 73), have critically condemned this "cleansing process" that maintained an Afro-American "trapped, disinherited, and despised, in a nation that has kept him in bondage for nearly four hundred years and is still unable to recognize him as a human being." Erikson and Baldwin agreed that they converged in their perception of the problem at hand.

A remarkable African American writer considerably younger than Erikson, Ta-Nehisi Coates, reopened the discussion of bigotry and hatred towards African Americans, as well as towards the "Other", more generally, who was unable to fit into whites peoples "(...) standards of civilization and humanity." In his book *Between the*

World and Me (2015), an extended letter to his 14-year old son, Samori, Coates condemned the enduring oppression, hatred, and hostile actions directed towards the "black body". Indeed, Coates traced the evolution from enslaved to the atrocious acts of police officers who killed unarmed black men and boys like Michael Brown and Tamir Rice. In addition, he denounced the disembodiment of the "black body", the body "[…] of a people who control nothing, who can protect nothing, who are made to fear not just the criminals among them but the police who lord over them with all the moral authority of a protection racket." If sometimes sustained by the "American Dream" so called, Coates denounced "white America" as "[…] a syndicate arrayed to protect its exclusive power to dominate and control [black] bodies." Psychologically, whites promoted black personal accommodation and social alienation. Since the Dream "thrives on generalization, on limiting the number of possible questions, on privileging immediate answers" it becomes "[…] the enemy of all art, courageous thinking, and honest writing". (Coates, 2015, pp. 42, 50). Erikson would have found much to ponder and ultimately agree with Coates' formulation.

Finally, Coates underscored the import of an awareness of all forms of oppression as blacks have sought a way to restore both personal and communal humanity. He held that once recognizing one's social "invisibility"[11] blacks will be able to redirect efforts towards a cultural politics of liberation. For Coates, the struggle for democratic values implied respect for each individual, as well as communitarian commitment to the ideals of human freedom and dignity for all. In a society inflamed by the fear of the "Other", Coates reminded his son "[…] to respect every human being as singular" and "extend that same respect for slaves and others in the more distant past" (Coates, 2015, p. 69).

Before he wrote *Between the World and Me*, Coates had acknowledged the import of the concepts of "negative identity" and "pseudospeciation" that he borrowed from Erikson's framework. But he also told of his debt to W. E. B. DuBois' vision of a humane Pan African "Family of Man" (Steichen, 1955). Like DuBois, Coates raised a question not only directed towards a specific group, the African Americans, but to all "invisible" minority groups that clung to a negative sense of identity: "I think the experience of black people in this country — as I was saying, in

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[11] See Ralph Ellion's *Invisible Man* ([1952]1975), Prologue, "I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids -- and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me".

terms of Du Bois — runs right down the middle of the country. You can't really talk about the country without it. But I also think it's reflective of so many other struggles. At its root, it's power. And I think that the struggle — even though this is the lens we see it through here, in America — is, actually, quite old. Obviously, there are particular details to it, but at its root, it's not a particular thing." [12] Like DuBois, Coates emphasized struggles to challenge the structure of entrenched power by affirming the principles of democracy, justice, and human dignity. Congruent with DuBois, he called for protests and other forms of political action to bring this about. However, whereas Coates understands his role being more intellectual than political - "there are people, activists who spend their lives grappling with that and have spent their lives grappling. I'm a writer. I prefer solitude; I prefer to be alone. I prefer some distance from struggle. I like that. That's my joy. That's my life experience"[13] - his rhetorical skill of highlighting the damaging consequences of an imposing American *imago caucasi*, a collective white imagination, to maintain power and righteousness, is already an incredible act of resistance and protest. In fact, tracing back to Erik H. Erikson's notion of "universal specieshood", Coates strives consciously for a highest good. He considers that every single human being, either black or white, should take pride in their personal and social identities, and together work to humanize society.

Flagging Erikson's concept of "pseudospeciation", Coates launched his campaign. Whenever "America believes itself exceptional, the greatest and noblest nation ever to exist, a lone champion standing between the white city of democracy and the terrorists, despots, barbarians, and other enemies of civilization", Coates felt it important "to resist the common urge toward the discomforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice" (Coates, 2015, pp. 8, 70), the need to critically understand the world, and, above all, the need for moral clarity, respect and human dignity. In some measure, Coates' letter to his son not only resembles James Baldwin's seminal work *The Fire Next Time* (1963), as an epistolary protest to his young nephew, but also Erikson's inspiring letter decades earlier to Gandhi. It stands to move us a long way toward understanding the interplay between particular and universal explanations of hatred that may break exciting new ground in addressing a very old topic. We can identify Erikson's hopefulness in Ta-Nehisi

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[12] See Coates, Ta-Nehisi (2017), "On Being with Krista Tippett and Ta-Nehisi Coates", Chicago Humanities Festival.

[13] See Coates, Ta-Nehisi (2017), "On Being with Krista Tippett and Ta-Nehisi Coates", Chicago Humanities Festival.

Coates' remarkable narrative, *Between the World and Me* (2015). In fact, while featuring a conversation at the Erikson Institute's[14] 2017 Annual Luncheon, Ta-Nehisi Coates emphasized that his work "doesn't always provide hope, but it provides enlightenment". Moreover, when Coates observes "Erikson grounds me, inspires me, and reminds me just how bright the future is"[15] – it is reasonable to believe that he not only admires Erikson Institute's "teaching philosophy" but may have, as well, a reflective understanding of Erik H. Erikson's vintage notions – mutuality, actuality, relativity and perseverance in truth in the name of universal humanity. Above all, Coates extended the historic African American struggle for dignity to our human commonality – to Erikson's "universal specieshood".

Along with Wendell Willkie's *One World* (1943) and Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man* photography exhibit during the mid-1950s at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Erikson embraced a universal cosmopolitan perspective, traced to the Enlightenment, which held that particularistic loyalties were irrational and had to be countered by reformist pedagogy. Through "Satyagraha,"[16] Erikson claimed, Gandhi had succeeded in reconciling brother and sister Sarabhai, mill owner and workers. Erikson hoped that a world recovering from the Holocaust and immersed in Cold War confrontations in which nuclear weapons were brandished would heed Gandhi's example of a new universal ethics: "For all parts of the world, the struggle now is for the *anticipatory development of more inclusive identities*" and ultimately the recognition of "universal specieshood.' Modern technology had had built weapons for "pseudospecies" warfare, but technology could also be used to enhance communication and understanding "in a sense of widening identity which helps to

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[14] Erikson's Institute was, in 1969, renamed after Erik H. Erikson.

[15] See Coates, Ta-Nehisi (2017), "Ta-Nehisi Coates and Alex Kotlowitz at Erikson Institute luncheon."

[16] See Friedman's *Identity's Architect*, pp. 378-379: "Because of his insistence on a broad definition of Freud's legacy and his attention to the creative strengths of a man like Gandhi, Erikson felt confident in equating the Mahatma's *Satyagraha* or 'perseverance in truth' with psychoanalysis. The two were 'joined in a universal 'therapeutics', committed to the Hippocratic principle that one can test truth … only by action which avoids harm – or better, by action which maximizes mutuality and minimizes the violence caused by unilateral coercion or threat.' More specifically *Satyagraha*, like psychoanalysis, 'confronts the *inner* enemy nonviolently'. Both revealed 'the poisonous pollution of man's inner motivations and the abysmal self-deceit and destructiveness' within. Thus, each was an 'instrument of enlightenment.' As Freud and Gandhi engaged in self-analysis and became enlightened about their motives and hidden demons, they created a perspective that enlightened humankind. Thus, psychoanalysis produced a '*truth method*, with all the implications which the word has in *Satyagraha*.' Both were at once 'encounters' within the self and between the self and the other, and both involved 'militant probing of a vital issue by a nonviolent confrontation' rather than repressive 'moral suppression.' To be sure, the method both used was 'disciplined self-suffering' while exploring the inner self. The result was a therapeutic transformation 'where man learns to be nonviolent toward himself as well as toward others.' Whether one called it psychoanalytic insight or 'truth in action', the outcome was successful when a person acquired the capacity 'not only to think clearly' about himself but also to enter into 'an optimum of mutual activation with others."

overcome economic fear, the anxiety of cultural change, and the dread of a spiritual vacuum." Erikson's paper "'Wholeness and Totality', presented in 1953 at the conference of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences already supported the acceptance of humankind without totalistic, exclusionary borders such as those adopted by the Nazis. Yet, it was only after Erikson had begun his book on Gandhi and "Satyagraha" that he became deeply committed to the idea of overcoming "pseudospeciation" and pursuing a pervasive sense of "universal specieshood". By giving broad new shape to *Gandhi's Truth*, he was articulating his own. As Erikson worked on the convergence of "Satyagraha" and psychoanalysis in a Truth uniting East and West, his tone was prophetic. The closer *Gandhi's Truth* came to completion, the more Erikson strained to see himself on a mission to save humankind from itself.[17]

Erik Homburger Erikson helped us to reaffirm the import of our very identities as vibrant and hopeful beings despite the bleak circumstances that humankind had been facing. While Hannah Arendt's monumental and consistently brilliant works help us to fathom the depths, varieties, and persistence of the tragic human condition, Erikson sought out the psychological skills to confront such tragedy energetically, hopefully, and over the long term. Unlike Arendt, Erikson's reputation has waned in recent decades even as his concepts of identity and the life cycle have been incorporated into much of our everyday discourse. Living in the shadows of the Holocaust, Stalinism, Hiroshima, and other mid-twentieth century brutalities, Erikson's response to hatred and violence was distinguishable in tone from that of Arendt and no few other intellectuals of their generation. He had little of their gloom and despair over the barbarities of the day. Rather, the preponderance of Erikson's work centered on hope and possibility – how people have often made creative, happy lives in the face of grim conditions and unrelenting hatreds.

Perhaps best exemplifying his hopefulness, Erikson recounted how Ghandi had resorted to "satyagraha" or assertive and life-affirming pacifism to successfully liberate India from discriminatory, paternalistic, and often hateful British rule. Similarly, in Erikson's *Young Man Luther*, a defiant man short on years and experience had offered a powerful voice for change – for human agency in particular – as he defied the constraints of the Roman Catholic Church. At Galilee, Erikson

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[17] See Friedman's *Identity's Architect*, pp. 380, 381, 379.

described how Jesus had revealed a lesson to humankind – that it was possible to find the "I" within each of us – an active, aware, continuous, and luminous quality that connected each individual self to all of humanity.

Indeed, Erikson's overriding hopefulness in humankind persisted alongside a full acknowledgment of the dogged persistence of hatred, violence, miscalculation, and even banality. This hopefulness represented neither Norman Vincent Peale-like "positive thinking" nor other formulas of upbeat reductionisms. Rather, it underscored an intellectual playfulness, a conceptual flexibility, and an openness. The "Manuscript von Erik" of his youth had revealed a tentativeness and playful eagerness to rethink and revise - qualities that never left him. More than Freud and many of his followers, Erikson spoke and wrote with a preliminary quality that always presumed revision. Like the sketches and woodcuts he made in his youth, he assumed that his thoughts about people and cultures would always require emendation. Indeed, he looked upon rethinking, retouching, and revising as a joyous process. Before bodily infirmities got in the way, Erikson had intended to question and reconstruct his important concepts of "Pseudospeciation" and "Universal Specieshood". We would almost certainly be offering a very different paper if he had. Ta-Nehisi Coates might also have also sought him out as he prepared a successor volume to *Between the World and Me*.

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