

**Pauline, Politics  
and Psychoanalysis**  

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**THEORISING RACISM IN AUSTRALIA**

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## Introduction

1996 to 1998 was a dramatic and turbulent time in Australian political life. It was a time in which race - and racism - became the issue. While race has always been an unresolved issue lurking just below the surface of the Australian psyche<sup>1</sup>, the rise to prominence of one woman enabled race-based politics to assume momentum not seen for a long time. Pauline Hanson was an unknown political novice when she was expelled from the Liberal Party during the 1996 election campaign. Prime Minister John Howard, seeking to prove his credentials on race, withdrew Liberal Party endorsement for Hanson in the safe Labor seat of Oxley for writing in the *Queensland Times* that assistance to aborigines had gone 'too far' and that:

governments shower them with money, facilities and opportunities that only these people can obtain no matter how minute the indigenous blood is that flows through their brains...<sup>2</sup>

Appearing as a Liberal on the ballot paper, Hanson secured a swing of 21 percent - the largest anti-Labor swing in the country - and comfortably won the seat.<sup>3</sup> The victory was hailed by many as a case of the hard-working underdog showing up an out of touch establishment.

If Hanson's upset win was not enough to gain Australia's attention, her maiden speech in Parliament certainly created a stir. In a speech that shocked the elites and resonated with disaffected Australia, Hanson now famously argued that 'we are in danger of being swamped by Asians'<sup>4</sup>. She attacked 'handouts' to aborigines as a type of reverse racism against whites<sup>5</sup> and criticised the policy of multiculturalism.<sup>6</sup>

Politicians and commentators vigorously attacked Hanson. Seemingly, the more they did, the more her popularity grew. In October 1996, 18 percent of

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<sup>1</sup> Though historically, racism in Australia has been more explicit than it has been covert. See Janeen Webb and Andrew Enstice, *Aliens and Savages: Fiction, Politics and Prejudice in Australia* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1998)

<sup>2</sup> Pauline Hanson, cited in Graham Richardson, 'The Unlikely Hero' in *Two Nations: The Causes and Effects of the One Nation Party in Australia* (Melbourne: Bookman, 1998), p 154

<sup>3</sup> Robert Manne, 'Foreword' in *Two Nations*, above n 2, p 3

<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 10 September 1996, p 3862 (Pauline Hanson)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p 3861

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p 3862

Australians said they would vote for her if she formed a party of her own, which would have given her up to 12 senate seats if a double dissolution election were held.<sup>7</sup> In April 1997, Hanson formed the One Nation Party. Over the next few months support for One Nation dropped from 13 percent to 2 percent in early 1998. Many political commentators wrote her off.<sup>8</sup>

Yet it proved much too early to write of Hanson. In the Queensland election of June 11, the One Nation Party shocked the major parties by winning 11 seats and 23 per cent of the vote. Most the seats won were won on the back of Liberal and National Party preferences, who had agonised for months over whether to put One Nation ahead of the Australian Labor Party. The result for the Queensland National Party was dismal, with its vote almost entirely displaced by One Nation. The ALP was able to form minority government with the support of an independent.<sup>9</sup>

The federal election in on October 3, 1998 saw a much different result with all major parties placing One Nation last on how-to-vote cards. Pauline Hanson, despite winning 37 per cent of the primary vote, lost the seat of Blair, in which she had decided to stand after a redistribution in had made Oxley unwinnable.<sup>10</sup> One Nation won only one seat in the federal parliament - Heather Hill winning the Queensland senate seat.<sup>11</sup>

It is too early to dismiss the Pauline Hanson movement and those it represents. Even if Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party are effectively defunct themselves, there is no reason for thinking that the underlying conditions that provided for their meteoric rise are not still in existence. It is quite possible - perhaps even likely - that they will manifest later, perhaps in another form, perhaps on the coat tails of a new Messiah. If Australia is to have a truly open

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<sup>7</sup> Results of a Roy Morgan Gallup poll cited in Manne, 'Forward', above n 3, p 4

<sup>8</sup> Manne, 'Forward', above n 3, p 4

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 5

<sup>10</sup> Margo Kingston, *Off the Rails: The Pauline Hanson Trip* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p 230

<sup>11</sup> After a challenge by a disaffected former One Nation member, Heather Hill was subsequently stripped of this seat by the High Court acting as the Court of Disputed Returns who held that due to her British citizenship she held an 'allegiance to a foreign power' in breach of s.44 of the Commonwealth Constitution. She was replaced by Len Harris, who occupied second place on the One Nation ticket. See Richard McGregor, Stefanie Balogh and Bernard Lane, 'Hanson

and inclusive democracy, it is of absolute importance that we understand the reasons for Pauline Hanson's ascendancy. A failure to come to grips with this is a failure to understand part of ourselves.

The Pauline Hanson phenomenon has been the focus of much attention from academics and journalists who have tackled the subject from a number of perspectives. Broadly speaking, there have been two main approaches. One group of commentators have sought to dismiss Hansonism as an irrational 'backlash' against an otherwise rational policy agenda, while the other approach has been to seek to understand the Hanson phenomenon.

The leading proponent of the first approach is Paul Kelly. Kelly argues that Hansonism is due to an 'institutional and leadership failure'<sup>12</sup> and arose because of a 'failure of judgement'<sup>13</sup> by the elites. According to this analysis, Australia's leadership failed to adequately implement and sell an agenda that was otherwise beyond reproach - multiculturalism, trade liberalisation, a market-oriented wages system, greater reliance on individual responsibility and private capital, reconciliation and republicanism.<sup>14</sup> Kelly's response to Hanson and supporters is has involved condemnation and an explanation as to why they are wrong. The Kelly response to Hansonism makes no attempt to develop an understanding of Hanson and supporters.<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, other commentators seek to understand Pauline Hanson and supporters, believing that 'without a true understanding, the struggle against Hansonism cannot possibly be successful'<sup>16</sup>. Most look firstly to the consequences of the policies that Kelly believes are beyond criticism. Commentators taking this approach agree that an explanation of the Hanson phenomenon is linked with the tensions that have arisen in a country that is divided - divided into what Michael Wooldridge terms 'policy culture' and

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Hamstrung as UK Declared a Foreign' *Australian* (Sydney) 24 June 1999; and Gervase Greene and Greg Roberts, 'Court Rules Out One Nation Senator' *The Age* (Melbourne) 24 June 1999

<sup>12</sup> Paul Kelly, 'Hanson - Symptom of a Deeper Problem' in *Two Nations*, above n 3, p 90

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p 96

<sup>15</sup> see also Paul Kelly, 'The Challenge of Pauline Hanson' *The Weekend Australian* (Sydney) 26-27 April 1997

<sup>16</sup> Manne, 'Forward', above n 3, p 9

‘community culture’<sup>17</sup> or what others more conventionally call ‘intelligentsia’ and ‘mainstream’<sup>18</sup>. The left and the right disagree as to the reasons for the emergence of this division. While the right blame a culture of ‘political correctness’, the left views the consequences of ‘economic rationalism’ as the source of division.

According to Ron Brunton and Padraic P. McGuinness on the right, the Hanson movement represents a backlash against Paul Keating, who they argue governed on behalf a politically correct elite, imposing his view of Australia as multicultural, pro-Asian and pro-Aboriginal on an unwilling nation.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, according to Henry Reynolds and Judith Brett, the moral universe of the Hansonites is created by deepening insecurity and resentment at the retreat of government services and support. Hansonism is thus an expression of ‘upwards-envy’ (of conspicuously successful urban elite) and ‘downwards-envy’ (of recipients of welfare support such as Aborigines, single mothers and dole bludgers).<sup>20</sup>

This essay unashamedly sides with those commentators seeking to understand Hansonism. Nevertheless, the motivation for writing this essay arose from a frustration with the Hanson commentary’s inability to answer a number of key questions: Why does insecurity lead to resentment? And why does this resentment manifest itself as racism? The lack of answers to these questions in the Pauline Hanson context been due to the absence of any thorough psychological analysis of the issue.

This essay aims to begin that project, by sketching out an illustration of the manner in which it may be undertaken. A complete psychological dissection of the Hanson phenomenon is an enormous task and one not possible within the

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Wooldridge, ‘A Pathology in the Political Process?’ in *Two Nations*, above n 3, pp 178-192

<sup>18</sup> see Nicolas Rothwell, ‘Thirteen Ways Not to Think About Pauline Hanson’ in *Two Nations*, above n 3, pp 161-168

<sup>19</sup> Ross Brunton, ‘Keating’s Legacy’ in *Two Nations*, above n 3, pp 38-47; Padraic McGuinness, ‘The Political Elites’ Contribution to Hansonism’ in *Two Nations*, above n 3, pp 131-140 and Padraic McGuinness, ‘Hanson’s Party a Headache for the Others’ *The Age* (Melbourne) 7 May 1997

<sup>20</sup> Henry Reynolds, ‘Hanson and Queensland’s Political Culture’ in *Two Nations*, above n 3, pp 141-150 and Judith Brett, ‘Representing the Unrepresented: One Nation and the Formation of the Labor Party’ in *Two Nations*, above n 3, pp 26-37

scope of this essay. Nevertheless, this essay, by tackling the Hanson phenomenon from a psychoanalytic perspective, will hopefully bring new insights to a complex and challenging problem confronting contemporary Australia.

Psychoanalysis, as the discipline concerned with developing an understanding of irrationality and the human emotions, seems perfectly placed to tackle issues such as insecurity, resentment and racism. This essay will investigate psychoanalytic theory to do precisely that. It is not reasonably possible to hope to satisfactorily cover the psychoanalytic field or to arrive at definitive conclusions on the psychic state of the nation. More modestly, this essay will examine the works of a number of psychoanalytic theorists to suggest ways that they may help us understand the success of One Nation in Australia.

The essay is structured in two main parts. Firstly, I survey the contentions of six key psychoanalytic theorists. By means of a brief rendering, I show that psychoanalysis affords us an understanding of the subject as a complex being, attached to, and even constituted by, certain images and ideals. In the second section, I suggest ways in which psychoanalytic theory may assist us to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the Pauline Hanson phenomenon. My analysis deals with only a few selected aspects of Hansonism, but to the extent that this can be seen as a synecdoche of the whole, it suggests that the attainment of an full understanding of racism and the human emotions is more complex and difficult task than we often acknowledge.

## Chapter 1: Psychoanalytic Speculations on Racism

Ever since René Descartes famously propounded his famous theory that *cogito ergo sum*<sup>21</sup> (I think, I am), humanist thought has been inseparable from western civilisation. Humanism is the mode of thought which posits a human essence - such as reason, feeling or experience - in place of a divine one, as the secure grounding of knowledge and history. This presupposes a transcendental self, or one nevertheless modelled on the positive idea of god: a self which is enduring, unified and fully present to consciousness; one which claims to possess its singularity, its self-sameness, prior to and beyond its relations with others.

Psychoanalysis brings to political theory the proposition that this self-certainty is nothing but a veneer, wallpapering over an ego that is fragile and uncertain. Human beings have learnt to construct a reality and develop defence mechanisms to protect an ego that is constantly threatened by internal and external forces. Defence mechanisms are necessary because the constant threats to the ego mean that we are constantly dealing with anxiety.<sup>22</sup>

### Melanie Klein

Melanie Klein was an extremely influential psychoanalyst whose theories have remained central to the ideas of many psychoanalysts today. She argued that the various modes of constructing reality and the mechanisms of defence against anxiety can be arranged along a developmental continuum. Some modes are regarded as more primitive than others, though all modes and all defence mechanisms remain available to all human individuals and may become operative.<sup>23</sup>

To capture the essence of this dynamic, potentially regressive, character of the human psyche, Klein uses the term 'position' rather than phase or stage. She proposes a developmental sequence in which all individuals pass through a

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<sup>21</sup> René Desartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

<sup>22</sup> see Stephen Frosh, *Psychoanalysis and Psychology: Minding the Gap* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Stephen Frosh, *For and Against Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1997); and Michael Rustin, *The Good Society and the Inner World: Psychoanalysis and Culture* (London: Verso, 1991)

<sup>23</sup> see Hanna Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973), pp vii-x



paranoid-schizoid position in the first few months of life to a depressive position and beyond. These positions will frequently recur in the psychological life of the adult. They will be particularly prevalent in relation to social events occurring in the subject's life.<sup>24</sup>

In the paranoid-schizoid position, the subject constructs a world of part-objects which are either ideal or bad, or alternatively one and then the other. This is achieved by the mechanisms of splitting and projection. Here, one object is split into two. Negative experience and affects are projected into the bad object and positive experience and affects are projected into the good object. There is an idealisation of the good object and a sadistic wish to punish and destroy the bad object. The mother's breast is the prototypical object - it is split into an ideal breast and a bad breast. In this case, negative experience is projected into the bad breast and positive experience and affects are projected into the ideal breast. The subject may also be split into the good and the bad self.<sup>25</sup>

In the depressive position, the subject constructs a world of whole objects that may have both positive and negative aspects. Consequently, ambivalence is central to the subject's experience of the object and the construction of the object is more realistic. The principal affects are loss and guilt.<sup>26</sup>

The predominant defensive operations of the depressive position are reparation, ambivalence and gratitude, which are mutually linked and reinforce each other. Reparation consists of an effort to reduce the guilt over having attacked the good object by trying to repair the damage, express love and gratitude to the object, and preserve it internally and externally. Gratitude also reinforces the love of the object, which is feared to be harmed or damaged by the aggression expressed towards it. Guilt, in other words, reinforces gratitude, and gratitude and reparation reinforce each other and increase the capacity for trusting others and the self's capacity to give and receive love.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude* (London: Tavistock, 1957); see also Segal, *Introduction to the Works of Melanie Klein*, above n 23, pp 24-38

<sup>26</sup> Melanie Klein, *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis, 1921-45* (London: Hogarth, 1948); see also Segal, *Introduction to the Works of Melanie Klein*, above n 23, pp 67-81

Ambivalence is a general expression of emotional growth rather than a specific defence per se; the infant's awareness of love and hate toward the same object fosters a deepening understanding about himself and of others. The tolerance of ambivalence implies a predominance of love over hate in relation to whole objects. More generally, the integration of love and hate brings about deepening of emotions and emotional growth, deepening self-awareness and capacity for empathic perception of others.

The negative pole of the depressive position are defences directed against the experience of dependence and ambivalence with regard to the object and take the form of control, triumph and contempt. Their purpose is to deny that the object has value and thus to overcome feelings of dependence, of anxiety regarding the loss of the object and feelings of guilt.

In summary then, psychoanalytic theory, stated in Kleinian terms, regards the human psyche as a complex and conflict ridden mental apparatus capable of the 'rational' calculation, but always subject to paranoid and depressive anxieties and the defensive formations which attend these.

### **John Cash**

John Cash has utilised Kleinian theory to develop a theory explaining the way communication is distorted within institutions. His starting point is the observation by Elliott Jaques that groups of people are resistant to change and unconsciously cling to the institutions they have because changes in social relationships threaten to disturb existing social defences against psychotic anxiety.<sup>27</sup>

Cash argues that projection is a central mechanism of defence which contributes to distortions in both the construction of political and social reality, and in communication. Secondly, the various individual defence mechanisms contribute to the formation of social defence systems. Cash describes this as 'cultural or

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<sup>27</sup> Elliott Jaques, 'Social Systems as Defence Against Persecutory and Depressive Anxiety', in Melanie Klein, Paula Heimann and R. E. Money-Kyrle (eds), *New Directions in Psychoanalysis* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1955), p 478

ideological encoding'.<sup>28</sup> That is, cultural systems incorporate or encode the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, along with their characteristic defences and affects. This produces cultural and group systems which contain the common the sense understandings that are drawn upon 'to construe proper forms of identity, proper forms of political and social relations and proper forms of power, authority and violence'.<sup>29</sup>

Further, Cash argues that these systems, once established, operate by subjecting individuals (and groups of individuals) to cathected positions within them. Crisis and its attendant anxiety, whether induced by imminent or actual change or by stressful and anxiety-ridden prevailing reality, tends to generate regressive transformations. These regressive transformations do not occur solely at the level of the individual, but are transformations that are themselves institutionalised.<sup>30</sup>

Building upon Kleinian theory, Cash distinguishes three psychodynamic positions within an ideological formation: the dehumanising position; the persecutory position; and the ambivalent position.

The dehumanising position is marked by the presence of the paranoid-schizoid position in its most primitive form. The political order is split into an idealised all-good group and a persecutory and hated all-bad group (or groups). Persons are seen solely as members of such groups. Moreover, the emotional and conceptual boundary between "us" and "them" is established through the use of metaphors that construe the other as either a despised animal or a disgusting object. Groups and their members are consequently experienced either as persecutory, and thus the object of sadistic aggression, or as sublime, and thus beyond criticism for so long as they do not frustrate the wishes of the subject. There is a fusion between the subject and the ideal objects and an exclusion of the bad objects. In effect, the other is 'a screen upon which the subject projects his or her phantasies'.<sup>31</sup>

The persecutory position is also marked by the presence of the paranoid-schizoid position, transposed to the construction of the political and social order. It too

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<sup>28</sup> John Cash, *Identity, Ideology and Conflict: The Structuration of Politics in Northern Ireland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p 79

<sup>29</sup> John Cash, 'Distorted Communication and the Dilemmas of Political Transformation in Northern Ireland' (Unpublished, 1998), p 6

<sup>30</sup> Cash, *Identity, Ideology and Conflict*, above n 28, pp 79-80

involves a world of part-objects, though these do not take such a thoroughly primitive form as in the dehumanising position.<sup>32</sup>

In the persecutory position, others are construed as persecutory if they adhere to social norms, values and beliefs that are different to those sanctioned by the subject's own communal grouping. Acting different is construed as a hostile and aggressive manner which must be defeated and subdued at all costs, in order to maintain the integrity and authority of the communal views, values and interests of the subject's own grouping.<sup>33</sup>

This intolerance to difference is not limited to members of the 'all-bad' group. The same tolerance is expressed towards members of the subject's own communal grouping whose behaviour and attitudes differ from those sanctioned by the communal norms.<sup>34</sup>

The persecutory position is similar in many ways to the dehumanising position. However, the persecutory position is not so rigidly trapped by the need to split and keep entirely separate the good and bad aspects of the political and social order. In the persecutory position there is a capacity to split the object of anxiety so as to preserve a positive image of the reference group. However, these constructions of members of the threatening reference group are, unlike their negative counterpart, curiously devoid of content. They have no particular attributes, beyond being seen as 'good'. They are non-threatening because they 'know their place,' as it were. Once they step outside their allotted social position (assigned for them by the subject's own 'in-group') they are then construed as persecutory, and are thus seen as deserving of exclusion and retribution.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike in the dehumanising position, the members of the 'all-bad' group are not graphically dehumanised in the persecutory position. They are signified as less than human, not by the use of appropriate metaphors, but are construed in iconic mode as a mere emblem or instance of the persecutory grouping itself. Thus, the presence of the persecutory position is noticeable by the absence of complexity in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, pp 81

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p 83

<sup>33</sup> Cash, 'Distorted Communication', above n 29, p 8

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p 9

<sup>35</sup> Cash, *Identity, Ideology and Conflict*, above n 28, p 84

the construction of the other as they are reduced to a 'cipher of the persecutory design'.<sup>36</sup>

By contrast to both the dehumanising and persecutory positions, the ambivalent position of ideology is marked by the presence of the depressive position. It constructs a world of whole objects. It is inclusivist rather than exclusivist, as there is no dehumanising of other human beings in either of the ways which characterise either the dehumanising or persecutory positions. Objects, whether they be individuals, groups or the total political and social formation, are construed as complex with both positive and negative aspects. It is from this that ambivalence arises. Thus the capacity for the handling of complexity, for shifting of complexity and for the enactment of compromise is greatly improved.<sup>37</sup>

Cash applies the above theoretical model to the political tensions in Northern Ireland and argues that political conflict there is as much concerned with which of the three positions will prevail as it is with any stark conflict between Unionism on the one hand and Republicanism on the other. This is especially true of intra-group conflict, as this is concerned with 'which set of ideological rules should be drawn upon to think, feel, construe and act properly' within the field of inter-group relations.<sup>38</sup> This conflict is both cause and effect of the way different individuals and sub-groups draw upon different rules to construe identities and social relations.<sup>39</sup> The challenge for Northern Ireland, he contends, is to 'institutionalise inclusivist rules (ie the ambivalent position) as the proper mode of being, doing, feeling and construing for political actors and their constituencies.'<sup>40</sup>

### **Michael Rustin**

Michael Rustin uses Kleinian theory to specifically address the issue of racism. He argues that since differences in race are entirely lacking in substance and are in effect a fantasy category, any analysis that posits an self-certain, 'rational' subject will not be able to adequately explain the phenomenon of racism. Race is

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<sup>36</sup> Cash, 'Distorted Communication', above n 29, p 9

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p 14

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p 12

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p 18

a hollow category, he argues, because although there may be visible and material differences between races, these are attributable entirely to cultural, religious or ethnic differences. Race is a concept linked intricately to biology, and there is no evidence than genetics explains the social position of different races.

Consequently, for Rustin, the key question surrounding the issue of racism is: 'How is it that a category so empty and arbitrary can nevertheless give rise to such powerful, oppressive, and even catastrophic social effects?'<sup>41</sup>. Since racism is 'irrational'<sup>42</sup>, the quest for the answer to this question leads him to the discipline that seeks to understand the irrational in the human mind - psychoanalysis.

Rustin argues that categories such as religion, class or nationality may, like race, serve as target groups for the psychotic subject involved in the paranoid splitting of objects into the loved and hated. But while any group may act as a receptacle of the subject's bad feeling, race proves especially suited to the task. Rustin contends that it is precisely the hollowness of the category of race that enables it to carry so much meaning.

The projection of bad feeling onto the other is to allow the subject to perceive itself as wholly good. Yet the subject, while projecting bad feeling onto the other, simultaneously idealises the object of their hatred. This is necessary, as in order to sustain an unrealistic fear of the racialised other, the other must be attributed with unrealistic capabilities. To illustrate this, Rustin points to the racist's fear (and admiration) of the sexual potency of the black male, or the intellectual ability of the Jew.<sup>43</sup>

Since the main power of racism lies at the unconscious level, Rustin argues that a critique and rebuttal of racist ideas will do little good. Classroom teaching and other anti-racist education programs may do little more than ruffle the surface, or may even induce defensive kinds of psychological behaviour. Similarly, the persecutory and guilt inducing pursuit of racists by anti-racists is not a useful

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<sup>41</sup> Rustin, *The Good Society and the Inner World*, above n 22, p 63

<sup>42</sup> The word 'irrational' is used by Rustin and other psychoanalysts to indicate the decentred nature of the human psyche. Psychoanalysts argue that 'rational' calculation is always subject to the interference of human emotions, fears, anxieties and desires.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p 66

response to racism. As racism is a state of mind that is at root paranoid and persecutory, persecutory treatment of the racist subject is likely to exacerbate, not ease, paranoid feelings.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, anti-racism may be more than merely ineffectual. It may be dangerous. Rustin argues that there is a real danger lying in the powerful feeling of unity-in-conflict evoked by negativistic anti-racist campaigns. This is not itself racist, but it is still persecutory in direction and conformity inducing in its internal structure. It induces a massifying and deindividualising state of mind that is likely to produce unconscious and hostile states of mind that are psychologically analogous to racism. Thus it is possible that 'movements whose objective is to dismantle racial barriers will unwittingly strengthen them, even though they will achieve some real gains in power, material and social self-respect in doing so.'<sup>45</sup>

A more effective strategy to deal with racism involves the development of a rational and non-repressive climate. Rustin contends that this is the climate in which racist thinking is least likely to thrive, and in which, conversely, positive perspectives of social improvement are likely to develop. Rather than 're-educating' racists, we should be explaining how and why false beliefs arise and are sustained because lasting change requires an experience of thinking about states of mind and their origins and their meanings, in relatively free and non-accusatory settings. We should champion the idea of rights of 'citizenship for all, unqualified by race'<sup>46</sup>. This would probably provide the strongest support for the aims of a non-discriminatory society, in which life chances are not determined by ethnic or racial attributes.

### **Stephen Frosh**

Stephen Frosh builds on Rustin's work to argue that:

unwanted or feared aspects of the self are experienced as having the power to disturb the personality in so damaging a way that they have to be repudiated and evacuated or projected into the racialised other...<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p 75

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p 78

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p 79

<sup>47</sup> Frosh, *For and Against Psychoanalysis*, above n 22, p 219

Like Rustin he argues that the racialised other is chosen for this purpose because of pre-existing social prejudices, and because, as a fantasy category, racism can be employed to mean virtually anything.<sup>48</sup>

Frosh also argues that there are two faces of the experience of modernity. On the one hand there is multiplicity, contradiction, flow and celebration of heterogeneity. The flip-side of this is the need for rigidity, domination, totalitarianism and the rejection of the modern environment in favour of tight control over events - a need to crush spontaneity to make life manageable. This side finds its psycho-political expression in racism. Racist ideology thus acts as a fortress protecting against the dangers of the world, while racist actions are an attempt to defend the integrity of the disintegrated self. Racism in this sense is not just anti-Semitic or anti-black, 'it is anti-world, anti-desire, anti-modernity itself'.<sup>49</sup>

Frosh points out that the idealisation that is the flip-side of the hatred felt by the racist often manifests itself in the form of conspiracy theories. For the racist, whose world is crumbling down, the search for explanations fulfils a deep emotional need. Like Rustin, he argues that the conspirators are seen as brilliant schemers and worthy enemies. This idealisation involves projections from an ego swamped with envy, while hatred is directed at the admired and despised object. It is not just the rejected aspects of the racist's identity that are projected outwards, but a 'bitter hatred that idealises that which it strives to crush'.<sup>50</sup> The admiration of the racist for conspirators is that they are secret, organised, impermeable, unfeeling and without passion. These are precisely the attributes desired by the threatened ego. Yet they are imaginary attributes which are part of the world that rejects modernity.<sup>51</sup>

### **Joel Kovel**

Joel Kovel contends that psychoanalysis has been of fundamental importance because it has decentred the ego, and broken the self-certainty of western experience. He argues that western civilisation since the Enlightenment has

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Frosh, *Psychoanalysis and Psychology*, above n 22, p 248

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p 241



sought to repress what he regards as the polycentric psyche and that the development of civilisation went hand in hand with the suppression of psychic polycentricity:

The exigencies of modern production, with its increasing routine and bureaucracy, impose the icy hand of rationalisation over human existence; thus the Cartesian identity of the self with its cogito became canonical because it reflected modern production of the state... The greatest achievement of psychoanalysis was to enrich self-understanding by recognising the polycentric nature of the mind.<sup>52</sup>

Kovel argues that until the west introduced the notion of the unified personality, all societies had regarded the psyche as essentially polycentric. A polycentric psyche in this view, implies not only an open psyche, but an open society - a society open to the other. The 'march of progress' however, went hand in hand with the attenuation of polycentricity.

This ultimately leads Kovel to conclude that 'racism is an affliction of the modern psyche'.<sup>53</sup> However, Kovel does not intend this to mean that pre-modern societies were without exclusionary beliefs. He instead argues that enormous changes exist across time and place in the way that ambivalence towards the other is expressed and that these changes must be accounted for historically. In his view, what distinguishes modern racism from pre-modern tribalisms and their successor nationalisms, is that racism relies on an abstract essence, embodied in the notion of 'race' to become the point of splitting between peoples. As the west began to regard itself as homogenous and purified (a cogito) it was led to assign the negative inherent in human existence between people.<sup>54</sup>

According to Kovel, white racism is special because whiteness defines western identity, and that whiteness is experienced most fully in the encounter with dark-skinned people. Hence the fact that the west defines itself as white is dialectically related to the domination historically established over blacks. Blacks, who had historically been treated as animals, though slavery, became animals in their essence. Similarly, the darkness of their skin came to represent the dark side of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Joel Kovel, 'On Racism and Psychoanalysis' in Anthony Elliott and Stephen Frosh (eds), *Psychoanalysis in Contexts: Paths between Theory and Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), p 207

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p 211

the body. Blacks came to be seen as beneath whites in their reasoning power and above whites in terms of their sexuality and capacity for violence. This became organised into the myth of animality. The splitting and projection of animality closes the logic that configures racism, since 'without the spectacle of lost nature to hate and be fascinated by, it is doubtful whether the reduction of the psyche to a homogenous personality could be sustained.'<sup>55</sup>

Kovel contends that the ego will not automatically turn racist. It will only do so under certain circumstances, when its identity is destabilised and social dislocations threaten further collapse. This threat is warded off by the collective banding together and expulsion of contaminating otherness on to the racially selected target. In this sense, racism represents a kind of protest against the abstracting logic of modernity as the constructing of a degraded race 'amounts to a kind of clinging to the primitive and the polycentric, though this is only recognised negatively as delusion and hate'.<sup>56</sup>

This points us to Kovel's central contention that a 'society/self transcendent of racism is one that has returned to an aspect of its origins'<sup>57</sup> - to an acceptance of the polycentric nature of the psyche. Hence the fight against racism becomes more than simply that - it becomes a fight against the abstracting logic of modernity.

### **Zygmunt Bauman**

Zygmunt Bauman, in his book, *Modernity and the Holocaust*<sup>58</sup> develops a theory that bears much in common with Kovel. He contends that while there are no 'good' and 'bad' people, there are 'good' and 'bad' faces of an individual that are two possibilities that may surface at different times and in different circumstances. It is impossible to spot in advance the signs that indicate the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid p 211-212

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p 218

<sup>56</sup> Ibid p 219

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 220

<sup>58</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989)

probability of their later manifestation. It is only possible to recognise these faces of the individual in the context that calls them into being.<sup>59</sup>

The focus of Bauman's book is on the Holocaust, which he argues was 'normal'. It was normal because it was consistent with the guiding spirit of our civilisation. The machinery of destruction in the Holocaust was the organised community, acting in one of its special roles. Hence there is a terror permeating our collective memories - the fear that the Holocaust was not the antithesis of modern civilisation, as we like to convince ourselves. We suspect that the Holocaust could merely have uncovered another face of the same modern society that we call civilisation. In this sense, we fear that both creation and destruction are the inseparable aspects of what we call civilisation. We carry with us the disturbing awareness that if it could happen massively elsewhere, it can happen anywhere, and it is definitely within the realm of human possibility. None of the societal conditions that made Auschwitz possible has truly disappeared. The Holocaust was thus 'a rare, yet significant and reliable, test of the hidden possibilities of modern society.'<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, 'Modernity and the Holocaust' in *The Polity Reader in Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), p 389

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p 393

**Summary of theoretical work**

This essay is not the place to catalogue, dissect and critique the entire body of psychoanalytic literature. The above section merely provides a rough sketch of the ideas of a limited number of theorists in order to demonstrate the type of understanding that psychoanalysis may allow us to bring to the study of racism and the rise of Pauline Hanson in Australia.

Psychoanalysis's main propositions as they relate to racism may be summarised as follows:

*Rationality is not the natural state of the individual*

Humans may be capable of rationality some of the time, but generally behaviour is governed by the way we deal with anxiety. The human ego is fragile and uncertain. Self-certainty is nothing but an illusion.

*Humans develop defence mechanisms to cope with anxiety*

In order to cope with anxiety, humans construct a reality and develop defence mechanisms. These defence mechanisms relate to stages of the childhood development continuum, so some are more primitive than others. We do not grow out of these stages of development but may regress back into these defensive positions as circumstances dictate.

The most basic position - paranoid-schizoid position involves a world split into part objects, which are either ideal or bad. Bad feelings within the subject are split off and projected onto the 'bad' object. The effect of viewing an object as wholly bad enables the subject to view themselves as wholly good. By contrast, in the depressive position, the world consists of whole objects that are both good and bad, which is a more realistic construction of the objects. Through the operation of reparation, ambivalence and guilt, the depressive position increases the capacity for trusting others and the self's capacity to give and receive love. However, the negative pole of the depressive position consists of defences directed against feelings of dependence, and take the form of triumph, control and contempt.

*Humans resist change because this change threatens established ways of dealing with anxiety*

People form established patterns of dealing with anxiety based on the defence mechanisms discussed above. Any change is usually resisted, because it disrupts established ways of dealing with anxiety. The consequent unease in the subject arises both because there is no effective defence mechanism in the interim and because there is uncertainty as to whether an effective defence mechanism will be developed for the future situation.

*Individual defence mechanisms contribute to social defence mechanisms*

The defences that individuals develop in response to anxiety act together to form social defence mechanisms. This is because the defence mechanisms contribute to the development of unconscious 'rules' that govern particular social relationships and affect the way that reality within groups is constructed and perceived. Conversely, these social systems, once established, operate by unconsciously influencing the responses of individuals within the social group. Crisis and change generates regressive transformation not only within the individual, but also at the level of the social institution.

*The most regressive defence mechanism results in a complete dehumanising of the 'all-bad' group*

In the paranoid-schizoid position, people tend to be split into belonging to an 'all bad' or an 'all good' group. A person's membership of a group defines them entirely. Members of the all-bad group are seen as less than human, as animal-like or thing-like. By contrast members of the all-good group are seen as sublime and beyond criticism.

*The 'all-bad' group is admired as well as feared*

In the paranoid-schizoid position, while denigrating the object of hatred, the subject often admires the group he or she hates. This is evident in the conspiracy theory. Members of the hated group are seen as brilliant conspirators, and as worthy enemies.

*Paradoxically, the arbitrariness of the category 'race' makes enables the psychotic subject to invest more meaning in it*

The racist subject chooses race-based group to project bad feeling onto because aspects of the racists self are perceived as so dangerous that they have to be repudiated and projected onto another person. The racialised other is chosen as the receptacle of the subjects bad feeling because, as a fantasy category devoid of content, race can be made to mean virtually anything.

*Modernity's attempt at rationalisation papers over a polycentric psyche*

Modern production, with its increasing routine and bureaucracy, rationalises human existence. Thus the classic Cartesian conception of self as centred around the ego becomes central because it reflects the modern production of the state. However, this only disguises and does not eliminate the polycentric nature of the psyche with its attendant anxieties and desires.

*Racism is a response to the abstracting logic of modernity*

As the west began to regard its personality as unified, it needed to assign the negative inherent in human existence between people because western self-certainty is fundamentally unable to deal with ambivalence.

Under certain circumstances, when the ego's identity is destabilised and social dislocations threaten further collapse, the collective bands together and projects the 'dark side' of the psyche (fear, anxiety, desire etc) onto a racially selected target. This is necessary as despite clinging to the idea of the unified self, the western psyche is unable to free itself from the 'burden' of polycentricity. Racism is thus a direct response to the abstracting logic of modernity.

*The rationality of western, 'white' society is defined in opposition to the 'animality' of black, 'primitive' society*

Racism by whites people against blacks is unique because its history. Blacks, who have historically been treated as animals by whites, came to be seen as animals in their essence and the darkness of their skin came to represent the dark side of the body. Blacks came to be seen as beneath whites in their reasoning power and above whites in terms of their sexuality and capacity for violence.

This became organised into the myth of animality, being precisely the opposite of rationality.

*Passionate anti-racism can produce psychological states analogous to racism*

Negativistic campaigns against racism often generate powerful feelings of unity-in conflict. This is not itself racist, but it is still persecutory in direction and conformity inducing in its internal structure. It induces a massifying and deindividualising state of mind that is likely to produce unconscious and hostile states of mind that are psychologically analogous to racism.

## **Chapter 2: Contemporary Australian Racism**

In this section I will take the theory outlined in the previous section and suggest ways that it may be applied to explain the success of Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party. The analysis offered is only suggestive. This study does not attempt a detailed analysis of the complexities of Hansonism. As Nicolas Rothwell points, 'Hansonism is protean, fast-changing'<sup>61</sup>. A comprehensive study would be able to bear in mind and investigate a number of key distinctions: the different strains of Hansonism in each state; the gulf between the attitudes and policies of One Nation and of its supporters; the different attitudes of different types of supporters; and most importantly, the differences between the background prejudices of One Nation politicians and their overt policies. This essay cannot hope to adequately investigate these subtleties. This analysis of Hansonism will merely suggest ways in which a psychoanalytic approach may assist us to build upon the works of others to open out the possibility of a full understanding of racist psychology, one that can account both for its subjective intractability and its social force.

Perhaps the most fundamental psychoanalytic proposition is that irrationality is not exclusive to the other. Consequently, we should not believe ourselves to be rational merely because we are able to recognise Pauline Hanson's irrationality, since irrationality is a characteristic we all hold in common. We are, in a sense, no different from Pauline Hanson. It is important to recognise this in our analysis of One Nation so that we do not dismiss the rise of One Nation as a pathological anomaly, a mere hiccup disrupting an otherwise rational society.

Pauline Hanson and her supporters' irrationality is due to regression into one of the defensive positions. Regression into defensive positions to cope with anxiety is a trait we all share. What characterises the Hansonites in particular is their tendency to revert back to the most basic position - the paranoid-schizoid position, which involves a world split into part objects that are either ideal or

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<sup>61</sup> Rothwell, 'Thirteen Ways Not to Think About Pauline Hanson', above n 18, p 163



bad. Pauline Hanson and 'mainstream Australians'<sup>62</sup> are seen as ideal, while the politically correct 'fat cats, bureaucrats and do-gooders'<sup>63</sup> are seen as all-bad.

In maintaining such a dichotomy between good and bad, Pauline Hanson and company are simply upholding a long Australian tradition, since development of the Australian identity has always needed an 'other' to be set against. White Australian identity has historically built its stability upon the exclusion of non-white immigrants and upon denial of civic involvement to aborigines. In their comprehensive catalogue of the history of prejudice in Australian fiction, Janeen Webb and Andrew Enstice conclude that:

When the new nation began self-consciously to define what it meant to be 'Australian', the terms of reference were exclusive, rather than inclusive.<sup>64</sup>

The concept of the Aussie battler is not, and has never been, one that can be sustained outside of an oppositional context.

If in their oppositionalism, the Hansonites may be seen as regressing to the paranoid-schizoid position, the 'politically correct brigade' - those supporting multiculturalism and aboriginal land rights for example - can be seen as regressing into the depressive position. The movement between guilt and the need to make reparations may be evidenced in the work of poet, Judith Wright when she describes her involvement in the Aboriginal cause:

Those two strands - the love of the land we have invaded and the guilt of the invasion - have become a part of me. It is haunted. We owe it repentance and such amends as we can make.<sup>65</sup>

Regression into the depressive position is more advanced and often results in a more mature and realistic approach than does regression into the paranoid-schizoid position. Yet it must be noted that regression into this position does not necessarily result in ambivalence and can often also manifest itself as control, triumph and contempt.

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<sup>62</sup> Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 10 September 1996, p 3860 (Pauline Hanson)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Webb and Enstice, *Aliens and Savages*, above n 1, p 217

<sup>65</sup> Judith Wright, quoted in William Wilde, Joy Hooten and Barry Andrews (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*, 2nd edition (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994), p 829

In the most general sense, the rise of Pauline Hanson and her followers may be explained as a conservative movement resistant to change. This resistance arises in response to the perception that the 'all-good' group (mainstream Australia) is under attack. Hence the resistance to change evidenced in One Nation's opposition to decreased tariffs, market liberalisation and privatisation of essential services. There is also the perception amongst One Nation supporters that support for 'the aboriginal industry' and multiculturalism 'has gone too far'. This conservative opposition to actual or perceived change can not be put down to a rational ideological critique of the various policy prescriptions. Though coherent critique is sometimes in evidence, the actual or perceived changes disrupt established ways of dealing with anxiety, and so lead to regression into defensive positions - thus undermining the group's capacity for 'rational' contribution to debate. While there is the perception that 'mainstream Australians' are under attack, the group possesses no effective defence mechanism in the interim and uncertainty consequently arises as to whether effective defence mechanisms will be developed for future situations.

Similarly, critique of the free-market economic principles by self-styled 'progressives' can not simply be put down to sensible, rational decision-making. Unease at change and its attendant psychic anxiety are not confined to One Nation supporters. What is different is the manner in which it is manifested. Critique of change, while not necessarily rational, need not be accompanied by the paranoid splitting of groups of people into good and evil, as evidenced with One Nation and followers. However, as will be discussed later, left-wing critics are not immune from a regression into the paranoid-schizoid position.

The emergence of Pauline Hanson and subsequently of her One Nation Party gave form to the defence mechanisms of anxious individuals, allowing the 'hidden underbelly of the Australian psyche'<sup>66</sup> to be exposed. The Pauline Hanson movement became the mechanism by which the paranoid anxieties of its followers became bound. Defence against psychotic anxiety thus became the primary element binding the disparate elements of One Nation. Individuals within One Nation may be thought of as externalising those impulses and internal

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<sup>66</sup> Kingston, *Off the Rails*, above n 10, p 4

objects that would otherwise give rise to psychotic anxiety and pooling them in the life of the One Nation movement. Consequently, the manifestations of unreality, splitting, hostility, suspicion and other forms of maladaptive behaviour are not unexpected.

As Pauline Hanson and One Nation came under a barrage of attacks from all quarters, the increasing allegiance of supporters to the movement may be seen as the 'resistances' of supporters unconsciously clinging to the institution of the Hanson movement because the attacks on the organisation threatened to disturb existing social defences against psychotic anxiety. In other words, the more the organisation was attacked, the more it generated defensive mechanisms which came to be bound into the social institution of the One Nation movement.

Pauline Hanson and supporters, primarily regressing to the paranoid-schizoid position, tend to split people into belonging either to an 'all bad' group or an 'all good' group. The group viewed as all bad is the intelligentsia, the media class, the educated and the 'information-rich' - the group articulating a vision of modern Australia that is republican, multicultural and reconciled. Hanson terms this group the 'new class elite'. A particularly targeted sub-group of the new class elite is the 'aboriginal bureaucracy.' By contrast, the 'all good' group consists of the mainstream, or 'everyday Australians'. A person is defined entirely by their perceived membership of either group.

This is evident in the following passage from Hanson's maiden speech to Parliament on 10th September 1996:

A type of reverse racism is applied to mainstream Australians by those who promote political correctness and those who control the various taxpayer funded "industries" that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups. In response to my call for equality for all Australians, the most noisy criticism came from the fat cats, bureaucrats and the do-gooders. They screamed the loudest because they stand to lose the most - their power, money and position, all funded by ordinary taxpayers.<sup>67</sup>

In this passage, people are clearly divided into two groups. One the one hand there are 'mainstream Australians', or 'ordinary taxpayers', while on the other

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<sup>67</sup> Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 10 September 1996, p 3860 (Pauline Hanson)

hand there are aboriginals, multiculturalists, 'minority groups', fat cats, bureaucrats and do-gooders. The message conveyed by Hanson is entirely clear - ordinary Australians are suffering at the hands of do-gooders who pander to minorities. 'Do-gooders' and the other groups are sneered and hated at by Hanson. Members of the 'all bad' do-gooder group are constructed as less than fully human, almost thing like. Similarly, Hanson's attitude towards ordinary Australians betrays a dramatic idealisation. Like the do-gooder group, they are beyond complexity. They are struggling, hard working battlers, suffering at the hands the 'new class elite'<sup>68</sup>.

In this sense, the two groups become the exact equivalent of the part-objects which predominate in the paranoid-schizoid position. As such they either become the object of sadistic aggression, or as sublime, so long as they do not frustrate Hanson's wishes. When elements of the all-good group become critical, as did sections of the One Nation Party, they are expelled, and subsequently become part of the all-bad group<sup>69</sup>.

There is a fusion between Hanson and the ideal group of battlers and a thoroughgoing exclusion of bad objects. Hanson is thoroughly oblivious to the obvious irony: as a politician she could quite easily fall within the category of the bureaucratic elite that she so despises. For Hanson, the do-gooding other is a screen upon which to project her phantasies. Thus all interaction for Hanson (and supporters) is seen as a contest between good and evil. The actual specific qualities of the other, and of Hanson herself, are obliterated. Hanson's authority is entirely instrumental, and is achieved simply by the venting of aggression onto the hated and inhuman oppressors. Hence, Hanson's objective is the complete destruction of the do-gooding oppressors, both symbolically and actually.

It should be noted that Hanson's primary division of groups is not racialised. The splitting of the world into good and evil, is not done between white and black,

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<sup>68</sup> The 'New Class Elite' is one of the subjects covered in Hanson's controversial self-published book. See Pauline Hanson et al, *Pauline Hanson: The Truth* (Ipswich: self published, 1996). Extracts from the book are also available on One Nation's website at [www.gwb.com.au/onenation/truth/elite.html](http://www.gwb.com.au/onenation/truth/elite.html).

<sup>69</sup> see Greg Roberts, 'Hanson Supporters Accuse Her of Suffering Delusions', *The Age* (Melbourne) 1 April 1997; Greg Roberts, 'New Rift in Hanson Movement', *The Age* (Melbourne)

but rather between ordinary Australians and intelligentsia. This does not conform entirely to the psychoanalytic conception of racism developed in the first section of this essay.

This is not to say that Hanson and supporters are ambivalent about race. Indeed, like racists who completely dehumanise the racialised other, Hanson's psychic response to race matters is marked by the presence of the paranoid-schizoid position. However, Hanson's attitudes to race are marked by the presence of what John Cash terms the persecutory position, which is effectively a subset of the paranoid-schizoid position. Like the dehumanising position, the persecutory position involves a world of part objects, though these do not take as primitive a form as the dehumanising position. Where the persecutory position is different to the dehumanising position is in the way part objects undergo transformation as they enter the realm of ideological discourse.

In the dehumanising position, the signification of human beings as less than fully human is achieved by the process of metaphor. For instance, the internal persecutory object joins with the fantasised persecutory elements of the political order and together they find signification through the images of 'fat cats' etc.

In contrast to the dehumanising position, the persecutory position is not so rigidly trapped by the need to split and keep entirely separate the good and bad aspects of the political and social order. Although only a mild modification, in the persecutory position there is a capacity to split the object of anxiety so as to preserve a positive image of the reference group.

Hence, the following quote from Pauline Hanson's maiden speech in Parliament:

I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians... They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate.<sup>70</sup>

Yet, despite her fear of Asian invasion, Hanson is at pains to stress that:

I do not consider those people from ethnic backgrounds currently living in Australia anything but first-class citizens, provided of course that they give this country their full, undivided loyalty.<sup>71</sup>

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11 August 1997; and Gay Alcorn, 'Disharmony in the Hanson Camp', *The Age* (Melbourne) 16 August 1997.

<sup>70</sup> Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 10 September 1996, p 3862 (Pauline Hanson)

In this instance there is an imagined distinction between types of Asians living in Australia. There are those with their own culture and who do not assimilate on the one hand. Yet there is also the positive image of the same people as those that give this country their full, undivided loyalty - who 'know their place'. However, unlike the negative view of Asians, the positive construction is devoid of any content. The 'good' Asian never enters the construction of the social order except as an exception. They never act in this particular construction of reality. They are seen as having no particular attributes beyond being 'good' or non-threatening. From Hanson's persecutory position, they have no role in the processes of political and social action.

In the persecutory position, people are not explicitly dehumanised. They are signified as less than human not through use of metaphor, but are construed in what Cash terms an iconic or emblematic form as mere ciphers of the split world of good and bad objects.<sup>72</sup> Hence the presence of the persecutory position is noticeable by the absence of complexity in the construction of persons.

The effect of viewing a group as all-bad is to allow the subject to perceive himself or herself as all good. The subject has parts of themselves that they do not like (or even hate). Rather than come to terms with this, these feelings are split off from the good feelings and projected onto an other. Lindsay Tanner, in his book *Open Australia*<sup>73</sup> suggests that it is this splitting and projection that is driving Hanson's fear that 'we are in danger of being swamped by Asians'<sup>74</sup>:

The Australian outlook has been dominated for most of our European history by a deep-seated fear that Asians will do to us what we did to the aborigines... Denial of Aboriginal dispossession has been a necessary psychological defence against the prospect of Asian conquest.<sup>75</sup>

Hence Hanson is tapping a deep chord within the Australian psyche. We have bad feelings about what European Australians did to aborigines. We are

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p 3863

<sup>72</sup> Cash, 'Distorted Communication', above n 29, p 9

<sup>73</sup> Lindsay Tanner, *Open Australia* (Annandale: Pluto Press, 1999)

<sup>74</sup> Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 10 September 1996, p 3862 (Pauline Hanson)

<sup>75</sup> Tanner, *Open Australia*, above n 73, p 30. Similarly, Webb and Enstice argue that 'peoples who occupy land they or their parents have taken from its original inhabitants are likely to be keenly aware of the possibility of displacement in their turn': Webb and Enstice, *Aliens & Savages*, above n 1, pp 273-274

uncomfortable with this bad feeling, and while some revert to the depressive position, and the corresponding affects of guilt, reparation and ambivalence, others, such as Hanson, revert to the paranoid-schizoid position. In this position, Hanson and supporters are unable to live with the bad feeling and guilt associated with aboriginal dispossession, so project it onto an Asian threat. In this manner, Hanson is able to perceive of herself as all-good, and guilt-free. It is not her that possesses bad feeling associated with dispossession, it is Asians who would love to dispossess us. Fear of Asian invasion is thus the psychological flip-side of denial of aboriginal dispossession.

This analysis is consistent with Zygmunt Bauman's argument that the holocaust was 'normal'. In the Australian example, there is a terror permeating our collective memories. We fear that the dispossession and oppression of aborigines was not carried on by an ignorant European Australian populace as we like to convince ourselves, but by the same modern society that we call civilisation today. We fear that creation and destruction are two elements of modern civilisation and that if it can happen to aborigines, it can happen to us, and it is definitely within the realm of human possibility. Australia's history of aboriginal dispossession is a significant test of the possibilities of our modern society. We deal with this fear in a multitude of ways. Some engage in a cycle of guilt, reparations and ambivalence, while others, such as Pauline Hanson regress to the paranoid-schizoid position and construct a fantasy world of denial and ultimately racism.

Of course, in response to allegations of racism, Hanson repeats ad nauseam her mantra that 'everyone should be treated equally and the same and treated on an individual needs basis.'<sup>76</sup> This is formulated in response to the belief that aborigines have it too good and that non-aborigines are being discriminated against:

Present governments are encouraging separatism in Australia by providing opportunities, land, moneys and facilities available only to Aborigines. Along with millions of Australians, I am fed up to the back teeth with the inequalities that are being promoted by the government and paid for by the taxpayer under the assumption that Aborigines are the

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<sup>76</sup> Hanson, quoted in Kingston, *Off the Rails*, above n 10, p 130

most disadvantaged people in Australia... Today... I talk about the privileges Aboriginals enjoy over other Australians. I have done research on benefits available only to Aboriginals and challenge anyone to tell me how Aboriginals are disadvantaged when they can obtain 3 and 5% loans denied to non-Aboriginals.<sup>77</sup>

The fuel driving Hanson's argument here is quite clearly resentment. And despite her assimilationist arguments that 'To survive in peace and harmony, united and strong, we must have one people, one nation, one flag',<sup>78</sup> the One Nation she envisages clearly does not include aborigines. The theme lurking very close to the surface of this superficial 'equality' argument is that there are two groups of Australians: those aborigines who have it too easy with everything handed to them on a plate; and those 'mainstream' Australians who have been hard done by at every step of the way.

The rhetoric of 'treating all Australians' the same carries with it a hidden catch. Just who is an Australian?

A racist means a person who considers their race to be superior to others. I have never, never stated anything like that whatsoever, and I never will, because I don't feel that way. I'm proud to be Australian, like any other race, and any other people are proud of their own race and their culture.<sup>79</sup>

This slippery rhetoric seems to be claiming that anglo-celtics are true Australians and all the rest are outsiders. Hanson's race is Australian, though aborigines' race is aboriginal. Although Hanson argues that all citizens should consider themselves first and foremost as Australians, she overlooks the fact that her rhetoric prohibits aborigines from doing so because they are unable to escape the aboriginality of their race.

The release of One Nation's health policy during the 1998 election campaign graphically illustrated the true meaning of Hanson's equality rhetoric. Consider the following transcript of Hanson's press conference:

Journalist: 'Is the health policy skewed towards providing greater care for aged people and people in rural areas?'

Dr Ray Danton (One Nation health spokesperson): 'The aged people are suffering and obviously the rural people are suffering too.'

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<sup>77</sup> Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 10 September 1996, p 3860 (Pauline Hanson)

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p 3861

<sup>79</sup> Hanson quoted in Kingston, *Off the Rails*, above n 10, p 124



‘What about aborigines - aren’t they suffering?’

‘Aborigines are going to be treated on the basis of need.’

‘So they’ll be treated equally, but rural people and older people will get treated in a special manner?’

‘Not in a special manner, in a manner that they should be treated and haven’t been in the past. They have been discriminated against.’<sup>80</sup>

Here, the true colours of Hanson’s agenda are revealed. There is to be no equality. One group will receive special treatment at the other’s expense. ‘Equal treatment’ here seems to equate to punishment - ‘to be treated equally’ by One Nation takes on an almost sinister connotation. By contrast, the elderly and rural Australians are treated ‘in the manner they should be treated.’

When confronted with examples of aboriginal disadvantage, One Nation supporters are unconcerned, unwilling to take on any responsibility for aborigines situation. Consider the following dialogue recorded at a One Nation meeting in Tasmania:

Journalist: ‘More aboriginal children die from malnutrition and diseases than in most third world countries.’

One Nation supporter: ‘That’s not my fault, that’s not the fault of anyone here. What you sow you reap. If you don’t look after yourself, you can’t expect other people to.’<sup>81</sup>

This is a stunning denial of the history of aboriginal dispossession. Any complexity in the explanation surrounding aborigines’ disadvantage is explained away by the belief that it must be their fault. Hence One Nation’s argument - hidden or otherwise - is twofold: Either there is no aboriginal disadvantage or if there is, it is their own fault.

One Nation’s consistent denial of aboriginal dispossession is intricately linked to their fear of Asian invasion. Refusal to acknowledge bad feeling associated with European Australians’ dispossession and exploitation of aborigines means that it must be split off from the reference group and projected onto an other - which in this case manifests itself as fear of Asians doing to us as we fear we did to aborigines. Hence, the symbiosis between refusal to acknowledge aboriginal dispossession and fear of Asian invasion.

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<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Kingston, *Off the Rails*, above n 10, p 167

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p 139

This leads the Hansonites to dehumanise aborigines and reduce them to an emblematic form. They are not fully human, and lack complexity. If they are disadvantaged, it is simply because it is their own fault. The Hansonites are unable to recognise the complexity of aborigines' situation because of their regression into the paranoid-schizoid position. There is a world split into good and bad objects, with mainstream Australians unable to do wrong, and aborigines getting it too easy. Yet, unlike Hanson's attitude to 'the elite', aborigines are not dehumanised through the use of metaphor, but are construed in iconic form as ciphers of the split world of good and bad objects. This lack of complexity is evidence of the presence of the persecutory position.

Psychoanalytic theory also suggests that the subject group admires as well as fears the hated all-bad group, and that this often manifests itself in the form of conspiracy theories. The admiration of the subject for the conspirator lies in the fact that they are seen as secret, organised, impermeable, unfeeling and without passion. These are precisely the attributes desired by the threatened ego. Is there any evidence that the Pauline Hanson movement admires as well as hates its enemies?

Hanson firmly believes that 'we are in danger of being swamped by Asians'<sup>82</sup> and in her maiden speech alludes to the fact that the populous Asian countries are 'well aware of our resources and potential.'<sup>83</sup> She urges us to 'wake up Australia before it is too late.'<sup>84</sup> As discussed above, Hanson's construction of Asian people is entirely one-dimensional. The sole characteristic of Asians is that they are plotting to overthrow us. They are portrayed as utterly unfeeling, organised and without passion. They would invade Australia without a second thought, without regret and without guilt. In other words, psychically, Hanson is convinced that Asians would be better at dispossession than European Australians are. The elimination of complexity has led Hanson to construct an imagined Asian that she both fears and admires.

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<sup>82</sup> Commonwealth, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 10 September 1996, p 3862 (Pauline Hanson)

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p 3863

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*

In a similar manner, Hansonites see the 'new class elite' as conspiring to deprive 'ordinary Australians' of resources - a mirror image of the manner in which European Australians deprived aborigines. The elite are seen as articulate, educated and powerful. They are working together with international markets, the World Bank and the United Nations as part of a great conspiracy to crush ordinary Australians and introduce their agenda of bleeding heart multiculturalism and internationalism. Native title is seen as a great plot designed to dispossess them from their land in the way they and their ancestors dispossessed the aborigines from theirs. Despite being seen as soft and emotional when it comes to aborigines and multiculturalism, the elite is viewed as cold and uncaring in relation to ordinary Australians. The elite is subconsciously admired by the Hansonites, who see it as organised, systematic and calculating.

It is much harder to see the manner in which Hanson and her followers idealise aborigines. Michael Rustin suggests that the sexual potency and the physicality of the black male invokes fear and admiration in the racist subject<sup>85</sup>, though this is not entirely evident in the Australian context. Unlike, other multicultural countries, Australia by and large does not conceive of the aboriginal male as possessing an exciting athleticism or a wild sexuality. It appears that there is merit in Alan McKee's suggestion that there a difference between Australian and other versions of blackness, and that representations of aboriginality might be better equated with Native American rather than Black American images.<sup>86</sup>

There is some evidence to support this emphasis on indigeneity, as Aborigines in Australia are often constructed as being either 'fullblood', 'traditional' aborigines, or as degraded, 'half caste' or urbanised aborigines. While we are fascinated by, and respect the sacred, 'primitive' aboriginal (discussed later in this essay), we are disgusted with the 'degraded' aboriginal. The imagined urbanised, drunken, welfare-rorting aborigine leads us either to hate or to look away because it reminds of the bad feeling lurking within our psyche associated with aboriginal dispossession. Or, according to McKee's construction, we are

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<sup>85</sup> Rustin, *The Good Society and the Inner World*, above n 22, p 241

<sup>86</sup> Alan McKee, 'The Aboriginal Version of Ken Done...'. Banal Aboriginal Identities in Australia' (1997) 11(2) *Cultural Studies* 191, p 191

shocked that 'these spiritual unknowable creatures' may be involved as something as banal as being a contestant on a television game show.<sup>87</sup>

Having established that regression into the paranoid-schizoid position leads the subject to split the world into an idealised all-good group and a dehumanised all-bad group, it must now be asked why the psychotic subject invests so much meaning in race. Why does Pauline Hanson construct Asians and aborigines as racial groups subject to her denigration?

Unlike cultural or religious differences, differences in biological race are almost entirely lacking in substance, though cultural and religious difference is often coincident with race. Differences in race are entirely attributable to genetic factors and it is not aborigines' genetics that makes their experience of the world different to those of European Australians. It is their history, social organisation and their culture that makes them different.

It is quite clear that any category may serve as a repository for the psychotic subject's bad feeling. One only need observe the Hansonites' denigration of the 'elite' class. Indeed, religion, class and nationality often do serve the same purpose as race in providing an object for the psychotic subject's hatred. Yet racism is different because it is arbitrary, lacking in all substance. Michael Rustin argues that it is precisely this hollowness that allows racism to carry so much meaning. The emptiness of the category 'race' means race can be employed as a receptacle to carry almost any meaning the psychotic subject desires. It is entirely a fantasy category.

Pauline Hanson's racism undoubtedly carries with it a long history of pre-existing social prejudices. Fear of Asian invasion has occupied a good proportion of Australian psyches for most of the twentieth century, and denigration of aborigines has been a feature of Australian life since colonisation. However, this in itself does not explain why racial targets become the focus of so much psychic aggression.

Modern production involves routine and bureaucracy, and increasingly compartmentalises and rationalises human existence. Modern production in this

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p 205

sense mirrors the classic Enlightenment conception of self as centred around the ego. But however much we attempt to paper over the polycentric nature of our psyches, we are never truly able to suppress the attendant desires and anxieties that form an essential component of human existence. We all share this struggle - a day to day battle between our attempts at rationalisation and the irrepressible desire and anxiety.

As discussed earlier, a crisis in the ego may lead to regression into the paranoid-schizoid position, with corresponding splitting and projection of contaminating bad feeling onto an other. In the most general sense, this bad feeling may be portrayed as all that is not modern. This contaminating otherness is all that is primitive and polycentric. Hence, when the racist constructs an imaginary degraded, primitive race, they are in a way dealing with the polycentric nature of the human psyche. If they are unable to, or modern society does not permit them to, maturely and openly acknowledge the polycentric nature of their psyches as a fact of human existence, then their splitting and projection of the 'primitive' is acknowledgment in a different form. Racism, in this sense, is a protest against a rationalising modern society that does not allow for the acknowledgment and expression of a polycentric psyche.

If this analysis is to apply in the Australian context to the Pauline Hanson movement, we should be able to see evidence of the construction of aborigines as primitive, and as not possessing the reasoning power of whites. It is sometimes difficult to see through the veneer of Hanson's equality rhetoric, though the cracks appear often enough to betray her motives. Hanson's belief that aboriginal disadvantage is due to their own inability to look after themselves (as discussed earlier) is evidence of this. Aborigines are seen as unable to function in modern society, as irrational and irresponsible. Hansonites have a firmly entrenched view that aborigines simply do not possess the discipline, organisation and reasoning capacities to function in our society. Consequently, according to the Hansonites, the best thing for aborigines would be for them to 'revert' to scavenging for food like animals. Queensland One Nation MP, Jeff Knuth, betrayed this belief during the 1996 Federal Election campaign:

‘They’ve tried to become white by adopting a flag, electric guitars and that... but it’ll never work,’ Knuth had said. The best thing was for the blacks to go back to the pastoralists, to ask: ‘We don’t want to take your land off you, but would it be all right if we did some work for you, and all you do is give us a bit of meat, or that?’<sup>88</sup>

This statement explicitly exposes the reality lurking behind One Nation’s equality rhetoric - the conviction that aborigines are not equal at all, but a primitive race to be treated as animals. In the mind of the Hansonites, aborigines, who have historically been treated as animals - through dispossession, unpaid work for pastoralists, denial of civil and political rights and though the treatment given to the ‘stolen generation’- are seen as animals in their essence. Aborigines’ dark skin has come to represent the dark side of humanity. In the final analysis, racism, becomes inseparable to the operations of modern society. The dark side of the subject - desire, anxiety, fear - needs to be banished if the modern society is to retain the egocentric self-certainty that it requires. Racism, it seems, is the price of our desire to maintain our egocentric illusions.

### ***Responding to Pauline Hanson***

Responses to Pauline Hanson have widely been seen as belonging to two categories: ‘going hard’ on racism; or ‘going soft’. The implication from the left - particularly the radical, ‘anti-racist’ left - is usually that going hard on racism is the noble thing to do, and that most leaders have been ‘too soft’ on racism.

According to the analysis developed above, racism is primarily the result of regression into the paranoid-schizoid position which results in the psychotic splitting of group into all-good and all-bad, with the subject’s own negative feelings projected onto the all-bad group. The question for us now to consider is whether the anti-Pauline Hanson movement in Australia may be inadvertently reproducing and contributing to the institutionalisation of the same psychic state.

It appears certain that at least a significant portion of the anti-racist movement have tended to regress into the paranoid-schizoid position. Pauline Hanson and the One Nation movement are constructed as being the devil incarnate, absolutely evil, and lacking in any human characteristics. Conversely, the anti-racist groups view themselves as crusaders for the greater good, and beyond criticism. A

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<sup>88</sup> Jeff Knuth MP, quoted in Kingston, *Off the Rails*, above n 10, p 122

common imagery arising out of Pauline Hanson's speaking tours of Australia has been confrontation outside One Nation meetings. With the police setting barriers in between, screaming matches would erupt between One Nation supporters on the one side of the barriers and anti-racists on the other. The confrontations sometimes turned violent and it was often difficult to observe just who was angrier and more embittered. The anti-racism demonstrations were characterised by cries of 'racist scum' and 'go and burn in hell'<sup>89</sup>. This was going about as 'hard' on Hanson as was possible, yet in so doing, the anti-racists almost ended up mirroring her psychologically.

On the 10th May 1997, the *Herald-Sun* gave the following report:

Screaming protesters battered the doors with sticks and banner poles as about 1000 Hanson supporters sat inside.

The protest turned ugly about 8:15pm when Chester Sommerville of the Concerned Voters Association of Tasmania, tried to introduce Ms Hanson. Demonstrators poured down the isles, giving Nazi salutes and shouting abuse...

Fights broke out as the supporters made their way through side exits guarded by six police officers to a door.<sup>90</sup>

The attacks on Hanson were justified by the rhetoric of 'fighting' or 'crushing' fascism. Yet, as a strategy, it was hugely unsuccessful. The more Hanson was confronted, the greater her popularity became. It was almost as though the protests reinforced Hanson's contentions that Australian political life consisted of either 'ordinary Australians' or the university educated politically correct elite. The anti-racists, by reinforcing this dichotomy, forced people to choose which side they were on. The 1998 Queensland election proved that a good many decided they were on the side of ordinary Australians, with One Nation winning 23 per cent of the vote and 11 seats. The anti-racist groups themselves seemingly recognised their failure and dropped confrontation as a strategy - by the 1998 federal election, the only passionate protests against One Nation were occurring in Perth.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> See Scott Emerson and David Fagan, 'Protesters Disrupt One Nation Launch' *The Weekend Australian* (Sydney) 12-13 April 1997

<sup>90</sup> John Hamilton, 'Hanson Flees' *Herald-Sun* (Melbourne), 10th May 1997, p 1

<sup>91</sup> Kingston, *Off the Rails*, above n 10, p 155

It is not surprising that these persecutory and guilt-inducing tactics have not been successful at 'converting' One Nation supporters to a progressive viewpoint, since racism is at root paranoid and persecutory. Indeed, it seems unlikely that it was ever the objective of the anti-racists to change the minds of Hanson's supporters. Because these supporters were seen as being part of the all-bad group there was no room for engagement. The sole objective was to destroy the Hanson supporters, both metaphorically and actually. The anti-racists' regression into the paranoid-schizoid position led them to believe that total destruction of the 'enemy' was a legitimate and worthwhile goal. Consequently, they were unable to see that annihilation was not a feasible option.



## **Conclusion**

The goal of this essay has been to build upon the works of Robert Manne and others who have sought to understand the Hanson phenomenon. I have attempted to contribute to this debate by suggesting ways that psychoanalytic theory may contribute to our understanding. Psychoanalytic theory is a powerful tool with which we may ultimately come to a full and comprehensive understanding of the complexities of contemporary Australian racism. Until then, this essay has offered some suggestions as to how such a comprehensive task may be undertaken.

The broad thrust of this essay has been to suggest that racism is not pathological, but is 'normal', since all our behaviour is governed by the way we deal with anxiety. Racism is simply the manifestation of a defence mechanism that helps the racist cope with anxiety. This essay has demonstrated that racism is intricately with the development of the modern psyche. Modernity's attempt to construct an ego-centric 'rational' subject disguises the truly polycentric nature of our psyche, with its attendant fears and anxieties. One consequence of the attempt to maintain the integrity of the ego, is that modern society assigns the 'negative' passionate side of the human psyche to racially selected groups. In this way, the rationality of white, western society is defined in opposition to the animality of black, 'primitive' society.

If racism is not pathological at all, but part of a human defence mechanism into which we all - anti-racists included - capable of regressing, our response to racism should not be about going 'hard' or 'soft'. 'Going hard' on racism serves only reinforce the paranoid splitting of subject groups into good and bad. A response to racism should not be about serving the psychic needs of the subject, but should be about effectively moving towards an inclusive and respectful society in which the ambivalent position is the predominant psychological position in public life.

This is perhaps where our leaders have gone wrong. Rather than attempt to empathise with the anxiety of the disaffected, they were instead dismissive. Nicolas Rothwell speculates that if an inclusive, rather than persecutory approach

had been taken with Hanson things may have turned out differently.<sup>92</sup> This is consistent with the psychoanalytic approach developed in this essay which suggests that psychic rules cathect the subject into societal roles and govern their psychic responses. If Hanson and supporters are angry because they have been excluded, further exclusion is not likely to make them any less angry. It is far better that we contribute to the development of an inclusive culture, and to an institutionalisation of what Cash calls the ambivalent position.

This is no small ask. It involves an unravelling of the modern project that began with the Enlightenment, and will ultimately involve conceding the possibility of self-certainty. Nevertheless, it is a task we may undertake together, starting from the premise that we are all the same - we all have fears, desires and anxieties - and that there is a demon lurking within us all.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Rothwell, 'Thirteen Ways Not to Think About Pauline Hanson', above n 18, p 167; see also Kingston, *Off the Rails*, above n 10, p 7 in which it is argued that Hanson was initially unsure of her views on race. It is speculated that, since she was shunned by the mainstream, it was left to the far right to shape her views on race.

<sup>93</sup> Manika Naidoo, 'My Fear is the Demon Within Us All' *The Age*, 3 March, 1999

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