

# ISSA Proceedings 2014 - About An Emotion, Indignation, And Its Argumentation. The Case Of The Argumentum Ad Selectivum

*Abstract:* This paper is about Indignation (defined as Anger about something Unjust) in everyday argumentation, when it becomes the object of an argumentative construction involving the pathos (genuine or phony emotion), the logos (legitimacy of the sets of beliefs and judgments concerning the state of affairs that generated the emotion) and the ethos (righteousness of the Indignant Person or Institution). I will focus on a frequent refutation in public discourse of someone's Indignation, that is its Selectiveness.

*Keywords:* Indignation, expression of strong emotion, pathos, logos, ethos, selectiveness, Stephane Hessel (2010)

## *Introduction*

At the origin of this paper, there was the international popularity of the word 'Indignation/Outrage' in 2011 and the debates and polemics in France following the editorial success of Stéphane Hessel's little book, *Indignez-vous!* (American title: 'Time for Outrage!'). As a discourse analyst, my main interest is in the approach of an Emotion (Indignation) in every day argumentation, following Plantin (2011) and Micheli (2010): the expression of emotion can be used as a persuasive argument to bring people into action, and can be evaluated as such, but the emotion may first need to be legitimized, and this process of legitimization will concern the three means of persuasion and their interaction: Pathos (genuine or phony emotion), Logos (righteousness of the object of indignation, legitimacy of the sets of beliefs and judgments concerning the state of affairs that generated the emotion) and Ethos (righteousness of the Indignant Person or Institution).

I will first specify the meaning of the word Indignation, and then will make a brief reference to approaches to Indignation in philosophy and argumentation studies. I will illustrate this argumentation of Indignation with examples mostly taken from the French media, the Internet and small publications concerning the Stephane

Hessel controversy. This will be followed by an exploration of the frequent denunciation of the Selectiveness of Indignation, and a reflection on its argumentative value.

### 1. *Indignation*

In definitions of Indignation, we find three words, 'anger', 'moral' and 'injustice', the cause of anger being something unjust, contrary to morality, moral norms' (Merriam-Webster). A first interesting difference with another strong, violent emotion, Anger, is the fact that Indignation is never directed at oneself, which for some people weakens its moral dimension: "Ce sentiment est de ceux qui ne s'appliquent qu'aux autres, jamais à soi, (...) et la morale authentique suppose d'abord des exigences qu'on formule pour son propre compte".**[i]** Indignation has drawn the attention of philosophers since Plato. Mattei (2005) presents a summary that refers in the first place to the source and nature of indignation: "sentiment que nous éprouvons face au déni de dignité dont souffre injustement un homme ou un groupe d'hommes. C'est la dignité comme *principe* premier de l'humanité qui justifierait l'indignation, comme *sentiment* second d'humanité"(p.14).**[ii]** In his chapter on political indignation, with references to the Valladolid controversy and the Dreyfus Affair, he writes: "S'indigner, c'est souffrir et, dans un premier temps, nous souffrons seuls" (p.126). Then comes a second reaction, which moves from the unjust act to the Victim (Pity) and to the Agent (Anger). If felt repeatedly, Indignation engenders hatred. The just Indignation can then become wrong or false, as it is less involved with justice and more with vengeance. In another chapter, 'Attac, ou l'indignation idéologique', Mattei refers to collective Indignation (illustrated by Anti-globalization movements), and its dangers as it moves the accusation of individuals, real persons to nations or systems, leading to collective culpability.

Cognitive antecedents, that is the awareness of an injustice, are usually recognized in emotions such as pity or indignation. But the emotion is not universally shared, as it will depend on beliefs and judgments of the Indignant. For Boltanski (1993), the consequence is that "Quand certains indignés en viennent à s'indigner des indignations des autres, et non des offenses faites à la justice, ils considèrent comme indignes les sentiments de leurs adversaires, et bientôt, leurs adversaires eux-mêmes » (p.22).

Elster (1999) describes Indignation as a *social* emotion that feeds on comparison.**[iii]** It is also described as a *triadic* emotion: A feels indignant about

B's treatment of C. I will add a fourth element, making it a *quaternary* emotion: A feels indignant about the injustice B done to C by D, as any argumentation of Indignation will concern, one of, or more often, these four elements.

A distinction has to be made between the emotion itself and its public expression (speech, article, book, street protests, art). I will focus on the verbal expression and its context. The speech act that manifests Indignation is a denunciation-accusation of what is considered unjust and against moral norms, and of the Agent judged responsible for said injustice[iv].

In order to argue in favor of Indignation as a moral, righteous, virtuous emotion, we have to consider the three means of persuasion and their interaction. In the following, I will focus on the argumentative construction of Indignation.

## 2. *Argumentation of indignation*

In the field of argumentation, following cognitive and philosophical studies of the relation between cognition and emotion, recent studies have considered emotions as arguments and defined the conditions of their reasonableness (Walton, 1992). Other recent studies have focused on the argumentation of emotions (Plantin, 2011, Micheli, 2010).

Brinton (1988) in his « Appeal to Angry Emotions considers the relationship between emotions and reason, and the conditions for a strong emotion to be justified and legitimate, according to a general or circumstantial approach to morality. In reference to Aristotle, Brinton sees in Indignation a call for action: "But, even in this narrow 'strict' sense, indignation is not a mere cool assessment or judgment; it is, or includes, a feeling or a complex of feelings – it is an emotion of passion. As such, it is a motivation to action, which is why it is appealed to in rhetorical situations, for example in public speeches whose aim is to get people to take certain courses of action" (p.81). He proposes an *Argumentum ad Indignationem* the logical correctness of which will be a matter of two things : "(1) whether the reasons given for the emotion are good ones, whether the truth of certain propositions, namely those which are appealed to, would, in fact, justify the feelings which they are supposed to arouse ; (2) whether the degree or intensity of the emotional responses (or intended emotional response) is appropriate to the reasons given, in the context of the rhetorical situation considered as a whole" (p.81). "When the grounds appealed to are inappropriate or inadequate, either for indignation , or for the called-for degree of indignation,

then there will be a logical failure” (p.83) . Brinton warns that the evaluation of *ad indignationem* “is often difficult and often has to be tentative, or has to be made relative to a restricted point of view” (p.83).

In other words, a virtuous Indignation will, as claimed by Aristotle (quoted in Brinton p.78), depend on “feel[ing it] at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way”. Arguing for or against Indignation will involve the three modes of proof:

*Pathos*: genuine emotion (vs. manipulative strategy), form given to the pathetic discourse

*Logos*: legitimacy of the Object of Indignation (Injustice, Victim, Agent)

*Ethos*: Righteousness of the Indignant Person/Institution[v]

The accusation of Selective Indignation (in the following SI) will stress the interaction between the three modes of proof. I will briefly illustrate this process with the Hessel Controversy.

### 3. Counter-argumentation of an indignation

#### 3.1 The Hessel controversy

In October 2010, a short text (19 pages, in the first edition of 8000 copies), based on a speech held for an audience of French youths[vi], was published without any prior publicity by a small publishing house (Editions Indigènes, Montpellier)[vii]. The author was Stephane Hessel, 93 years old, an ex-diplomat, a member of the French resistance, a survivor of concentration camps, with a life filled with activities in the domain of human rights and social justice. The success of the publication was immediate: almost 800,000 copies had been sold in France by the beginning of 2011. It then became international, with translations into different languages (34, according to *Le Monde*, on September 28, 2011).

In the first place, it is an appeal to an emotion, Indignation, said to be the first motif of the Resistance in World War Two, and presented as the opposite of indifference and passivity, an appeal which argues for action and involvement against various injustices. The winter and spring of 2011 saw many discussions and reflections in France on the emotion and its intentional object. At the same time came the protest movements in the Middle East, in Europe and North America, which saw hundreds of thousands of people, mostly young, take to the streets and to symbolic places (squares, rich avenues, financial centers).

In Spain, the movement adopted the name of *Los Indignados*, in reference to Hessel's brochure. Historians will have the task to determine the real influence that Hessel's publication, and its mediatization[viii], have had on these events.

In France the editorial success has been differently interpreted: as an extraordinary intuitive feeling of deep anger and fear for the future of many people that ignited a mood of protest, as an illustration of the intellectual poverty of the buyers/readers (mostly said to be related to left wing thinking and politics), as the instrument of a political (leftish) manipulation, sometimes correlated to the proximity of the French presidential elections (2012), or as propaganda against Israel, and a strategy of the Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions Movement (BDS). This last accusation was related to the two pages of the brochure expressing the author's current Indignation regarding the Palestinian question and illustrated by the situation in Gaza.[ix] These pages generated critical reactions from journalists, polemicists, politicians and ordinary people, and as many critical counter-reactions. This offers a very rich field of observation on the argumentation of the emotion, Indignation, and of its Object.

### 3.2 *Argumentation against a particular Indignation*

The Object of Hessel's personal, current Indignation is the situation in Gaza/of the Palestinians. In critical commentaries, this is considered to be a one-sided position, as nothing is said about the crimes of Hamas. This SI originates in a personal obsession, which is hatred of Israel/Jews.

#### 3.2.1 *The Pathos*

The emotion is denounced as being 'dépassée' (out-moded), naïve or disproportionate, possibly as the result of manipulative actions undertaken by the BDS movement, aggravated by the senility of the Indignant. In the most extreme critical reactions, the emotion is related to hatred towards Israel, and so is its editorial success, which is "au coeur même de cette indignation aussi obsessionnellement sélective qu'effroyablement, monstrueusement, pathologiquement, indignement disproportionnée "(Goldnadel, 2012: 19).

#### 3.2.2 *The Logos*

The Logos concerns the Injustice committed (the blockade of Gaza, the Cast Lead Operation, the Palestinian question), the Victims (the Palestinians in general and in Gaza in particular), and the Agent (Israel, its army). The argumentation against Hessel's Indignation concentrates on what is perceived as a fallacious

representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It questions the nature of the Injustice, and reconsiders the attribution of the roles of Victims and Agent. In its most developed forms (such as Szlamowicz 2011), it combines the denunciation of the numbers given by Hessel (of Palestinian refugees, of victims from both sides) of the Palestinian narrative (Nakba), of the 'lies' concerning actions by the Israeli army and specific interventions (Cast Lead in Gaza); words such as 'settlements/occupation' are rejected based on 'historical facts' (San Remo Treaty 1920, territories legally obtained through winning wars, security- reasons), questions are asked about the Palestinian ideology (undemocratic, focused on destruction and judeophobia[x], Hamas terrorism), and about the existence of a 'Palestinian people'. There is talk of a one-sided position in Hessel's text, as nothing is said about the crimes of Hamas[xi] and of the Palestinians. The designation of Palestinians as 'réfugiés' is rejected, as well as 'victimes', since "la part active du camp arabe dans ce conflit interdirait moralement de solliciter le statut de victimes" (34).[xii] The conclusion is that the denomination ('réfugiés/victimes') is equivalent to the premises of an argumentation: Israel is the oppressor. Denying the premises leads to another conclusion: there is no injustice, there are no (Palestinian) victims.

Then comes the accusation of SI. An example: "Vous n'y trouverez pas non plus d'indignation sur la violation des droits de l'homme en Birmanie, en Chine, en Iran, en Corée du Nord, en Libye, en Tunisie et dans d'autres pays car l'indignation de Stéphane Hessel est à géométrie variable. Manifestement, sa boussole intérieure s'est bloquée sur ce pays honni" (Assouline, cf. Torck 2013). Goldnadel (2012) criticizes the title, which, contrary to what its generic form might lead one to expect, is not an appeal for an "indignation universelle" since the book "ne s'indigne de rien, ou presque", and then enumerates a dozen countries that should have been the object of Hessel's Indignation (17).

The SI argument is composed of two elements: the accusation of focusing on one country and the mention of other countries that deserve Indignation, as a form of *X Quoque*. The most common counter-arguments to the Argument of Selectiveness, in relation to these two pages, are the following. First, Israel is a democracy, whereas the other countries usually mentioned are not democracies. Land occupation (and its consequences for the population) is not democratic. So Israel may be/should be criticized for its politics. The second argument is the Argument of Proximity, which argues, on historical (Jews in European/Western

history), cultural (religion, sciences, art), geopolitical (Israel is in the Middle-East) and economical grounds (financial help from Europe to the Palestinians), for a natural, legitimate interest in Israel's actions.

Hessel's SI is seen as a one-sided strategy and is quickly connected to the Ethos of the Indignant: "Non seulement il ne dit pas la vérité historique et factuelle du conflit mais, *quand même il dirait vrai*, pourquoi son indignation s'exerce-t-elle uniquement sur ce pays et nullement sur les dictatures islamiques, la Chine, l'Iran, ou les massacres d'opposants régulièrement perpétrés par le Fatah et le Hamas ? "(Szlamowicz, p.9, my emphasis). When Personal Indignation is seen as a personal obsession, to which a name can be given (Hatred of Zionism/Israel/Jews = anti-Semitism), then we turn to the Ethos of the Indignant. As the French adage says, tell me what your indignation is, and I will tell you who you are.

### 3.2.3 The Ethos: 'the despicable old man' ("le vieil homme indigne")

The denunciation of Hessel's Ethos concerns his social Ethos, Amossy (1999)'ethos préalable', the image and reputation of the person, and the discursive Ethos. The attacks on his Social Ethos concern his family first, and his earlier self-presentation as a Jew (his grand-parents were Jewish immigrants who joined the Lutheran Church, his mother was "la fille d'un banquier prussien et antisémite", precizes Goldnadel p.(31). Then there is his alleged participation in the writing of the Declaration of Human Rights. In fact, he turns out to have only been an 'observer to the editing of the Declaration'. His participation in the Resistance and his deportation to concentration camps (Buchenwald, Dora) are not usually questioned, although his declarations about the Resistance and his experience are the object of various comments (Who gives him the right to speak in the name of the Resistance? being the most frequent).

The Discursive Ethos is the topic of Szlamowics (2011). His objective is to show "comment le texte de Stéphane Hessel, en tant qu'il participe plus largement du mouvement politique que constitue la nébuleuse du BDS, veut influencer sur la langue pour instituer un halo de connotations négatives autour du mot « Israël » " (p.21). Chapter IV ( 'Indignation et Emphase: la posture du succès'), following one chapter on linguistic approaches, and two chapters which denounce the ' myths' and 'factual lies', concerns Hessel's Ethos: the claim of Jewishness (which has already been denounced as false) is presented as a way to escape the accusations of anti-Semitism, and to advance an Authority argument. Mention is made of the 'Alterjuifs' (the Self-Hating Jews), for who "l'antisionisme est aujourd'hui le plus

sûr moyen de faire carrière médiatique” (p.81). The Authority argument is also based on the creation of an image by the author through references to the War and the Resistance, to his age, his family and cultural background. With the title of the brochure: Hessel “s’offre ainsi au lecteur comme modèle déontique”, “cette déonticité (...) qui articule indignation et action, formule un appel au militantisme qui ressemble fort à un discours de sergent recruteur. C’est d’ailleurs la stratégie avouée du BDS ” (p.77). Again, the main aim of Hessel’s text is said to be the denunciation of Israel; if there is mention of other objects of indignation, it is seen as a construction which might be attractive to young people. The chapter concludes that the “incohérences philosophiques” have nothing to do with Logos, but with Ethos and Pathos, with “la posture qu’il entend camper: l’indignation pacifique” (p.84). As the French adage says, tell me what your indignation is, and I will tell you who you *really* are.

Two remarks as a conclusion to this part of the study. First, Szlamowicz’s aim was to show that Hessel’s call was, in the first place, a strategy of the BDS movement. This, however, was repeatedly taken as a given fact. Surprisingly, for a linguist, there is also no reference to the textual genre and its context[xiii]. Second, there is a total absence of reflection on, or even reference to, the events taking place in different countries. Published in April 2011, the ‘study’ limits itself to the two pages on Gaza, while hundreds of thousands of people had taken to the streets for reasons that had nothing to do with Israel or Gaza. I will now enlarge the descriptive field, looking at other uses of the argument of Selective indignation.

#### 4. *Selective indignation*

‘Selective’ can be understood as resulting from a process of selection, often related to specific goals or norms (highly selective admission process to a club for instance, selective tastes as choosy, particular tastes). Combined with a word of emotion, the implication often will be related to the person having the emotion (his past, his personality, his character, etc..). A selective fear for dogs, but not for snakes, will possibly be related to a childhood experience; a selective anger, to the person’s character (she doesn’t care about the mess I make but gets really mad when I borrow something from her without asking).

In the following I will consider some examples of accusations of SI taken from a data collected on Google.fr/com, using the search terms ‘Selective indignation/Indignation sélective’ in the winter and spring of 2013, and in March 2014. It shows a big diversity of Addressees (accused of SI), but by far the most



frequent are governments, organizations, institutions, (political) groups, (protest) movements, media or their representatives (vs. Individuals). The Indignation, sometimes considered legitimate, is then opposed to silence or indifference regarding other Objects.

#### *4.1 A brief exploration of Accusations of Selective Indignation*

(1)

Looking at [Australian] Foreign Minister Bob Carr's ministerial website, though, you could be forgiven for wondering exactly what criteria the Foreign Minister uses to condemn incidents. There appears to be no rhyme or reason as to the threshold for such public utterances. Why for instance, does the Foreign Minister expressly condemn the firing of three rockets from Gaza into Israel on 26 February that caused no injuries, as well as a bomb attack in Hyderabad that left 15 people dead, and yet say nothing on the record regarding a targeted series of attacks against a religious minority in Pakistan that has left more than 250 people dead in a little more than a month?**[xiv]** Note that two events on a specific day are opposed to one event or series of events that took place in a period of a month; another difference is the number of victims, 0/15 as opposed to more than 250.

(2)

Why should it be impossible for the Indian intelligentsia to read Israeli novels and poetry, attend exhibitions by Israeli artists, listen to Israeli musicians, watch Israeli theatre performances, and still stay sensitive to the cause of Palestinians? I have not heard of boycotts anywhere of Chinese goods, Pakistani novels or Indian films, though these originate in states that oppress people in similarly unbearable ways.**[xv]** The argument against the boycott seem relevant, especially because it concerns the Israeli Art world, which is almost entirely located within the Green line, as opposed to the boycott of goods made or harvested on the West Bank. Note the form given to the 'comparison' of Injustices with the expression "in similarity unbearable ways", while denying the legitimacy of the 'choice'. This seems to argue in favor of another motivation behind the emotion. Religion appears frequently as a criterium for Selective Indignation. In France, it will often concern the attention given to Jews and Muslims vs. Christians, as Agents or Victims, as in

(3)

Affaire Charlie Hebdo : une indignation sélective? Après l'incendie criminel de la rédaction du journal Charlie Hebdo dans la nuit de mardi à mercredi, la question de la liberté d'expression face aux sensibilités religieuses est à nouveau posée, une liberté d'expression défendue à géométrie variable selon les polémiques. Déjà en 2006 Charlie Hebdo avait suscité la colère de certains musulmans avec des caricatures de Mahomet. ...)Au-delà du milieu médiatique, c'est la classe politique dans son ensemble qui s'est indignée (...) Cette véritable union nationale, ces avalanches de communiqués de soutien défendant la liberté d'expression, le "*droit au blasphème*", la libre pensée ou la laïcité, ont pris une telle ampleur qu'elles posent désormais la question du traitement partial ou non, égal ou non, des affaires mêlant liberté d'expression et religion. (...) Car avant les attaques contre la rédaction du journal *Charlie Hebdo*, ce sont des catholiques intégristes qui ont suscité la polémique, celle-ci ne créant en aucun cas le même élan de solidarité et de soutien que pour l'hebdomadaire satirique.(...) Et aucun ministre n'a alors pris la peine de s'exprimer sur la question.**[xvi]**

The data is rich in alternative Objects that refer to states of affairs or events of a different nature, from a different time or place. For instance: addressing the Media, Object 1 : Aggression DSK-Diallo and its media coverage opposed to Object 2, silence on rapes and crimes on women in Africa; addressing Politics/Media/Public, O1: Bin Laden as opposed to O2: dictators supported by the US, victims from US sanctions and bombing in Iraq and Native American slavery; On LeMondeJuif.fr site, O1, support of some French mayors for the liberation of Palestinian prisoners, silence on O2, violence in Palestinian jails and detention conditions in French jails. The Site Altermedia/Libération opposes O1, acquisition by Bernard Arnault of the Belgium nationality for 'tax evasion', to the silence over O2, Rothschild (French, part owner of the newspaper) and his Israeli citizenship.

The following example concerns the Indignation of an historian, about the French Memory Laws in France and the interference of politics in science (History) through legislation, for instance relative to the condemnation of the Armenian genocide. If this indignation is recognized as righteous, it is judged 'incomplete':

(4)

Il est dès lors regrettable que Pierre Nora ne dise pas un mot, dans sa tribune, du harcèlement juridique, policier, ou parfois mafieux, des chercheurs et des écrivains qui jugent que le mot "*génocide*" est approprié pour décrire les massacres d'Arméniens par les Turcs autour de 1915. »**[xvii]**

One reaction to the accusation:

Il existe des dizaines de pays qui contestent les génocides, des pays arabes par exemple qui pratiquent le négationnisme sur la Shoah. En utilisant le même procédé que vous, M. Chouat, on peut donc vous renvoyer la balle, votre indignation est sélective. Nora a dénoncé l'évolution juridique du moment dans le domaine qui est le sien, l'histoire, et du pays qui est le sien.

Nora's Ethos is questioned in another reaction:

Le GROS problème de la démarche de Pierre Nora c'est qu'elle est clairement a motivation idéologique. Jamais Pierre Nora ne dénoncera l'attitude de la Turquie et son historiographie d'état..... Il demande donc clairement une protection des négationnistes (et de la violence sous-jacente de leur attitude) sans oser prendre position sur la défense de la vérité historique qu'il prétend prôner.

Examples (5) and (6) illustrate accusations of SI directed to the Victims-Indignant or to the Indignant close to the Agent:

(5) Selective indignation on the streets of Israel. Middle-class Israelis, aware they have lost social security and affordable housing, are protesting by pitching tents and demonstrating in city streets. But will they demand equality for all? For now, they seem intent only on their own lost privileges.**[xviii]**

(6) There's nothing wrong per se with paying more attention to tragedy and violence that happens relatively nearby and in familiar places. Whether wrong or not, it's probably human nature, or at least human instinct, to do that, and that happens all over the world. I'm not criticizing that. But one wishes that the empathy for victims and outrage over the ending of innocent human life that instantly arises when the US is targeted by this sort of violence would at least translate into similar concern when the US is perpetrating it, as it so often does (far, far more often than it is targeted by such violence).**[xix]**

The following example presents a very rare case of an identical Injustice (death penalty) and its Victims (executed persons), taking place at the same moment, in the same country:

(7)

Dans la nuit du 21 au 22 septembre dernier était exécuté par injonction létale, dans un pénitencier de l'Etat américain de Géorgie, Troy Davis, un jeune noir accusé du meurtre, en 1991, d'un policier blanc, mais que tout portait à croire,

faute de preuves matérielles et de témoins fiables, innocent. Le monde entier, l'opinion publique comme la presse internationale, s'était alors ému, très justement, de cet horrible et cruel sort que cette justice aussi barbare qu'aveugle avait ainsi réservé à ce malheureux devenu, bien malgré lui, le symbole planétaire de la lutte contre la peine de mort. (...) Et, pourtant, les opposants résolus à la peine de mort que nous sommes auront-ils failli, sur le plan moral, ailleurs. Car le même jour, quasiment au même moment, mais dans l'indifférence générale et en un oubli d'autant plus indécent, était exécuté, dans un autre pénitencier d'un autre Etat américain, le Texas, un autre condamné à mort : Lawrence Brewer, un jeune blanc, membre de l'infâme et très raciste Ku Klux Klan, accusé, en 1998, d'un meurtre particulièrement odieux, qu'il a par ailleurs toujours revendiqué, à l'encontre d'un citoyen noir. (...) Mais il n'empêche : l'opposition à la peine de mort, quant à elle, ne peut souffrir, en tant que règle universelle et principe absolu, d'aucune exclusive, ni hiérarchie.[xx]

#### 4.2. *Value of the Selectiveness argument*

Most of the examples refer to media texts, political declarations, street protests and topical articles, produced at a certain moment, in a particular context, by different people, who may be or are politically or ideologically oriented. When the accusation is addressed to an institution (governments, political groups, media, NGO's), in order to be considered legitimate, it would have to be based on a large corpus, analyzed *on the long term*[xxi]. Its study would not be, in the first place, rhetorical or discursive, but political and critical of the media. When it comes to the Indignation of an individual (much less frequent in the analyzed data), the accusation of SI may lose all grounds for the following reasons.

First, one could consider that the expression 'selective indignation' is a pleonasm. Each violent emotion can be said to be unique, as it concerns one person, at a certain moment, in a specific context, and whose intensity will depend on the identity of the Indignant (his/her life story), the direct knowledge of the Injustice, the personal involvement, or in other words, the Proximity. As said by Mattei (2012:24): "Ce sentiment s'éveille devant une *injustice vécue, dont nous sommes les témoins*" (my emphasis); "Il s'agit donc non d'un jugement intellectuel, d'un choix idéologique ou d'une posture sociale, mais d'une émotion spécifique, à elle-même sa propre fin" (27) This makes it difficult to force an universal dimension to the emotion itself (as done by Mattei[xxii]). But, Indignation is also seen as a judgment of value, is related to what is perceived as an injustice according to

universal justice principles. If Indignation is accepted as a primary affect, some will say that it loses its virtue once it is subjected to reason (and public expression!): “ Dès lors que l’indignation n’obéit plus aux ordres du coeur mais se plie aux décrets de l’entendement, elle trouble sa pureté pour se mettre au service de l’idéologie. Et l’idéologie, même quand elle combat le mal au nom de la justice ne repose le plus souvent que sur le ressentiment” (Mattei, 2012 : 28).

In the second place, as the emotion embodies a person’s knowledge and beliefs about the Object, it will most often lead to an Ethotic argument, as the Object of Indignation, and the expression of the emotion, will be related to and explained by the personality and beliefs of the person. And the denunciation will as often be related to the personality and beliefs of the denunciator.**[xxiii]** In very sensitive cases, such as the Israel-Palestine question, this accusation can /will back-fire on the denunciator of the Selective Indignation (see Torck 2013).

In the third place, it brings the denunciation into slippery argumentation fields: argument of Incompleteness**[xxiv]**, Justice Argument, Double Standard, Red Herring, forms of *Tu Quoque*, and especially Arguments of Comparison (weak analogy or comparison**[xxv]**, hierarchy of Injustices or Victims). All can be linked to varieties of Ethotic arguments. What does it say for instance of the Feminist who is indignant about a Muslim woman wearing a Hijab in Quebec, and says nothing about a Jewish Hassidic woman wearing a wig? And who ignores the deaths or disappearance of Native women?**[xxvi]**

In a provisional, pragmatic, conclusion on the Argument of Selectiveness, I will leave the floor, so to speak, to a French humourist, frequently quoted in the debates, Guy Bedos: “Il y a des gens qui ont des indignations sélectives. Moi, j’ai des indignations successives”.

### *Conclusive remark*

Can Indignation be considered a virtuous emotion? To answer this question, one is tempted to quote Aristotle again (a virtuous emotion will be felt at the right time, about the right object, towards the right people, with a right motive, in the right ways), as this covers all the sensitive domains of the evaluation of Indignation. If one accuses someone else of SI, it often takes the form of an emotional discourse, one Indignation reacting to another, both claiming righteousness, but directed to different Objects. In the Hessel case, the Injustice is questioned, or reversed, as we are dealing with opposite, and concurrent,

## Victims and Agents (Palestinians vs. Israel/Jews).**[xxvii]**

The interaction between Pathos, Logos and Ethos was particularly present in the case studied, but is also specific for the emotion itself. As a strong emotion, which is never directed to oneself as an Agent, and refers to principles and norms of justice, Indignation is never just a personal emotion, once publically expressed, and consequently generates questions and doubts about the Injustice and its corollaries, the Victim and the Agent. But as it is also an accusation, it makes the Indignant (and his/her Ethos) an object of debate. Le café philosophique de Margency, organized a meeting on the topic of the usefulness of Indignation (January 2011), and posted on its site the results of the discussion, on topics such as Objects of Indignation**[xxviii]** , social changes that were founded on Indignation (abolition of slavery, human rights, education,...), controversial Indignations (abortion, euthanasia, arms control,...). The question “Why does one become indignant?” combined with the adage ‘Dis-moi ton indignation, je te dirai qui tu es’ provided 14 brief answers, of which only one can be considered positive: “par conviction morale”. The others threw a negative light on the Indignant (“pour paraître moral”), on his/her motivations (“peur de l’autre, de l’avenir”, “pour déconsidérer un adversaire”, pour dire son appartenance ou son opposition à un groupe (politique ou catégorie sociale), par suivisme”. This distrust is also to be found in philosophical commentaries (frequently quoting Nietzsche’s “No one lies so boldly as the man who is indignant”) and sociological studies, as Indignation is said to often drift to personal or ideological resentment. As for the public expression of it, distrust will be, with good reasons, related to the pathemization and personalization of news and politics.

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