

**BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

**Nature versus Nurture: Is Altruism Biological or Social?**

**The Complex Nature of Altruism**

**Bachelor Thesis**

**Bratislava 2016**

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**BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

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The Complex Nature of Altruism**

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## **Declaration of Originality**

I declare that this bachelor thesis is my own work and has not been published in part or in whole elsewhere. All used literature and other sources are attributed and cited in references.

Bratislava, 22 February 2016

Petra Batthyányová

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Knowing One's Roots: What My Family Kept Quiet About**

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### **Abstract**

This thesis will examine the complex nature of altruism from a sociological point of view. In social sciences, the concept of altruism has been traditionally viewed from three basic points of view – biological, psychological and sociological. Scholars have repeatedly asked whether altruism is biologically inherent in human nature or whether it is determined by psychological or social conditioning. This thesis will explore all of these factors while paying specific attention to the social roots of altruism. From a socio-political point of view, cooperation can be socially and politically constructed. Social institutions and norms contribute in a major way to the shaping of the altruistic or selfish human tendencies as well as the prevalence of cooperative or conflict prone human behavior in society. In the final section, this bachelor thesis will also examine the possible ways state institutions can encourage or discourage altruism through a case study of the Slovak institutional and media approach towards the current refugee crisis.

**Prirodzené alebo vykonštruované : Je altruizmus súčasťou ľudskej prirodzenosti alebo socializácie? Komplexná povaha Altruizmu**

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**Kľúčové slová:** altruizmus, empatia, kooperácia, konflikt, sebecko, spoločnosť

**Abstrakt**

Táto bakalárska práca sa pozerá na komplexný aspekt altruizmu skrz sociologický pohľad. V sociálnych vedách je koncept altruizmu tradične vnímaný skrz tri hlavné pohľady - biologický, psychologický a sociologický. Akademici často diskutujú o tom, či je altruizmus biologicky daný alebo či je ľudská podstata viac ovplyvnená psychologickými a sociálnymi faktormi. Táto práca berie do úvahy všetky tri pohľady pričom bude klásť dôraz hlavne na sociálny a politický konštrukt, pretože sociálne inštitúcie a normy v silnej miere ovplyvňujú altruizmus alebo sebecko v ľudskom správaní rovnako ako kooperáciu a konflikt v spoločnosti. V závere bakalárskej práce sa bude prihliadať na rôzne spôsoby akými štát a jeho spoločenské inštitúcie buď podporujú alebo nepodporujú altruizmus. Aplikuje sa to na príklad Slovenska, kde inštitúcie a médiá ovplyvňujú spôsob, akým spoločnosť pristupuje k utečeneckej kríze.

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Some say that the aim of our life journey is important, however, I advocate that the journey itself is more important as it leads us to the aim.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my whole family. Namely, my mother, for everything she did and continues to do for me and for the love and support she gives me. Then, to my grandmother, for teaching me that dreams can turn into reality if one works towards them, not just dream about them. Many thanks to my father, Ľudovít, and Marta for their support, friendship, and help.

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## Why the study of altruism?

*"Any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members -- the last, the least, the littlest."*

Cardinal Roger Mahony<sup>1</sup>

Last semester, in one of my favorite classes, in the reading of Moral Tribes<sup>3</sup> it was suggested that morality is contextual. This idea which I did not pay much attention to before made me think about how so many things we consider to be a personal choice are actually socially based and it made me ponder how the quality and the kindness of society can be influenced socially.

In light of the refugee crisis today we need to figure out who we are going to be as a society. How we are going to deal with those who need help, those who are socially weak, ostracized or disadvantaged. Are we going to go in the direction of a more totalitarian society which views foreigners as outsiders and enemies? Or are we going to choose the path of a truly democratic society which embraces diversity and bases its foundation on compassion, cooperation and help of others. As the theoretical part of this paper will show, the tendency of humans to cooperate exists along side the tendency of humans to separate themselves from each other and to fight. In spite of the complex predisposition of humans to engage in the non-cooperative "survival of the fittest", many studies also suggest that it is possible to have

a society that supports and encourages the cooperative aspects of being human. Research also suggests that such a society then leads to better „social well-being“ of its citizens and a better quality of life for its individual members as well as people as groups.

Therefore, it is very important to examine how altruism can be socially created and encouraged as this will give us clues and suggestions on how to create a kinder, more inclusive society.

## Research Design and Methodology

**Analysis of previous research:** The thesis will use an analytical synthesis of research materials from the fields of political science, philosophy, sociology as well as biology and psychology.

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<sup>1</sup> In a 1998 letter, Creating a Culture of Life.

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**Case study:** The thesis will also use a case study in the form of a media analysis (print and tv media) of the Slovak coverage of the refugee crisis as well as a number of in-depth interviews with experts in the field of migrants and refugees in Slovakia. The interviews will be transcribed and put through a content analysis.

## Chapter I: Altruism in Broader Context

*To live for others, the definitive formula of human morality, gives a direct sanction exclusively to our instincts of benevolence, the common source of happiness and duty. ... The first principle of morality...is the regulative supremacy of social sympathy over the self-regarding instinct.*

August Comte<sup>2</sup>

The main aim of the first chapter is to outline and examine the concept of altruism from three major points of view: social, biological and psychological. The guiding questions of this chapter are the following: a) what is altruism and how it is defined? b) how is altruism categorised? and c) what are the implications of the experience of altruism?

### 1. Altruism

The notion of the concept of altruism appeared in many philosophical sources as well as in the work of the French philosopher and “father of sociology” Auguste Comte<sup>3</sup> already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The word itself is composed of the root *altrui* - meaning “the others”, while the word “altruism” was introduced as an antonym for “egoism”. Altruism can be seen as giving priority to the needs of others before ours to achieve common interests and better cooperation. The discussion of altruism meant for the 19<sup>th</sup> century a new wave of questions and discussions of philosophical, religious, and socially-ethical perspectives on the morality and the functioning of individuals in a society, and, vice versa, the impact of society on individuals. Another important philosopher engaged in the discussion of altruism was Thomas Hobbes. He focused mainly on the analysis of human nature, people’s way of thinking (the way people

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<sup>2</sup> Comte, A. (1981) *Catechism of Positivism*. London: Kegan Paul. Translated by R. Congreve.

<sup>3</sup> August Comte is known as the founder of Sociology and Positivism – a movement which believed that only scientific methods can lead to true knowledge. Comte discusses altruism in more detail in *Catechism of Positivism* where he understands altruism as putting “social sympathy over the self-regarding interests”.

reached their interests), and whether people were able to give up their own needs in favour of the needs of the whole group. The initial knowledge about altruism led him to classify altruism into various categories such as psychological, social, and ethical altruisms<sup>4</sup>. Following his work, many further questions arose in the wider discussion of altruism: What is the source of altruism in people? Do people behave altruistically? How to lead a society towards altruism? These questions were tackled by different disciplines as altruism was examined from a wider social, biological, or psychological view.

## 1.2 Altruism in biology

*Let us try to teach generosity and altruism, because we are born selfish.*

Richard Dawkins<sup>5</sup>

In biology and neuroscience, altruism is studied from the point of view of our biological – more specifically - genetic make-up. Even though the concept of the “selfish gene” might mislead us to believe that biologically, we are inherently selfish, the science shows that on the biological level, genes need to be both selfish and cooperative at the same time in order to survive.

In evolutionary biology, scholar often use the concept of the so called “reciprocal altruism”. This concept appeared between the 1960s and 1970s and it was initially developed by a socio-biologist Robert Trivers and also used by the biologist Richard Dawkins’s. Reciprocal altruism refers to a behaviour of an organism that leads to a temporary reduction of the organism’s biological ability in favour of another biological ability while expecting that the other organism will “return the favour” in the future. On the human individual level, this might refer to a person’s willingness to help others that only exists if a favour helps the receiving person more than it costs the giving person and the receiving person is eager to return a favour if roles

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<sup>4</sup> Hobbes, T., & Gaskin, J. C. A. (1998). *Leviathan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Dawkins, R. (2006). *The Selfish Gene*. United States: Oxford University Press.

should change. Thus, reciprocal altruism is a sort of automatic calculation of cost benefit or “tit for tat”<sup>6</sup>.

Dawkins, in his book *The Selfish Gene*<sup>7</sup> goes further from the micro world of biology into the macro world of the organisational structure in a society. He perceives the life in a society as a defence against an enemy (what is good for the collective is also good for the individual). In the group, we focus on building the strength and cohesion of the group through different socialization processes. In this context, Dawkins talks about the mimicking process, for example, through which we learn how to interact with others and to imitate other people’s behaviour which also teaches us what is rewarded and what is punished. He claims that mimicking is the essence of social and cultural processes - people mimic what they see in all aspects of life.

Dawkins’s peer, a known socio-biologist Robert Trivers<sup>8</sup>, brought some evidence that altruism is implemented in the brain as a set of moral emotions. Trivers observed that human behaviour is influenced both by one’s individual genetic predisposition as well as by the environment in which a person is brought up. In the same way as Dawkins, he supported the idea of reciprocal altruism and claimed that the cooperation of individuals and its benefits is not a wrong choice but it does have an ultimately selfish motive.

In this context, Trivers focused especially on the social rules and aspects of reciprocal cooperation. The upside of this altruism is that it may maintain peaceful interaction as well as serve to prevent negative or harmful behaviour. For example, in the case of cheating in a cooperative relationship – the principle of “you will reap what you sow” might often lead to honesty in cooperation because if “I don’t cheat on you – you will not cheat on me”. Thus, maintaining of these rules then leads to better cooperation and general satisfaction on both sides. The downside of reciprocal altruism is that if a person breaks rules of reciprocity, the cooperation breaks down. Thus,

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<sup>6</sup> Trivers, R. (1971). *The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism*. Quarterly Review of Biology

<sup>7</sup> Dawkins, R. (2006). *The Selfish Gene*. United States: Oxford University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Trivers, R. L. (1971). *The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism*. Quarterly Review of Biology

reciprocity is dependent on one's ability to remember the social interactions and the gains of the social interaction.

Ultimately, Dawkins and Trivers believe that similar to the functioning of the genes, an individual must follow his or her selfish strategy in order to survive while he also believes that altruism can be taught and the selfish gene can be suppressed if necessary – mimicking is one of the ways we learn to act in an altruistic way. According to Dawkins, humans are brought up as instruments of their genes, however, the advantage of these instruments is that they can raise against their makers<sup>9</sup>.

### 1.3 Altruism in psychology

*To see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, to feel with the heart of another. For the time being, this seems to me an admissible definition of what we call social feeling.*

Alfred Adler<sup>10</sup>

The field of psychology understands altruism in terms of a motivated class (group) of people that aims to help the other group to achieve an objective. Similar perspective is used for the role of egoism in motivating the achievement of one's own objectives. Psychology especially examines whether an individual is truly capable of altruistic behaviour and to what extent altruistic behaviour is subject to selfishness and self interest in the process of and motivation for cooperation.

For example, behaviourism in psychology believes that each type of human behaviour is either rewarded or punished and thus human actions and motivation are guided by behavioural consequences. The supporters of this approach argue that people tend to avoid punishment and are led to act in a way that is followed by a reward.

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<sup>9</sup> Dawkins, R. (1998) *Sobecký gen*. Mladá Fronta, p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> Adler, A. (1964). *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*. H. L. Ansbacher and R. R. Ansbacher (Eds.). New York: Harper Torchbooks.

This understanding of altruism is more similar to the biological concept of reciprocal altruism.

On the other hand, the social psychologist Daniel Batson, known for his theory of empathetic altruism and prosocial behaviour, discusses the role of empathy in the process of cooperation and understands the selfish roots of reciprocal cooperation in a much more complex way. Unlike the biologists or even some social scientists Batson believes that help based on true empathy without anything in return does exist. He further posits that we use empathy as a certain social compass that helps us “co-feel” with the needs of others and function better in a society.

In his book *Altruism in Humans*<sup>11</sup>, Batson defines altruism as an action designed to improve someone else’s situation. In his work, Batson is not particularly interested in the evolutionary altruism (a behaviour where one organism behaves in such a way as to contribute to another organism). He is more interested in the way humans help each other and more importantly, what drives them to help each other. In other words, he focuses on what he understands as the building elements of cooperation - the human empathy and compassion. Batson is convinced that reciprocal altruism is not a key mechanism in altruism as such, but rather, empathy is crucial. Even though one can find selfish reasons in helping others, Batson argues that selfishness is not the main reason for altruism, he does not ultimately believe that helping others is a form of selfish behaviour. Based on a number of experiments<sup>12</sup> the author found that people behaved in an altruistic way systematically. If people see someone suffering, they most frequently help out of stress due to the feelings empathy – feeling what it might feel to be in the other person’s shoes - which drives individuals to the urge to help someone. In his book, Batson also advocates that empathy is our moral choice

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<sup>11</sup> Batson, C.D. (2011). *Altruism in Humans*. New York: Oxford University Press. In this book Batson defined altruism as “*Other-oriented feelings congruent with the perceived welfare of another person.*”

<sup>12</sup> Batson finds in his work that people are sometimes selfish, sometimes not, depending on the circumstances.

and, most importantly, altruism is to a large extent a result of socialisation or socialization can lead us to altruism.

Ultimately, similar to the sociological view of the key role that socialization plays in us becoming “human”, Batson believes that pro-social tendencies are both innate to humans as well as they are firmly incorporated in the motivational structure of a person which is created by the socialisation process.

#### **1.4 Social aspect of altruism**

*As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races.*

Charles Darwin<sup>13</sup>

Sociology or political science clearly show that society impacts individuals through the creation of socially constructed concepts. That means that the way individuals in a society think or act and the way that a society as an entity views various social phenomena is subject to culture, traditions, and way of thinking of the whole society. In this context, sources in social sciences and philosophy will focus on examining altruism from the point of view in which a society can encourage, discourage or even create cooperation and peace on the one hand and self-interest and conflict, on the other hand. For example, Thomas Hobbs<sup>14</sup> or Stephen Pinker<sup>15</sup> suggest that a “great leviathan” leader either in the form of a personal leader or a state - can tame conflict and can produce a more cooperative, more civilized society.

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<sup>13</sup> Darwin, Ch. (1871) *The Descent of Man*. London: John Murray

<sup>14</sup> Hobbes, T., & Gaskin, J. C. A. (1998). *Leviathan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>15</sup> Pinker, S. (2011). *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. USA: Penguin Group.

In this context, the work of Stephen Pinker brings a number of important ideas and findings. Overall, the work of Pinker leads to the conclusion that our modern western society is becoming more altruistic and the current western society is definitely more altruistic than the society of the past.

In his book *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, he examines the history of European countries and large kingdoms and its important connection to the forms of political governance of different states and societies. It cannot be denied that one can find many wars, murders, and suffering in the world. However, Pinker points out that due to a more effective political organization, the current western society is much more altruistic and humane (a murder was much more common in the 14<sup>th</sup> century). He claims that the current political form of a democratic society - composed of governments, courts, police, and a legal use of force - is unprecedentedly effective. Thanks to the effective government, we live in a relatively well-functioning society which is much more able to protect basic human rights. He emphasizes the importance and key role of an effective political system in the creation and maintenance of peace and similar to Hobbs, views anarchy in very negative and harmful terms in the context of peace and conflict in society.

In addition, Pinker also explores other key social factors that play a role in the maintenance of peace. He believes that in the context of a democratic society, a lower rate of violence exists due to a higher level of education, development of science as well as the existence of independent media which brings different points of view to the forefront. Pinker ultimately defends the position that human nature, which includes both the predisposition for violence as well as the ability to find social tools for conflict resolution, is becoming more altruistic. This trend in which the violent aspect of human nature is more suppressed exists, according to Pinker, thanks to the rules of the society, its laws, its trade, exchange of goods, education, and other factors, or in other words, thanks to an effective political and social system that keeps the violent tendencies in check and encourages more cooperation. From a social of point view, the key aspect of altruism lies in the society's ability to create it and encourage it.

### **1.5 The interconnected nature of altruism**

To summarize, this chapter outlined the basic definitions of altruism from the biological, social and psychological perspective. From the biological perspective, altruistic behaviour is genetically determined, similar to selfish behaviour, and it is part of our innate development and functioning. The selfish and the altruistic tendencies of organisms work hand in hand.

The psychological aspect shows us the fact that the mere altruism is closely linked with empathy and thus the ability to assess the feelings of others: empathy.

The socio-political perspective points out that the very way in which a society functions, how it is organized and managed affects altruistic or egotistical behaviour. In other words, social structure and organization has a direct impact on the way in which its people are going to behave, which innate predisposition is going to come to the surface or what the interplay of selfish vs altruistic behaviour is going to look like.

For the purposes of this thesis, perhaps the most important aspect of the different views on altruism is the fact that all scholars who study altruism agree that socialization and social structure play an immensely important role in the creation, encouragement and maintenance of cooperation or vice versa, the creation and support of conflict.

## Chapter II: Cooperation vs. Selfishness

*One of the great debates in Western civilization is whether humans are born cooperative and helpful and society later corrupts them (e.g. Rousseau), or whether they are born selfish and unhelpful and society teaches them better (e.g. Hobbes). As with all great debates, both arguments undoubtedly have some truth on their side.*

Tomasello, *Why We Cooperate*, p.17

### 2.1 Cooperation vs Selfishness

Examining the social aspects of altruism in more detail, this chapter will examine two aspects of interaction in society. The first aspect will include altruism, empathy, compassion, and cooperation of individuals in a group. The second aspect will involve conflict and non-cooperation (selfishness). As it was outlined in the first chapter, different scholar and points of view examine different aspects of the altruism-selfishness continuum. The main difference in standpoint is outlined in Tomasello's quote above – the two differing views make opposite assumptions about inherent human nature.

Dawkins, representing the conflict and non-cooperation will argue that humans are naturally selfish and thus the essence of altruistic behaviour is either built on selfish intentions or it has to be forced socially. On the other hand, Tomasello's theory (similar to Batson's point of view) claims that people are born with an innate instinct for cooperation, which means that being empathetic and helping others is a given part of who we are. Human assistance does not always happen for selfish reasons because we are born with an innate ability to feel compassion and empathy.

## 2.2 Cooperation

*One key to human survival was the ability to cooperate – to work together in pursuit of common goals, such as protection and food.“*

William Ury<sup>16</sup>

The meaning of the word “cooperate<sup>17</sup>” is to work together. From the socio-psychological point of view, cooperation can be understood as a behaviour, during which individuals work together in order to achieve a goal. In order to establish cooperation, it is very important to build empathy, trust, and compromise for the good of the majority. Therefore, we will discuss cooperation through Michael Tomasello, who is an advocate of the theory that cooperation and altruism are not alien features to the human kind. He even claims that they are a part of our nature.

### **Tomasello: Why we cooperate?**

In his work *Why Cooperate*<sup>18</sup>, Tomasello discusses the origins of cooperation between humans and whether cooperation has social or evolutionary origin. His research focuses on young children and chimpanzees among whom he observes aspects of cooperation. His research concludes that the only difference between the two species is that a two-year-old human child is better equipped to cooperate with his peers thanks to a better developed capability to communicate.

There are a number of experiments to prove this finding. For instance, in one experiment Tomasello put food on two ends of a wooden board and chimpanzees only had to pull a rope tied to the board to themselves in order to reach the food. Through joined efforts, the chimpanzees managed to pull the board to themselves. A problem

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<sup>16</sup> Ury, W. (2000). *The Third Side: Why We Fight and How We Can Stop*. Penguin Books.

<sup>17</sup> Dictionary.com Unabridged. Retrieved February 19, 2016 from Dictionary.com website <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cooperation>

<sup>18</sup> Tomasello, M. (2009). *Why We Cooperate*. Boston, USA: The MIT Press

occurred when the same experiment took place while only one bowl of food was placed in the centre of the board. Only one chimpanzee pulled the rope because he knew he would get the food while the other only held the rope. Tomasello repeated this experiment with children while he put gummy bears candy in the centre of the board. The first child approached the board and took a gummy bear. Then, the second child approached the bowl and took three bears. The first child returned and argued that it is not fair and convinced the other child that they should divide the gummy bears. As a result, they were both satisfied.

Following his many experiments, Tomasello ultimately argues that humans are born with an innate predisposition to cooperate and feel compassion. He summarizes his findings in a number of points<sup>19</sup>: Tomasello finds that cooperative behaviour occurs spontaneously at the age of 14 months even in children who had not been previously encouraged towards this behaviour. The encouragement or rewards by parents do not have an impact on a help-oriented child - the child helps others to the same extent regardless of encouragement. Interestingly, primates, who from an evolution points of view are close to us, exhibit the same behaviour. Thus, Tomasello claims that it can be argued that this behaviour is inherited, rather than the product of a specific culture or certain socialization. Finally, children from cultures with less significant impact of their upbringing help others to the same degree as children from Western cultures. Thus, he argues that the cultural differences are not necessarily always the determining factor. Overall, Tomasello concludes that the willingness to help is essentially driven by the child's innate empathy and compassion.

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Tomasello. Annual Reviews. A Lecture in Psychology: Origins of Human Cooperation and Morality. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOHxsZBD3Us>

Tomasello, M. (2009). *Why We Cooperate*. Boston, USA: The MIT Press; Tomasello, M., Vaish, A. (2013). Origins of Human Cooperation and Morality. *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 64: 231-255; Tomasello, M., Melis A.P., Tennie C., Wyman E., Herrmann E. "Two Key Steps in Evolution of Human Cooperation". *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 53, No. 6 (December 2012), pp. 673-692.

### **Tomasello: The Interplay between Biology and Norms**

Describing his work, Tomasello speaks of cooperation in terms of biology and calls this biological aspect “personal morality” and in terms of social context, which he calls “norm based morality”<sup>20</sup> Personal morality refers to the supposition that humans are cooperative by nature and during cooperation they either act fair naturally or are encouraged to act fair by others in their social group. Norm based morality refers to the human ability to act cooperatively as a result of enforced and learned social norms that are part of the socialization process. We perceive social norms and moral judgments as control. We are afraid to break the social norms and the consequential reaction of our surrounding (slander, social exclusion). Therefore, cooperation is a part of human nature and the limits of our cooperation are set by social norms and institutions, which overlook our behaviour. The personal morality and the norm based morality are working hand in hand and they are two aspects of one continuum.

In this attitude, one can find that Tomasello is in agreements with Pinker and Dawkins, who also claim that cooperation itself and one’s behaviour is under the supervision and is influenced by social conditions.

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Tomasello. Annual Reviews. A Lecture in Psychology: Origins of Human Cooperation and Morality. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOHxsZBD3Us>

### 2.3 Dawkins: The Selfish Gene

*Let us try to teach generosity and altruism, because we are born selfish. Let us understand what our own selfish genes are up to, because we may then at least have the chance to upset their designs, something that no other species has ever aspired to do.*

Richard Dawkins<sup>21</sup>

Selfishness is generally defined as a state of being devoted to or caring only for one-self or concerned primarily with one's own interests, benefits, or welfare that does not take others to account<sup>22</sup>. Richard Dawkins, examining the other side of the “cooperative vs selfish” debate

argues that humans are essentially wired to be selfish and in order to survive they must act selfishly.

In his work and his book *Selfish Gene* he examines the human behaviour through the lens of the genome and the nature and functioning of genes. In the most general way, Dawkins argues that genes which are responsible for our survival must be wired to act in a selfish way and genes survive to a large extent because they can act in a way that puts their own survival before anything else.

Even though Dawkins does admit that on the biological level genes, in addition to always fighting for the organism's survival, also need to be able to cooperate. However, he argues that even cooperation is always motivated by the gene's need to survive and thus any type of cooperation has ultimately self-preservation motives and only happens for the gene's benefit or on the human social level, for the individual's benefit.

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<sup>21</sup> Dawkins,R. (1976). *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>22</sup> Dictionary.com Unabridged. Retrieved February 1, 2016 from Dictionary.com website <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cooperation>

For example, Dawkins notes that humans behave in a cooperative especially in groups and most of all in groups that are one's own family. In this case, relational altruism or cooperation happens because we act altruistically towards the genes that are related to our genes. We are genetically coded to help family members. A sacrifice for the good of a related gene can be understood as a sacrifice for the good of oneself. Even if the understanding of family relationships is always open to social influences, Dawkins argues that familial cooperation is hard wired into us as a survival mechanism and in a way, it is still motivated by one's own survival.

In the context of living in groups and surviving in groups through cooperation, Dawkins perceives cooperation and cohesiveness in groups again in self-preservation terms as it is usually motivated by a need to be protected from predators or outside groups which are not interested in our benefits. He argues different people are divided into numerous groups based on different types of criteria or common traits and these groups act selfishly towards each other because they see each other as **separate** – “us versus them” and thus they pursue their own goals with a disregard for other groups that they might perceive as a threat for a number of reasons. An individual protects other members of his group, which means that he is acting selfishly towards members of other groups, while, at the same time, acting altruistically towards members of his own group. In this cooperation, Dawkins argues people cooperate on the basis of the reciprocal altruism principle and they only act altruistically or cooperatively if they know that the offered assistance will benefit them.

Overall, Dawkins's work *The Selfish Gene* tells us that human genes as well as human nature must be selfish in order to evolve and reproduce while at the same time, genes and humans must be able to cooperate to also ensure their survival. In terms of cooperation, Dawkins concludes that we choose to cooperate in groups or in families and thus we follow our selfish genes in the sense that we choose to cooperate with a person in some way related to us, rather than an unrelated person. When there are conflicts in the cooperation with a related person, we try to resolve these conflicts with common interests. We create larger groups and societies where people learn to share love for many common aspects and thus can survive with less conflict and more peace. Therefore, Dawkins does conclude that altruism can be taught and, therefore, can suppresses the selfish ego in an individual or selfish tendencies in groups. Lastly

he also notes that altruism and selfishness often coexist. People must sometimes be more altruistic if they want to cooperate with others, while other times they must be selfish in order to help themselves at the expense of others and achieve their goals.

#### **2.4 Key Role of Social factors in the Shaping of Altruism and Self-interest**

Many scholars differ in their position in the great debate whether we are inherently compassionate or wired to be selfish.

In his book *Why We Cooperate*, Tomasello concluded that humans are cooperative from childhood and that it is a part of the human nature to be able to cooperate, act altruistically and most of all, to feel empathy and compassion. However, at the same time, he did admit that humans will often act in order to benefit only themselves and his research showed that cooperation and altruism must be nurtured in a variety of ways. The social factors in the encouragement of cooperation play a fundamental and absolutely essential role.

In contrast to the initial position of Tomasello, Dawkins argued that we are inherently driven by selfishness which is a part of our genes and that cooperation has predominantly a self-preserving motivation. Dawkins, however, also admitted that similar to genes, we need to be able to cooperate in order to survive and such cooperation can be taught and encouraged by larger environmental and social factors.

Even though these two influential authors come out of different standpoints, like many other authors in this debate, it is very important to note that they all (Hobbs, Dawkins, Green, Tomasello, Batson, Ury, and others) ultimately share a vital common conclusion: Whether we are initially born compassionate or self-interested, the way we are going to behave in many situations is **most of all impacted, shaped and even created** by the socialization we receive, the structure and organization of the society we live in, and by the culture, institutions and norms that mould our thinking, our views, our beliefs.

Since the ultimately goal of this thesis is to examine the factors that lead to cooperation and altruism in society, using the ideas outlined in the previous two chapters, the next chapter will focus on the types of social context which create altruism,

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and how the social structure and organization acts as an indicator of whether or not a society is capable of running on the altruistic principle. This next chapter will also attempt to point out the conditions under which altruism can work and under which conditions it cannot.

### Chapter III: Building blocks of Cooperation

*“We come equipped with automated behavioral programs that motivate and stabilize cooperation within personal relationships and groups. These include capacities for empathy, vengefulness, honor, guilt, embarrassment, tribalism, and righteous indignation. These social impulses serve as counterweights to our selfish impulses.”*

Joshua Green

#### 3.1 Building Blocks of Cooperation

Based on the second chapter’s findings, it can be claimed that cooperation is an important part of an individual’s performance within a society. The overview of the scholarly findings regarding altruism concluded that people can act both empathically and cooperatively as well as selfishly and non-cooperatively. Authors in this field agree, despite their differences, that altruism and cooperation – whether we are born with it or not – can be shaped in a key way by social conditions. In other words, to a very large extent a society makes an individual either altruistic or selfish.

Thus, using the concepts outlined in the previous two chapters, this chapter will outline and examine the building blocks of cooperation. The chapter will focus on the social ways – aspects of social organization and structure that have the power and the influence to encourage cooperation, empathy, and altruism in human behaviour.

To do this it will use the concepts and ideas from two relevant works. The work of Joshua Green and his book *The Moral Tribes*<sup>23</sup>, where the author presents his key concepts of building cooperation and the psychological theory of Zaki and his findings on how morality, empathy and education work in institutions.

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<sup>23</sup> Green, J. (2013). *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap between Us and Them*. Penguin Books.

### 3.2 Moral Machinery and Tribes

*“Biologically speaking, our brains were designed for within-group cooperation and between-group competition. Cooperation between groups is thwarted by tribalism (group-level selfishness), disagreements over the proper terms of cooperation (individualism or collectivism?), commitments to local “proper nouns” (leaders, gods, holy books), a biased sense of fairness, and a biased perception of the facts.”*

Joshua Green<sup>24</sup>

Green discusses human cooperation and empathy from the perspective of a larger socio-political structure which he calls “the moral machinery”. As Aristotle claimed in his book *Politics Book I*<sup>25</sup>, people are political animals by nature. It is natural for them to divide themselves into groups (families), which eventually form small communities and, consequently, villages and towns. Towns then form us. In order to be a part of a community, we must know the rules of the game. For example, we must know how to cooperate, how to recognise which community is closer to us and which one is necessary for our survival, how important promises are in relationships, what to be cautious of, and which rules to follow.

In order to live in groups, we must know whether or not are we able to trust each other, even though we are not related to or friends with the other person. This situation is particularly problematic as we recognise that cooperation would be beneficial to us, and, at the same time, we are aware of the possibility that the other person might betray us. However, without trust we cannot cooperate, and without cooperation, we cannot form communities. All these dilemmas have always existed and always will, since we are forced to live in a world which constantly presents us with dilemmas. We can use our morality, conscience, and empathy for moral guidance. These usually help us resolve our dilemmas.

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<sup>24</sup> Green, J. (2013). P. 154

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle. *Politics*. Book 1. <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.html>

However, a problem occurs if one suppresses his consciousness and morality. In this case, it is difficult to find the truth and follow it, as it can be based on a subjective feeling. Interestingly, we find it easier to cooperate with people who we are related to, for example, our closest family. In these relationships, trust seems to be given. We are not as suspicious of our family as we are of other people. The reason for this is simple, according to Dawkins; our genes are responsible for this phenomenon. We find it easier to cooperate with our family and feel natural trust towards them because we see them, in a way, as a part of us. Our behaviour is influenced by our emotions, and we are bound with our relatives by an invisible bond, which always pulls us towards each other.

At the same time, we must consider a bond called friendship. This bond is based on shared experiences – by repeating common activities, we start to trust each other. However, we must remember that friendship is a very strong, yet fragile bond. We find it difficult to distinguish between real friends and people who pretend to be our friends. This relationship is based on the reciprocal principle, in other words, everything we invest in the other person we want to see our trust returned. Therefore, it is full of actions and reactions.

### 3.3 Empathy

*Throughout the world, teachers, sociologists, policymakers and parents are discovering that empathy may be the single most important quality that must be nurtured to give peace a fighting chance.* Arundhati Roy<sup>26</sup>

*"Only curiosity about the fate of others, the ability to put ourselves in their shoes, and the will to enter their world through the magic of imagination, creates this shock of recognition. Without this empathy there can be no genuine dialogue, and we as individuals and nations will remain isolated and alien, segregated and fragmented."* Azar Nafisi<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Roy, Arundhati. *Cultivating Empathy in Children and Youth*. Retrieved 5<sup>th</sup> February 2016. <http://eqi.org/roy1.htm>

<sup>27</sup> Nafisi, Azar. (2008). *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. Random House Trade Paperbacks. Page 78.

To function in a society, we have to be able to cooperate with other individuals and we have to be able to cooperate as groups. According to many scholars, the cornerstone of cooperation and altruism is empathy. Empathy allows us to feel what others feel and leads us to better understanding of other people's position.

Joshua Green in his work *Moral Tribes* discusses the many aspects of cooperation and the corner stone of cooperation – the feeling and ability to feel empathy. In order to be able to function and maintain living in the moral machinery, **empathy** is absolutely crucial. It is important to be able to understand the feelings of the other person in order to avoid causing them harm. It is a form of self-reflexion. It could be argued that our current society does not function as well as it could due to the fact that there seems to be a tendency for people who suppress their empathy to be more successful. This type of people is particularly preferred in politics, medicine, and business. Is this right? Do we really prefer people who suppress their empathy to people, who are able to act upon it? This is the real dilemma, as I think the system would work more effectively if there were people in business and politics who are able to be empathic. The question is whether or not they would be more efficient.

### **3.4 The Social Institution of Treats and Promises**

Another important important aspect of The Moral Machinery is **treats and promises**, which work as a glue of cooperation. A promise is a kind of an agreement which forces us to perform duties we have previously agreed to. In the case of a broken promise, there is a punishment in the form of guilt. Guilt creates pain and blame. These form a mirror, which shows us where we have made mistakes. Conscience is a quiet voice which reminds us that someone is watching us. It is difficult to silence it.

Another important tool for self-reflexion and a reminder that someone is always watching us is slander. This serves the purpose of reminding us to consider what we do and how we act. Slander can be defined as the society's opinion of us. It is a critical tool of social control. It is not always fair but it has been estimated that 65 per cent of our dialogues are slander. We are usually critical of acts that contradict our beliefs and values.

Values and beliefs are what make us individuals and they divide us into communities. People are usually divided on the basis of language, culture, race, religion, or ideology. The division into groups, tribes or communities has been with us since the beginning of human kind and it cannot be prevented or avoided as it is the building stone of social organization. Most importantly, making the “tribal” distinction between “us and them” is natural for us while at the same time it leads to a more divisive personal stand and greatly impacts selfish behaviour versus more compassionate behaviour. While we have to acknowledge that the divisive group behaviour is an essential part of human social organization, it is important to remember that despite our differences, we are all humans. We all have certain qualities, which are universal, regardless of race, culture, language, or social standing. These qualities have always existed and always will. Everyone is capable of feeling love, happiness, sadness, or jealousy. These emotions and feelings cannot be determined by a religion, or the colour of one’s skin. I would claim that these emotions are even independent of time.

### **3.5 Social Institutions of Education**

Finally, empathy and altruism are influenced by a large number of other social factors, such as education, social institutions, culture, and society. Green as well as Zaki<sup>28</sup> conclude that empathy can be either supported or suppressed by various social factors. Equally, it can be argued that empathy is the beating heart of cooperation and altruism and that it is the main building block which is mutually influenced by institutions, laws, education, and genes.

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<sup>28</sup> Zaki, J. (2013). Cue Integration: A Common Framework for Social Cognition and Physical Perception. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. U.S. Sage Publications. Retrieved November 11, 2013.

### **3. 6 The Rich Tapestry of Cooperation**

All the reviewed scholarly work ultimately argues that empathy is the root and foundation of cooperation which is then influenced by a myriad of other social factors such as tribal and group relationships or a system of treats and promises which bind us together. Similarly, one should also mention institutions which build cooperation, norms, laws, culture, and most of all education. In conclusion, cooperation is highly important for an individual, while cooperation could not exist without empathy and trust. Laws and agreements can help cooperation in the sense that they build trust.

These findings will help shape the final chapter, which will examine a case study, namely, the way immigrants are perceived in Slovakia. I will focus on cooperation in practice, and how it is formed by the society, norms, culture, and education through media and politics.

#### **Chapter IV: Impact of socio-political discourse on altruism**

*“Definícia Strednej Europy: nie sme schopní kooperácie” - “Definition of central Europe: We are incapable of cooperation.”*

Magda Vášáryová<sup>29</sup>

##### **4.1 The Slovak society and its attitude towards the immigration crisis**

The last chapter will apply concepts and ideas from the previous chapters in order to examine a specific case of the Slovak political and media discourse regarding the refugee crisis in Europe in order to assess whether the social discourse supports cooperation or conflict.

The work of the previous chapters has concluded that cooperation – no matter whether we are born with it or it is socially fostered – is greatly shaped by social influences and it cannot work without empathy. Social factors forming cooperation can have significant impact – either positive or negative.

In the final chapter, this thesis will focus on the way the European immigration crisis has been perceived in Slovakia. The main argument of this chapter is that the public socio-political and media discourse has a great impact on the way that large problems are perceived and on the way cooperation or rejection of cooperation is either encouraged or completely discouraged.

As studies in human conformity show (Ash, Milgram, Zimbardo<sup>30</sup>), people respond intensely to authority and the impact of groups that have power. In this case, the authorities that have great power are media and politicians. The politicians and the media have direct influence on the opinions of the general public and on the ways that

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<sup>29</sup> Czech TV (CT2) live broadcast, program “Z očí do očí“, 5.10.2015, 22:00-23:00.

<sup>30</sup> Milgram, S. (1975). *Obedience to Authority: An experimental view*. New York: Harper Colophon Books.; Asch, Solomon (1952)., *Social Psychology*. New York: Prentice-Hall.; Asch, S. (1955) *Názory a spoločenský tlak*, *Kritika a Kontext*, No.37 volume XIII. Ročník. Zimbardo, P. (1971). *Stanford Prison Experiment*. <http://www.prisonexp.org/>

general public, in this particular case, is going to perceive the refugee crisis or refugee problem in Europe.

The refugee immigration crisis has divided the Slovak public into two major camps and on the political and media level we see discourses representing these two opposing points of view. On one side, people try to empathise with the immigrants, on the other, immigrants are considered to be a tremendous threat.

#### **4.2 Integration of migrants in Slovakia<sup>31</sup>**

In Slovakia, there are over 84 thousand foreigners with legal living permits. They represent 1.56 percent of all the inhabitants of Slovakia. People from countries from outside the European Union (from so called the third-world countries) represent 41.6 percent of all foreigners in Slovakia. Despite the fact that Slovakia has one of the lowest percentages of foreigners in the European Union, since it entered the union the percentage has multiplied and is still growing. This migration trend leads to a greater cultural and religious diversity, while the majority of Slovaks do not have sufficient information about migration and they hold prejudices and stereotypes against foreigners. The IOM in Slovakia reacts to these trends and does the following steps in order to integrate foreigners.

In June 2015, according to statistics of the Border and Aliens Police, and The Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, there were 79,422 foreigners with valid visas living in Slovakia (1.46 per cent of the whole population of Slovakia),

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<sup>31</sup> Kern ,M.,(2015), Prieskum: Utečencov nechceme a bojíme sa ich, denikn.sk

Cokyna,J.(2015) ,Utečenci, Európa a Slovensko: otázky a odpovede, denikn.sk

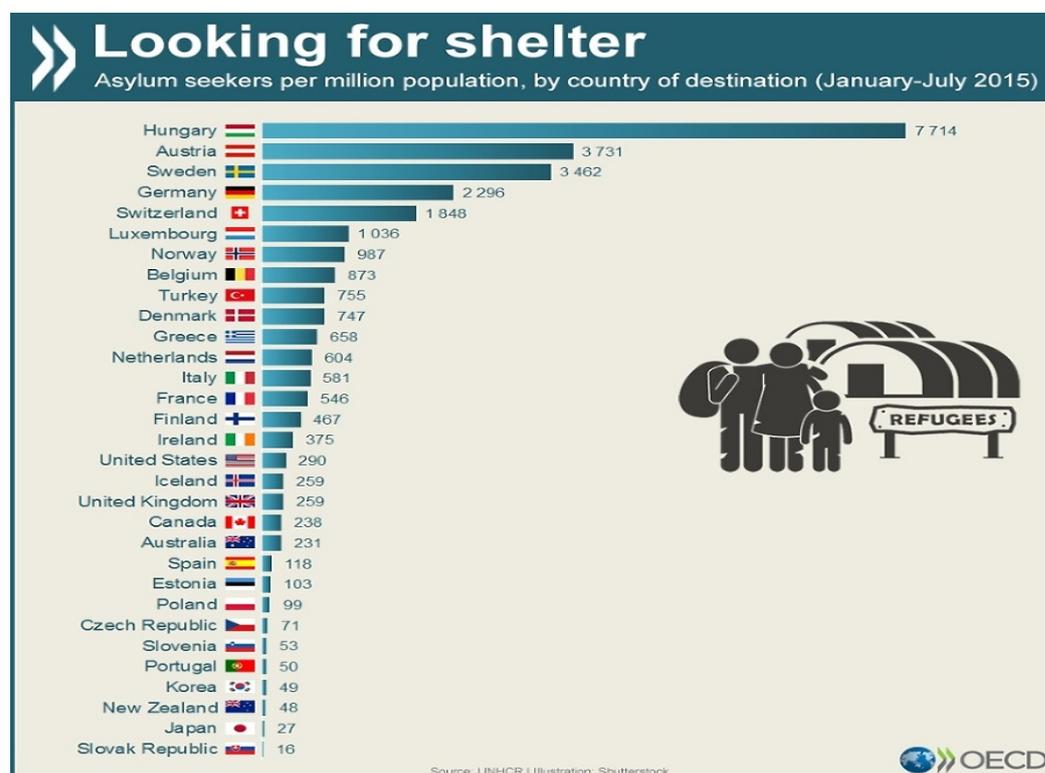
IOM,(2015)Európania najviac odmietajú imigráciu cudzincov, Tlačová správa Ústredia IOM

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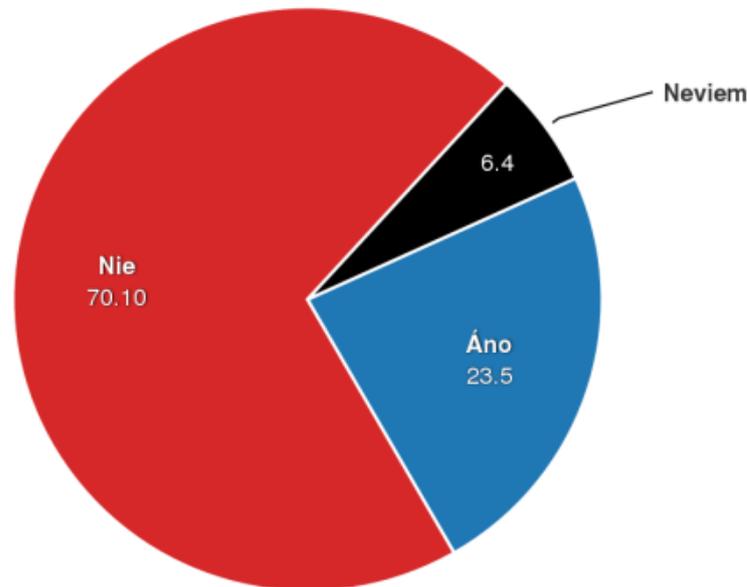
out of which 22,865 were employed.

According to the Gallup Company's survey, 37 per cent of the domestic respondents support the idea of maintaining the current state of immigration, while 44 per cent support its decrease. In comparison, only 4 per cent of the respondents could imagine an increase of this number.

A third of respondents (34 per cent) is inclined to believe that foreigners hold jobs which Slovaks are not interested in. Almost the same percentage (30 per cent) thinks that foreigners steal jobs from the domestic workers. Out of the European countries which performed a similar questionnaire, only the people of Ukraine, Serbia, and Moldavia had a higher percentage of similar attitudes.



## Ste za to, aby Slovensko prijalo utečencov na základe kvôt, ktoré navrhuje EÚ?



Source: Polis

According to a Survey performed by the Polis agency, a vast majority of Slovaks refuse to accept the immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa based on the quotas suggested by the European Union. 70 per cent of the respondents refused these quotas (more likely to vote no on the issue were 36.3 per cent and definitely no would vote 33.8 per cent). Only 23.5 per cent would rather or definitely agree with the quotas.

Majority of people believe immigrants to be a threat to the security of Slovakia and its citizens. Yes, or more likely yes, was the answer to this question of 63.4 per cent of inhabitants, while only 24.4 per cent of people had no concerns.

### 4.3 The Slovak Political and Media Coverage of Refugees

#### 4.3.1 "Us versus Them"

In Slovakia, positive and negative attitudes towards the refugees are wrapped in different types of institutional narratives (government, media) that provide moral justification for accepting or rejecting refugees.

Mirroring the two sides of the refugee crisis standpoints, we see two types of political narratives. A more conservative narrative led by the prime minister Fico and his supporters and the more liberal narrative led by the Slovak president Kiska as well as scholars and academics.

President Kiska, when it was announced in July 2015 that Slovakia will willingly accommodate only 100 out of 40,000 immigrants, said that we lost the sympathy of the majority of Europe. *“Slovakia became an object of ridicule and jokes by the European and, indeed, world media. It seemed that the Slovak position towards this issue lacked human touch – and, indeed, the value of a human being.”*<sup>32</sup>

Members of Parliament - Martvoň, Blaha, Kaliňák, and Blanár - reacted to Kiska’s speech in the following way: *“It is shameful, he turned against Slovakia.”* Further, commenting on the EU suggested quotas of immigrant acceptance they said: *“We will never support the dictated quotas. Never. Not even if we remained the last player in this game, we would still consider them irrational.”*<sup>33</sup>

The conservative narrative, mirroring Dawkin’s selfish principle that is based on separation, division and an “us and them” attitude, refuses to acknowledge that the people who are forced to leave their country do so because of massive life threatening reasons. Rather, maintaining the divisive narrative, Fico and his supporters maintain that 90 percent of the migrants have an economic motivation and thus they would be here to rob us of what is ours. In this context, Fico said:

*“Since mister president is not the responsible person in the issue, it is easy for him to make such comments. Should anything happen in Slovakia, he will be the first one to*

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<sup>32</sup> **Kiska ,A.** (7. OKTÓBRA 2015 14:49),*Kiskov prejav v NR SR*, DENIKN.SK

<sup>33</sup> **Kiska ,A.** (7. OKTÓBRA 2015 18:36),*Kiskov prejav v NR SR*, DENIKN.SK

*point fingers at the government for not having handled the situation”, the prime minister commented on the president’s speech.*<sup>34</sup>

Following the attacks in Paris and Germany, Fico repeated his warnings that the uncontrolled and undirected migration wave is directly linked to the terrorist and sexual attacks. *“Therefore, I refuse claims that Slovakia does not have the right to talk about these questions, since we protected our country from being a migration route”*.<sup>35</sup> Further, in a similar vein, he continued to say: *“However, if there was a different government in Slovakia, there would be thousands of migrants here, mainly Muslims. “If any government does this, a ghetto will form, just as it has formed in Paris, and we will not be able to handle it, since we do not know how to integrate these people into the society. Why is it such a problem that we talk about this so openly? Why are we afraid to tell the truth?”*<sup>36</sup>

#### **4. 3.2 “No wall in the world of any given individual country can be unquerable.”<sup>37</sup>”**

On the other side of the debate, we can see the liberal narratives of scholars and academics. The point of view outlined by the sociologist Michal Vasecka, Iveta Radicova or the politologist Samuel Abraham regarding the way immigrants are perceived in Slovakia mirrors the inherently cooperative view outlined by Tomasello or Batson. A

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<sup>34</sup> **Fico,R** , ( 6. januára 2016 14:18), *Premiér: Iná vláda by na Slovensko navozila tisícky migrantov,*),teraz.sk

<sup>35</sup> **Fico,R** , ( 6. januára 2016 14:18), *Premiér: Iná vláda by na Slovensko navozila tisícky migrantov,*),teraz.sk

<sup>36</sup> **Fico,R** , ( 6. januára 2016 14:18), *Premiér: Iná vláda by na Slovensko navozila tisícky migrantov,*),teraz.sk

<sup>37</sup> Radičová, I. (12..2.2016 )Radičová :Fico pri utečencoch iné tvrdí a iné koná. HNtelevízia, <http://tv.hnonline.sk/9ed2ab26-4fe1-43cb-b3be-cfb73b013a55>

view that is founded and focuses most of all on empathy, connection and the realization that we are all interconnected and if we are not going to help each other, we are not going to survive.

Michal Vasecka in Dennik N<sup>38</sup> comments on the public fear of immigrants in the following way:

Q: Why do migrants scare the Slovak public so much?

*This case is similar to Islamophobia in countries where Muslims have never lived and do not even live. It reminds me of Japan, which held strong anti-Semitic feelings, while it is one of the countries where Jews have never lived. Slovakia does not have any experience with immigration. All it has ever experienced was emigration – it has always been a one way wave. The second reason for it is that Slovakia is not ready for any oddities. Therefore, the prognosis is negative towards the possibility of the Slovak public being capable of accepting immigrants who are visibly different and co-living with these people might require a great deal of effort at the beginning. ... For the first time, Slovaks understand that this could concern them as well. For the relative wealth we possess, there are very few migrants here. In purely economic terms, given our level of sophistication, we should have had them much more by now.*

Vasecka also comments more broadly on the historical roots of the “tribalism” in Central Europe. He says that middle-European societies are very close-minded towards any oddities. It is partly due to the way our nations have been formed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century – on the principle of exclusivity – and the last 200 years have been marked by the attempts to eradicate anybody who does not belong to the ethnic core of the society. Just when the mistaken ideals of “purity” materialized, people, who are visibly different, started to appear. These people are even more visibly different than the minorities that some regimes, very regrettably so, tried to eradicate through genocides, deportations, or violent assimilation. The Czech and Slovak societies share equal blame in this matter.

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<sup>38</sup> Kostolny ,M.,(2015) Sociológ Vašečka: Slovensko sa bojí utečencov zbytočne, my ich ne-lákame,denikn.sk

Commenting on a survey that Vasecka and his colleagues conducted in 2009<sup>39</sup> for the IMO, he also discusses a different reaction to immigrant to the one we notice in public today.

Q: In 2009, you conducted a survey for the International Migration Organisation. One of the outcomes was that the majority of the respondents said that if they decided to help someone, they would help refugees. They seemed to show compassion. Now, when they have the opportunity, everything seems to have changed. The reaction is brutally cruel, ruthless. What happened?

*When we were conducting the survey, it turned out that people were confused about the terminology. They understood migrants as refugees and asylum seekers. They did not make the distinction. However, they did indicate that they were willing to help. Previously, this help would realistically take place. For example, approximately 15 years ago, a group of Kurdish refugees appeared on the eastern border – the human smugglers left them behind borders – and the locals selflessly helped them. They made them tea and fed them in the middle of the night. Compassion appeared when people were staring face to face with this group and when people had to look directly at their misfortune. However, in the current scenario, people are afraid of the volume of the problem. Partly thanks to short reports in the media and stories without broader context, the public expects hundreds of thousands of people, who will flood the European Union.*

Q: In reality, our case is different. There have been waves of thousands of refugees going through Slovakia. They did not stay here, they were not granted asylum. However, 12 or 13 years ago, the number of refugees was much higher than 800 people, which we were asked to accept. There was no reaction then, no tension. Why now?

*It is certain that this situation occurred partly due to pictures in media and the information smog on social networks. There are more pictures of refugees, they are more visible and available, and this is a further problem – it serves as a basis for conspiracy theories. However, it seems that for the first time, the citizens of the Slovak Republic realized that this problem concerns them. In 2004, more than 11 thousand people requested asylum in Slovakia, and the public did not know about*

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<sup>39</sup> Kostolny ,M.,(2015) Sociológ Vašečka: Slovensko sa bojí utečencov zbytočne, my ich ne-lákame,denikn.sk

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*it. And many of them probably do not even know that only 15 of them were actually granted asylum. Had they known this, they could be more satisfied now – they would feel that the state fulfilled the civic request to minimize the number of migrants in Slovakia.*

Echoing the narrative of empathy and solidarity, the politologist Samuel Abraham discusses the migration crisis<sup>40</sup>:

*Every great crisis gets simplified to a black and white model; there is no time or patience for shades. Unfortunately, the migration crisis is no exception, it has split the society and nuances and shades seem to have disappeared. Compassion, empathy, and the will to help the weaker, as well as freedom, solidarity, and responsibility are values coded into the DNA of the western morality and ethics. These values are what makes European Union so great and noble, and it seems obvious that this aging union could physically absorb a few more millions of immigrants. However, the fear of immigrants and the threat of terrorist attacks give space to populist and xenophobic politicians to gain support. They promise to stop the immigration wave but, at the same time, they would burry liberal democracy, and with it, even the European Union. Therefore, the reasons why the immigration wave must be stopped are not the migrants, but rather us, our irrational human fear. When we are afraid, most of us prefer security to liberty. We are willing to sacrifice solidarity towards the immigrants. Rational European politicians should not present their nations with this dilemma since it is obvious that most people will choose amorally and rather pragmatically.*

### **4.4 Discourse leads to public opinion: Society shapes compassion**

As this chapter outlined, the political and public opinion on the refugee crisis is split into two opposing views.

On the one hand, some politicians and public groups focus most of all on the Dawkins's version of humanity – the “us versus them” – a narrative and a public story which is full of differences and the desire to protect “your own”. They point out that migrants are of a different faith, because of this dangerous faith, they represent a

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<sup>40</sup> Galis,T.,(2016), Politológ Abrahám: Fica neporazí opozícia, on sa napokon porazí sám.

threat of terrorism, an economic danger, and many different oddities that have no chance to be integrated into our well functioning Slovak society. Representing this “Selfish Gene” view, the media and politicians present migrants to the public as a threat to our country, which efficiently serves to divide the public opinion between “us” and “them”. As Dawkins would say, our selfish gene is trying to protect our group, and, therefore, it encourages us to be violent and not empathic.

On the other hand, some people and politicians engage in a compassionate and empathic point of view while they conclude that people who are fleeing from war, terrorism, and poverty need to be helped because we are all connected. In this type of narrative, the common aspects of individuals tend to be pointed out, the focus is on the fact that we are all human and we all ultimately want and deserve the same things. The concepts and ideas of cooperation are put in the forefront and the goal of such public consciousness raising is a helpful approach to the migrants who need help. This narrative reflects all the scholarly views on the building blocks of cooperation and the nature of empathy.

Why does the nature and direction of the different political and media narratives matter? As it has been mentioned, according to Milgram’s (and other scholar’s) theory, people adjust their positions to the position of the majority and they respect the opinion of the authority (politicians, media, and norms). Thus, the impact and the power of a public discourse cannot be underestimated and the way the crisis is presented to the public becomes crucial. A political and public discourse that highlights commonality, interconnection and the need to view every problem from a broader perspective while ultimately calling for cooperation and empathy will lead to individual and social behaviour that has a great potential to create peace and mutual understanding. A discourse that focuses on the differences and self-protection, ultimately calling for a great division between “us and them” has a great potential to lead to conflict, bigotry and misunderstanding of the complex nature of every social problem.

## Resumé

Autorka si zvolila tému altruizmu. Dôvodom bola aktuálna utečenecká kríza a jej vnímanie slovenskou spoločnosťou, ktorá sa rozdeľuje na dva tábory. Na jednej strane sú na Slovensku ľudia, ktorí sa snažia situáciu riešiť hľadáním ako pomôcť ľuďom, ktorí utekajú pred nebezpečenstvom a sociálnou neistotou. Na druhej strane máme na Slovensku ľudí, ktorí sa boja že utečenci ohrozia ich vlastné sociálne a ekonomické istoty a tým sa stávajú k odmietavému postojovi voči utečencom. Otázkou autorky bolo, čo nás vedie k ceste altruistického vnímania aktuálnej krízy, a čo naopak, k sebeckému a odmietavému postojovi. V tejto práci sa autorka snaží poukázať na fakt, že rozdielnosť je prirodzená rovnako ako je prirodzená kooperácia medzi rozdielnosťami. Teoretická časť práce sa sústreďuje na predispozície ľudí ku kooperácii a rovnako sa práca pozerá aj na predispozície ľudí z biologického hľadiska ku konfliktom a sebeckosti. Skrz teoretickú rovinu poznávania komplexných aspektov altruizmu autorka dospela k názoru, že ľudia majú aj predispozíciu nekooperovať a sociálne inštitúcie vedia tuto predispozíciu k nekooperácii rovnako ako ku kooperácii ovplyvňovať. Výskum autorky tiež poukázal, že kooperácia vedie k lepšie fungujúcej spoločnosti. Kde občania majú lepšiu kvalitu života ako jedinci, rovnako ako súčasť skupiny. Preto autorka práce v závere zdôraznila, že altruizmus existuje a je súčasťou ľudskej podstaty, dá sa naňho pozeráť skrz sociálny, psychologický a biologický aspekt no samotný sociálny aspekt altruizmu je kľúčový, pretože môže altruizmus potlačiť, ale aj podporiť. V spoločnosti kde kooperácia prihliada na potreby všetkých členov skupiny vedie k lepšie fungujúcej spoločnosti. Preto bolo pre autorku veľmi dôležité vyjadriť sociálny aspekt altruizmu a sociálne podmienky, ktorými je altruizmus v spoločnosti podporený alebo naopak. Sociálny faktor, ktorý dôkazuje altruizmus v ľuďoch podporiť alebo potlačiť dal autorke práce zistenie, že ak sa bude spoločnosť viac prikláňať na empaticky a kooperatívny prístup k utečeneckej kríze, bude to viesť k oveľa vládnejšej a ohľadupľnejšej spoločnosti.

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