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Cruelty

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CRUELTY

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of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Thomas John Kussell

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ABSTRACT

CRUELTY

by Thomas John Kussell

The claim that cruelty is the worst thing that we do, with the only exception to the rule, the prevention of greater cruelties, is supported by a Humean perspective on cruelty. The hypothesis that cruelty is solely a pathological condition is rejected. Definitions and views of cruelty by Hume, Kierkegaard, Spinoza, Hobbes, Shklar, Kekes, Rorty, and Hallie are examined and compared.

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CHAPTER ONE

“Emotions Reversed” – Hume and Kierkegaard

Hume had noted cruelty as the most detestable of vices. He gives a quotation from Plutarch, which well illustrates this point. Hume notes that in Plutarch's Lives, Pericles, on his deathbed, is being admired by his friends. Pericles then says:

... you forgot the most eminent of my praises, while you dwell so much on those vulgar advantages, in which fortune had a principle share. You have not observed that no citizen has ever yet worn mourning on my account.¹

At least part of the reason that Hume's selected this quotation from Plutarch was to show that the noblest characters are devoid of cruelty. Hume noted cruelty as a stronger form of hatred. Angry passions like revenge and hatred easily lead to cruelty. Hume says, “When these angry passions rise up to cruelty, they form the most detested of all vices.”² Hume could be counted among the philosophers that hold that cruelty is the worst thing we do.

The opposite of cruelty, for Hume, is benevolence. He holds benevolence in esteem, saying:

... that no qualities are more intitled to the general good-will and approbation of mankind than beneficence and humanity, friendship and gratitude, natural affection and public spirit or what ever proceeds from a tender sympathy with others, and a generous concern for our kind and species.³

Hume further says:

¹ David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning The Principles Of Morals. LaSalle, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Company 1960, p.9.

² David Hume, A Treatise on Human Nature, Second edition, Index by Selby-Bigge, Oxford: Clarendon press, 1990, p. 605.

³ Hume, 1960, p. 10.

Upon the whole, then, it seems undeniable, that nothing can bestow more merit on any human creature than the sentiment of benevolence in an eminent degree...⁴

Hume, then, goes on to make comments on the useful. He says, "In general, what praise is implied in the simple epithet *useful*! What reproach in the contrary!"⁵ He notes that "justice is useful to society,"⁶ and that "public utility is the sole origin of justice."⁷ Hume then gives examples using extreme conditions. He uses extreme benevolence in one example. He indicates that if the world were full of friendship and generosity "that the use of justice would, in this case, be suspended by such an extensive benevolence..."⁸

His example is not as extreme as it may appear. In this country a fair amount of benevolence is demonstrated regularly. If our neighbor is not doing well, we generally are willing to help. The educational system sees that all children are afforded learning opportunities. Children are no longer set off to work in factories and mines. Supermarkets stock an abundance of food for all. During Christmas, the spirit of benevolence is present, even if in commercialized form. Benevolence is demonstrated in many ways. Between benevolence and justice, Hume holds benevolence as the greater good.

Hume gives an example of the extreme opposite of a benevolent society. He notes that if society could not provide for all of the common necessities that people needed to survive, then again "the strict laws of justice would be suspended."⁹ If a virtuous man were placed in a society of ruffians he too would be obliged to "consult the dictates of

⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

self preservation alone”¹⁰ Hume’s point is that once man starts experiencing the inconveniences due to extreme want or extreme selfishness the need for justice once again rises. Hume notes that in such a state of extreme want (which, here, is similar to a state of war) justice is not present.

It is fair to say that in such cases justice is needed. Few would argue that point. Surely in a society where extreme want is the norm, justice is needed. But as Hume has said, it is often suspended. The Russian and French revolutions are examples where justice was needed but suspended.

Hume places a higher value on “benevolence” than on “justice”. It is not hard to see why. Benevolence or the lack thereof is instrumental in the early formation of character. If benevolence were withheld from infants and children, the need for justice would rise. If benevolence were withheld from infants and children we would suspect this as one of the origins of cruelty. Benevolence is required for healthy development. Justice on the other hand has little to do with early development. As long as the infant receives sufficient portions for development the matter of justice is irrelevant. At some later stage, a sense of fairness develops or fails to develop in the individual. The sense of fairness is largely influenced in turn by benevolence or the lack thereof. Justice that is based on benevolence might hold propositions such as “All men are created equal.” Justice that is lacking a benevolent foundation might hold such propositions as “An eye for an eye.” There can be an element of cruelty in such justice.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

Hume had used Hobbesian-like examples to show how justice could be suspended but it is noted that Hume generally opposes Hobbes' state of nature as state of war. Hume says:

Whether such a condition of human nature could ever exist, or if it did, could continue so long as to merit the appellation of a *state*, may justly be doubted. Men are necessarily born in a family society, at least; and are trained up by their parents to some rule of conduct and behavior.¹¹

Hume points out that man is born in family society and is brought up by parents who influence what is learned. He speaks of natural sentiments and gives an example, which demonstrates the importance of benevolence. Then he gives examples reversing the positions, also demonstrating what effect such a reversal would have. In some examples, there were extreme abundance and extreme benevolence. In other examples, there are extreme want and extreme selfishness.

Natural conditions, natural sentiments, original instincts and the like form much of Hume's philosophy. Natural sentiments and original instincts are given as basic to man. Hume makes a statement in the treatise regarding love and hatred that is of interest here. He says:

The passion of love and hatred are always followed by, or rather conjoin'd with benevolence and anger.¹²

He then says:

Love is always followed by a desire of the happiness of the person belov'd and an aversion to his misery: As hatred produces a desire of the misery and an aversion to the happiness of the person hated.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹² Hume, 1990, p. 367.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

Hume notes that “The conjunction of this desire and aversion with love and hatred may be accounted for by two hypotheses...”¹⁴ In one hypothesis love has a cause, an object and an end. Hume says, “ In this system love is nothing but the desire of happiness to another person and hatred that of misery.”¹⁵ Erich Fromm advances this idea. Fromm says:

Love is not primarily “caused” by a specific object, but a lingering quality in a person, which is only actualized by a certain “object.” Hatred is a passionate wish for destruction; love is a passionate affirmation of an “object”; it is not an “affect” but an active striving and inner relatedness, the aim of which is the happiness, growth and freedom of its object.¹⁶

Fromm improves on what Hume said. He retains “cause,” “object” and “end” but offers some modifications. The “cause” becomes an actualization from a lingering quality within. The “end” is the happiness of the person. “Happiness” is elaborated as growth and freedom. He notes further that love is not a feeling or affect but an active striving and inner relatedness. Fromm’s version is similar to Hume’s but is a fuller version.

Hume notes that the particular conjunction of desire and aversion, as he stated it, are the “most obvious and natural sentiments.” The same can be said of Fromm’s comment. Hume also noted that the conjunction of desire and aversion can be expressed in other ways. In the obvious and natural order “love is always followed by a desire of the happiness of the person below’d.” Hume then notes that this obvious and natural order conjoined with desire is not necessary.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.367.

¹⁶ Fromm, 1941, p. 114.

He makes a comment about love and hatred that does not appear to be of natural origin. He makes a comment that seems more like something from Lewis Carroll's Looking Glass world. At first glance it is jarring but upon deeper review reveals a problem of human existence. Hume says regarding the arrangement of love and hatred:

This order of things, abstractly consider'd, is not necessary. Love and hatred might have been unattended with any such desires, or their particular connexion might have been entirely revers'd. If nature had pleas'd, love might have had the same effect as hatred, and hatred as love. I see no contradiction in supposing a desire of producing misery annex'd to love, and of happiness to hatred.¹⁷

Much of cruelty is built upon this reversed and unnatural foundation. A moment's reflection on the condition of love and hatred having entirely different and reversed connections suggests a world of cruelty. One only need ask what kind of world is there in which there is desire to produce misery annexed to love or of happiness annexed to hatred.

Hume notes that the natural order of associations of love and hatred are not necessarily fixed. Not only are the orders of these associations not fixed and necessary but also the orders of these associations are reversed more often than commonly thought, as will be shown. For many people a reversed order of emotions is part of everyday existence.

If the connections of the natural order of the emotions are entirely reversed from their original order it is apparent that angry passions will rise. Cruelty and destruction, then, become more probable responses. That is, if the order of desires of producing

¹⁷ Hume 1990, p. 368.

misery annexed to love, or happiness to hatred is in this reversed form, cruelty is a more likely outcome. These reversed states, as can be seen, are particular mechanisms for cruelty.

For the sake of greater clarity and simplicity, the phrase “emotions reversed” will be used in place of the more awkward, “the desire to produce misery annexed to love and of the desire to produce happiness annexed to hatred.” The term “emotions reversed is used rather than the term “reversed emotions” so that a backwardness is more clearly designated in its use. Under the natural form, we desire happiness of our beloved. In the “reversed” form we desire misery of our beloved (including ourselves). Common sense tells us that something is wrong. We might even say that something is pathological.

One may ponder what this looking glass world of Hume’s would be like? A world of miseries annexed to love would seem to be a cruel world. In most cases it makes for a cruel world. What sort of world would exist where desires of producing misery are annexed to love? One such world would be one of sadomasochism.

For a common reference, it seems fair to say that sadomasochism is a desire to inflict misery and pain on others or to have it inflicted upon oneself, depending on whether the person is sadist or masochist. In the case of sexual sadism or sexual masochism, sexually arousing fantasies are present.¹⁸ Love is present at least in the form of the desire of lust. There is, present, a cruelty of delight (as opposed to cruelty of indifference). The sexual sadist desires to inflict pain, suffering or misery on another and

¹⁸ American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1997, pp. 529, 530.

sees it as a type of love. Some have noted that more specifically, humiliation,¹⁹ is the type of pain that the sadist desires to inflict. But as it is use her the term pain will suffice.

Opposite the sadist, the masochist desires to have pain, suffering, or misery inflicted upon himself or herself and also views it as a type of love. Sadomasochism seems, on face value, one fair match to Hume's abstraction of hatred and loves connection reversed.

Sadomasochism seems to meet the conditions of desire to produce misery annex'd to love and/or happiness annexed to hatred.

A sadist desires to produce misery upon others and seems to see this misery as a function as a type of love. There may be deeper functions but, as noted, sadomasochism will be viewed prima facie here. The masochist does not quite fit Hume's condition as stated. Instead of desiring to inflict misery upon the other the masochist desires to have the other inflict misery upon the masochist himself. Yet, there still remains the misery annexed to love. It seems a variation in that the masochist is the recipient of misery annexed to love.

Melancholia is another condition of misery annexed to love that has been found in searching for reversed connections of emotion. "Melancholia" is the antiquated term that refers to what we call "depression," today. The reason melancholia is selected is that it shows a connection between what Kierkegaard called "bondage of sin" and the "demonic," and Hume's "emotions reversed."

Before we proceed, melancholia needs to be distinguished from grief or physiological depression, though there may be some blending of the conditions. We

¹⁹Richard Rorty, Contingency, irony, and solidarity, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 177.

derive at melancholia in the same way we derive at sadomasochism, by viewing it as the natural order of the “emotions reversed.” But instead of the suffering as it is found in sadomasochism, sexual, emotional or physical pain, it is pain as sadness. Nineteenth century melancholia was romanticized. Romanticism is a sort of idealized love. The melancholic, we may then say, is a person who desires to receive sadness, the depressed state, and annexes comfort to it. This assumes that the melancholic is not just a passive recipient of the misery of depression but desires in some way to produce misery because it has been annexed to love. As noted, the love that is referred to in melancholia is found in Romanticism as romantic love. Melancholia, like fainting was a romantic, proper thing to do in the nineteenth century. Melancholia, as presented here, is a desire of misery annexed to a “romanticized” love, that is an idealized love. Romantic love is largely love held in the imagination. Hume had noted that the desire for happiness or misery stem from the “ideas” of happiness or misery and as such stem from the “imagination,” which in turn shows that they are not integral to love and hatred.²⁰ Arron T. Beck , author of Cognitive Therapy of Depression noted that Epititus wrote, “Men are disturbed not by things but by views which they take of them.”²¹ Melancholic ideas of romantic love are easily held in the imagination. As Hume said the passions can express themselves in a hundred ways. They need not be entirely reversed but may be blends of the natural and reversed orders.

Soren Kierkegaard writes in Either/Or of characters that astutely describe melancholia. One character says:

²⁰ Hume, 1990, p. 367.

I say of my sorrow what the Englishman says of his house: My sorrow is my castle. Many people look upon having sorrow as one of life's conveniences.²²

My sorrow is my castle. Misery is annexed to that which one should love. The thing that should give warmth and pleasure instead is a misery that is accepted as a comfort. The character then says:

On the whole I lack the patience to live. I cannot see the grass grow, and if I cannot do that, I do not care to look at it at all. My views are superficial observations of a "*fahrender Scholastiker* [traveling scholastic]" who dashes through life in the greatest haste. It is said that our Lord satisfies the stomach before the eyes. That is not what I find: my eyes are surfeited and bored with everything, and yet I hunger.²³

Things that should delight, he does not derive pleasure from, things that should fill leave him empty. The emotions have been reversed. Another way of viewing the order of emotions being reversed is to view them as being dysfunctional. A dysfunction is a disordering of a function, which is what occurs in "emotions reversed".

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to differentiate between types of depression and melancholia. But briefly put depression or extended grief are natural when it comes from a loss of love such as, when a loved one dies and is not a desire of misery annexed to love. But for the purpose of referencing a condition to Hume's order of "emotions reversed," melancholia serves the purpose. For instance Kierkegaard's character says regarding the page in *Figaro*:

From the foregoing, the basis of what is distinctive in the melancholy of this level should be evident, that it arises because the whole fullness

²¹ Arron T. Beck, *Cognitive Therapy of Depression*, New York: The Guilford Press, 1979, p. 8.

²² Soren Kierkegaard, *Eithor/Or*, Part I, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 21.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 25.

of life presses down and, so to speak, overwhelms one; whereas the melancholy of another level (the romantic) can express itself, inasmuch as the individual, pursuing his vanishing object, is as if brought to a standstill by what it would call the poor, prosaic world.²⁴

The phrase “the individual pursuing his vanishing objects illustrates the desire to annex misery to love. Kierkegaard notes the romantic at this level of misery. If we refer to Hobbes we note the endeavor towards something is desire. We see one is pursuing or endeavoring toward a vanishing object. It is the endeavor toward disappointment. It is the endeavor or desire toward misery. There would be happiness if the vanishing object was a negative something, like a cancer but the outcome, the consequence cited here is melancholic. Melancholia fits the condition of Hume’s connection of the “emotions reversed”, as desire of misery annexed to love.

Kierkegaard wrote on the “demonic.” His section on the demonic deserves close scrutiny and comparison to the order of natural “emotions reversed”. A few terms may be required here to get the reader on board. There are two kinds of evil – “the bondage of sin” and the “demonic.” “The bondage of sin is the unfree relation to the evil.”²⁵ “The demonic is an unfree relation to the good.”²⁶ Kierkegaard notes that since there is a relation to the good there is an opportunity for redemption in the demonic. “The demonic therefore manifests itself clearly only when it is in contact with the good... The good, of course, signifies the restoration of freedom, redemption, salvation, or whatever one would call it.”²⁷ He gives a clear view of what redemption or salvation consists of. One

²⁴ Ibid, p. 534.

²⁵ Soren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Anxiety, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 117.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 117.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 117.

can also see the unexpressed potential for action when one has opened the doors to freedom after being imprisoned. Kierkegaard says, "The good cannot be defined at all. The good is freedom. The difference between good and evil is only for freedom and in freedom, and this difference is never in *abstracto* but only in *concreto*."²⁸ Kierkegaard's notions of the good and freedom are empirically grounded. Existential writings tend toward deeper psychological insights. This is natural enough in that their starting point is individual existence. Both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard displayed their deep insights into human nature. It is at this juncture of the concrete that empiricism and existentialism overlap.

"The demonic is anxiety about the good."²⁹ This appears to be the saving grace regarding the demonic. One can be redeemed. It could also be the greatest curse in that the demonic may be erringly associated with the good. That is, a great evil may be overlooked because one sees what appears to be a good. The anxiety about the good is double edged.

It should be stressed that those who suffer from the "demonic" often are not bad people though there is an evil about them (they harm themselves). Kierkegaard describes the melancholic and the hypochondriac as manifestations of the demonic. He says:

"The demonic is unfreedom that wants to close itself off. This however remains an impossibility. It always retains a relation, and even when this has apparently disappeared altogether, it is nevertheless there, and anxiety at once manifests itself in the moment of contact [with the good]... The demonic is inclosing reserve [det Indesluttede] and the unfreely disclosed. The two definitions indicate, as intended, the same thing..."³⁰

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 111.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 123.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 123.

We see how the melancholic closes himself off. This is also a reason why the hypochondriac tends to remain a hypochondriac. When thinking about the good, the getting well, the inclosing reserve unfreely announces illness. It is an evil (the demonic) that holds them but it is not that they are evil, they may do great good.

This is an encapsulation and synthesis of the demonic. It provides a quick reference for the reader. As noted, the demonic is an unfree relation to the good. Cruelty is often an unfree condition particularly when the natural order of the emotions have been reversed (misery annexed to love and happiness annexed to hatred). Kierkegaard drew attention to other (concrete) conditions of the demonic. He says:

The demonic does not close itself up with something, but it closes itself up within itself, and in this lies what is profound about existence [*Tilvaerselsen*], precisely that unfreedom makes itself a prisoner. Freedom is always *communicerende* [communicating]...unfreedom becomes more and more inclosed [indesluttet] and does not want communication. This can be observed in all spheres. It manifests itself in hypochondria, in capriciousness, it manifests itself in the highest passions, when in a profound misunderstanding they introduce the silent treatment.³¹

A moment's reflection on hypochondriasis shows it as a desire of misery annexed to love.

Kierkegaard then offers an important footnote in his comment on hypochondriasis and capriciousness. He notes:

It has already been stated that the demonic has a much greater compass than is generally believed.³²

A similar claim is made of the order of "emotions reversed". Under the heading of the order of "emotions reversed", sadomasochism and melancholia have been given. Now,

³¹ Ibid, p. 124.

hypochondriasis has been added to this reversed world. The list does not stop at hypochondriasis but continues to grow. Kierkegaard also added “capriciousness” above. The demonic manifests itself in Hypochondrias and capriciousness. The capricious is one who does the sudden. Kierkegaard notes “The demonic is the sudden... another aspect of the unclosing reserve.”³³ He also notes, “the demonic is the “contentless”, the boring.”³⁴ Kierkegaard notes that the sudden, and the “contentless”/boring are opposites. The reader may be confused by Kierkegaard’s comments that the demonic is capricious, and “contentless”. In order to offer a clear reference to what Kierkegaard means by this, I offer this supposition: The capricious, and sudden, as demonic, is that which is found in the character types, whose whims lead to destruction. The gypsy Carmen from Bizet’s opera and Scarlett O’Hara from Gone with the Wind are two examples. We also may note impulsivity as part of the sudden.

In opposition to the “sudden” is the “contentless,” the “boring”. The “contentless,” the “boring” is the empty. The person, who is this type, too, does not have a core self, but instead of being flighty or impulsive may have the appearance of a rock - but as Kierkegaard notes the “contentless” is mimical.³⁵ The person is mimical because at some level he is aware that he is empty. The mimical, also, can be characterized. This person does more cruelty than the pure type of evil person, those in bondage of sin. The person of the pure type of evil might engage in an act of cruelty that appalls most people. The evil is done on smaller scale. It is done on the individual level. The “contentless” that

³² Ibid, p. 124.

³³ Ibid, p. 129.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 132.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 132.

has mimicked may mimic that which has appeal to others. This type of the “contentless” could be called the demonic as automaton or authoritarian. He is empty; orders or rules fill the emptiness. The Nazi represented a cruel form of the automaton or authoritarian. While the automaton follows orders in empty fashion the authoritarian has more at stake. Introjections fill his life. Like the automaton, he too functions well in a bureaucracy but tends to be a bigger bureaucrat such as a leader in the Nazi party for example. Most of Kierkegaard’s forms of demonic tended toward internal cruelty. This last form, the demonic as “contentless” has potential for great external cruelty.

Not all cruelty originates from “reversed emotions”. Cruelty may originate because of famine or war other such negative life conditions. During famine or war one may be forced into cruel actions. During war, reciprocity could be expected as a natural response. The natural order of emotion may still be retained and actions still be cruel. But when the emotions are reversed from their natural order the tendency is towards destruction by virtue of its form. Normally there is a natural tendency to happiness annexed to love. In “reversed emotions” happiness is annexed to hatred.

The bondage of sin (unfree relation to the evil) and the demonic (unfree relation to the good) share properties with “emotions reversed” and also have a close association with cruelty. Kierkegaard views the good as freedom and the bondage of sin and the demonic as unfree. Some philosophers such as the late Philip Hallie has stated that the opposite of cruelty is freedom. Fromm had noted that the desire for the loved one is for happiness, growth and freedom. In regards to freedom he seems to hold submission as an opposite. It shares some qualities with unfreedom.

Another comparison between “reversed emotions” and the demonic is that both, when turned against their objects of hatred, point toward the good. By this I mean working the negative against the negative such as, in the Humean form, hating hatred, which may be used to protect rights. Or, in Kierkegaardian form, demonizing the demon, which may lead to “revelation.” A variant of this is Judith Shklar’s maxim and exception rule, which notes that cruelty is the worst thing that we do; the only exception to this rule is the prevention of greater cruelties. The maxim that cruelty is the worst thing we do collapses onto itself using cruelty to prevent greater cruelty. What Hallie calls mitigated cruelty is similar to the cruelty in Shklars’ exception rule.

Extreme self-love (narcissism) also may explain some cases of melancholia or hypochondriasis. The individual receives pleasure in himself. He finds pleasure in ‘his’ misery. The search into extreme self-love bears examination but takes us too far afield at this time.

But in return to “emotions reversed,” it is obvious that depression is found in the “original” instincts, that is, found naturally. If a family member dies we feel sympathy. Divorce or loss of work has a similar effect. No claim is made about depression or grief of this natural sort. In the original or natural form of depression or sorrow, love and hatred’s connexion with desires have not been reversed. There, misery comes from a natural loss. What is meant by melancholia, as it is used here, is that love and hatred’s connection with misery has been reversed from their natural order, nothing more.

It is interesting to note that the conditions of sadomasochism and melancholia, as “emotions reversed,” would seem, on the surface, completely different species, the one

cruelty and the other depression. But upon review melancholia, as presented, seems to have a sadomasochistic component and takes a form of internal cruelty. Sadomasochism and melancholia share some common qualities, one of which is a masochistic component. A misery that tends to be destructive is present in both.

Natural sentiments, on the other hand, tend to be life serving. Natural sympathy leads us to desire happiness for ones we love and misery for those we hate. It has a pragmatic function; it serves to provide for our well being. It is supportive of life. One produces happiness for those one loves because they are a source of pleasure. Egoism is implied, but the implication is not restricted to egoism. A pragmatic system is, also, in place in that the organism supports one who one loves, which often has a reciprocal function of returning the support or love. Then there is the natural sentiment of motherly love, unconditional love, which is life-supporting. Motherly love (and fatherly love) appears altruistic at times. Parents often place themselves at risk to protect their young.

The obverse of the “unnatural” desire to produce misery annexed to love is the ‘natural’ desire to produce misery annexed to hatred. It is self-supporting though not supporting of the other. One hates an entity and then desires to produce misery in the threatening entity. The annexation of misery and hatred in this case preserves the self and is potentially destructive to the other. It has a negative reciprocal function. If the self is threatened it reciprocates with a desire to produce misery. Hatred is naturally annexed to this function. Its design is to keep oneself alive.

However, with Hume’s reversed order of the emotions a desire to produce misery annexed to love, tends to be destructive to the love object and hence potentially is

harmful to the self because of reciprocity from the other. The beloved is 'naturally' averse to receiving this misery. Only when the beloved has the reversed counterpart of misery annexed to love (masochism) does the mechanism serve a reciprocal reversed function – providing it is not fatal – and the other person is part of the same covenant. One may accept the misery, even desire it, in order to obtain the end. But the price is unfreedom.

Basically, the desire to produce happiness annexed to hatred tends to be destructive to the self or the beloved. Internally this seems a mechanism for suicide. Externally it seems a mechanism for homicide.

It seems clear that if the natural order of emotion is reversed, destruction is a primary function, and is perpetuated. The desire to produce happiness in one who one hates is by nature self-defeating and possibly self-destructive. The function of this reversed happiness is not to turn the hatred into love but to keep the happiness annexed to hatred.

The same is true of the desire to produce misery annexed to love. This also tends to be self-defeating. But love strives for life and may wish to perpetuate misery in order to perpetuate itself. Love is the creative process. Desire seeks, aversion closes. But the love, here, would be a cruel love, a love that thrives by the infliction of misery.

In opposition, love of self-preservation is posited behind the 'natural' order of the desire to produce misery annexed to hatred. There is a desire to hurt the thing that is believed to give pain.

To make matters even more complicated, these principles of the natural order of emotions and the order of the “emotions reversed” can be confounded by mitigating factors. A couple of examples should suffice to illustrate this point. A desire to force oneself to walk across a scorching desert may produce misery but if the outcome is to find water, a higher desire for the preservation of life may mitigate the forced action. This is mitigated cruelty and a positive application of Shklar’s exception rule, which stated that the only exception to the rule that cruelty is the worst thing we do is the prevention of greater cruelties.

The two sets of principles, natural and “reversed emotions” supply reference in evaluating cruelty and benevolence. Life-giving acts generally have high values while destructive acts generally are held low on a cruelty/benevolence scale. On such a scale “emotions reversed” would tend toward the cruelty end of the scale.

Thus far, misery or cruelty to the self has been discussed in some particulars. Inward cruelty leads to the destruction or maiming of the self. Often it goes unnoticed. But cruelty is better known by what it does to others. Another example of the desire for misery annexed to love, or happiness annexed to hatred needs to be discussed. The demonic shown in Kierkegaard’s examples was mostly inward cruelty. But the bondage of sin and the demonic also have outward manifestations, which may have cruel effect. The cruelty that the poor and African Americans and women have endured and have incorporated into their being is often (conveniently) unseen. The demonic within them that whispers into their ears- “you are no good” or “you are not as good” has been bred for generations. Many carry schemas of unworthiness within themselves. In large, the

demonic resides in schemas. The demonic can take subtle form as well as violent. It should seem obvious that no persons are innately born with a schema that says that they are no good. Such an alien language had to be taught. Getting a person to believe that he is no good is not difficult. Rorty notes something on this point in *Orwell on Cruelty*.

Rorty says regarding Winston, the protagonist, of 1984:

The only point in making Winston believe that two and two equals five is to break him. Getting somebody to deny a belief for no reason is a first step toward making her incapable of having a self because she becomes incapable of weaving a coherent web of belief and desire. It makes her irrational in a quite precise sense: she is unable to give a reason for her belief that fits together with her other beliefs. She becomes irrational not in the sense that she has lost contact with reality but in the sense that she can no longer rationalize- no longer justify herself to herself.³⁶

For a people to say that they are no good or that another is better (for no real reason) is to say that two and two equals five. African Americans for generations were intimidated not to think.

But before going on to cruelty of others a problem of philosophy requires mentioning. William James said, "History is a blood bath."³⁷ There are probably very few philosophers who would disagree with his statement. If philosophers were to apply a value to that statement, they would probably apply a high value. Out of a list of a hundred it might make the top ten list. Granted that world leaders have been predominantly male, the problem for philosophers is that when one turns to philosophy, works on the blood baths of history are rather sparse. Works on the harm that man does to his fellow man are not dominant in the writing of philosophy. Even in ethics, works on the "good

³⁶ Rorty, 1989, p. 178.

life” take precedence over issues of cruelty or harm to others. The psychology of philosophy bears examination.

One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the writings of philosophy are male driven and not female driven. This is supported in a small way by looking at all the works of philosophy and comparing the ratio of male to female writings. The psychological question, then, can be asked what are philosophy’s topics of interest. What do philosophers desire? To some degree the desires can be reduced to physiology. The ancient wisdom in mythology notes that the one is Mars and the other is Venus. The one is derived from the warrior and the other is derived from the caregiver. The writing of one seeks to go boldly where no man has gone, while the writing of the other asks how can I relieve sorrow? The mother by nature has been endowed to show the natural order of emotions to her offspring. It is true not all mothers do this; some teach misery annexed to love or happiness to hatred. Those that do, largely teach what has been taught. It is clear that the reversing of emotions is more likely to be taught by one who is detached and for one whom care is not primary. Likewise philosophy follows schemas that are essentially masculinist or feminist. Myths, anthropology, and psychology have long shown the division between masculine and feminine. The division is significant, one is thinking and the other is feeling, one is benevolence and the other is justice. Judith Shklar’s claim that cruelty is the worst thing we do is an example of the female aspect of philosophy. Philosophers, such as Hume, follow similar paths. The claim here is that a female reign of world leaders and philosophers would tend to produce less world cruelty.

³⁷ William James, The Writings of William James. Edited by John J. McDermott, Chicago: The University

As mentioned, outward cruelty is more visible so we can look for an observable example. World War II stands out as the epitome of cruelty. I suppose one could start from the premise that World War II developed from the natural order of emotions. However, the insane nature of the war would seem to indicate that the war developed from a reversed order of emotions. Hitler could easily be described as holding “reversed emotions”. Hitler has been noted as an extreme narcissist. The war partially was built on his delusions of grandeur. The German national character has been described as “authoritarian.” They too prided themselves in nationalism, which is a social narcissism. Numerous examples of misery annexed to love or happiness to hatred could be found.

As noted, the demonic is the “contentless.” While Kierkegaard’s comments on the demonic tended toward inward cruelty, demonic outward manifestations needs to be discussed. Kierkegaard stated, regarding the “contentless.” “the demonic is essentially mimical; the sudden he cannot achieve, because it interferes with his lines.”³⁸

Capriciousness is a manifestation of the sudden, which is the demonic. The opposite of the sudden is the “contentless”, the boring. The “contentless” is also described as mimical. The “contentless” is noted to have a comical aspect.³⁹ An example of the “contentless” being mimical and comical is noted in Anton Chekov’s *Three Sisters*. Solyony, a staff captain, utters the lines, “peep, peep, peep,” in several places throughout the play. In one variation of the play, the lines used were, “cluck, cluck, cluck.” Chekov expressed the “contentless” succinctly. Solyony is speaking but he is shown “contentless”, mimical, and comical. But tragedy may lie behind comical contentlessness.

of Chicago Press 1977, p. 661.

The Nazi was a manifestation of the “contentless”. The mediocrity of Hitler and his cronies is well documented. Discussion regarding the Nazi as automaton or authoritarian has been well developed by Fromm and Adorno.

If we view the Nazi as mimical, then the mimical can be viewed as cruel. The mimical then, as well as the comical, can be cruel. But one does not necessarily follow a mime. The mime, then, to be followed must mimic some good. Kierkegaard noted that the “contentless” models facts. For the Nazi, ideology served that purpose. For the mime to be successful, the good that is mimicked must be related to those who receive it. The Germans were ready to hear that they were a superior sort. For them, race and sex were issues. They were ready to wreck havoc on those, who they were told were enemies of the state. It is a peculiar page in history that an intellectual country like Germany would believe such gibberish. It should serve as a warning that poverty and harsh treatment is a source of cruelty. The lesson was not learned in at least the first half of the twentieth century. World War II exemplifies how the mime can be a seducer. Many were ready to receive Nazi ideology and Japanese ideology; many were seduced.

Those who suffer from “reversed emotions” tend towards cruelty in inward or outward forms (or both). Kierkegaard has demonstrated the demonic (“emotions reversed”) in his examples as inward cruelty. I have extended the “contentless” to outward forms of cruelty. At least some forms of the “contentless” are authoritarian with propensity for outward cruelty. The “contentless,” also, shares some properties with the sudden, in that the sudden is often empty. However, the contentless need not be sudden.

³⁸ Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 133.

The cruelty generated by authoritarianism is largely due to annexing “reversed emotions” to objects such as ideology. The “contentless” fills his emptiness with facts. Those who oppose the ideology are hated. A facade is present that seems to follow (mimic) the natural order of emotions. The natural order is such that one desires misery to that which one hates. Unless one looks beyond the façade it appears natural.

If one is cruel one tends to not want to view themselves as being cruel unless they delight in the cruelty. The façade is a way of hiding one’s cruelty. The matter of cruelty and facade is further complicated by the fact that the natural order of emotions and the unnatural order are not black and white. Hume notes, “the passions may express themselves in a hundred ways.”⁴⁰ References to “reversed emotions” may not be complete opposites but may consist of blends. In actuality blends of “natural order emotions” and “emotions reversed” are expected. For instance, work may provide benefits but often contains detrimental conditions. Working in coalmines or asbestos factories are examples. Natural and “reversed emotions” often blend together in actuality. Nonetheless, it is easier and paints a more understandable picture to describe the “emotions” in extremes.

Rorty wrote on cruelty as expressed in literature. He spoke of the writer Nabokov, who is perhaps best known for Lolita. Rorty says, “Nabokov’s greatest creations are obsessives.”⁴¹ Rorty says of the characters, Kinbote and Humbert, that they are “exquisitely sensitive to everything which affects or provides expression for their own

³⁹ Ibid., p. 133.

⁴⁰ Hume, 1990, p. 368.

⁴¹ Rorty, 1998, p. 158.

obsessions, and entirely incurious about anything that effects anyone else.”⁴² On the surface this type may appear as sensitive, as in context of his or her self, but deeper review reveals the incuriousness in regards to what effects others. With skill the “incurious obsessive” learns to blend what would appear to be care of others into his obsession. For instance the “incurious obsessive” as an officer may show concern for the men or women in “his” or “her” platoon.

The term incurious seems to take on a meaning similar to Hobbes’ definition of cruelty – little sense of the calamity of others. The incurious obsessive as a cruel type is a peculiar example of “emotions reversed.” The desire for misery annexed to love or happiness annexed to hatred do not appear directly, in the case of the incurious obsessive. If we view the incurious obsessive as “contentless,” then we see that the object of attention, his obsession, is that which attempts to fill the emptiness that constantly has to be filled but never is. It is obvious that the obsessive is unfree. It is clear the nature of his condition makes it so. He is incurious about the things that effect others – it is his own obsession that is of concern. He remains in unfreedom.

The cruelty done by the “contentless” as manifested by obsession may be described as being done through indifference. Cruelty of delight was noted in sexual sadism. Cruelty of indifference is noted with the curious obsessive. The script of the incurious obsessive might read something like “it is not that I wanted to be cruel but that I was just adhering to the rules (following my obsession).” Or a variant is, “those that do

⁴² Rorty, 1998, p. 158.

not adhere to the rules should be punished.” The obsessive is a rule follower. He is an expression of the “contentless.” Rules, facts, dogma fill his emptiness.

It is documented that many German soldiers who worked in concentration camps suffered stress. They could not be indifferent. Yet there were many who through the mechanism of indifference believed that what they were doing was right (supporting the Fatherland). The emptiness was filled with what their superiors told them.

Erich Fromm, in Escape From Freedom states, “The authoritarian character loves those conditions that limit human freedom, he loves being submitted to fate.”⁴³ Kierkegaard notes, “Unfreedom, the demonic, is therefore a state, and psychology regards it as a state. Ethics, on the other hand, sees how out of this state the new sin constantly breaks forth, for only the good is the unity of state and movement.”⁴⁴ The demonic thrives in unfreedom.

Thus far it has been shown how the sadomasochistic, the melancholic, the hypochondriac, the capricious, the sudden and the “contentless” all share forms of what has been termed, using Hume’s formula, “reversed emotions”.

In Fromm’s later writings he speaks of two types of ethics. One type is described as biophilous and the other type is described as necrophilous. Necrophilia is not used in the sense of a morbid sexual perversion but as a general love of death (necro + philia). It is a destructive process. Biophilia, on the other hand, is a love of life, a creative process. Fromm says:

⁴³ Fromm. 1941, p. 170.

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 135.

There is no more fundamental distinction between men, psychologically and morally, than the one between those who love death and those who love life, between the necrophilous and the biophilous. This is not meant to convey that a person is necessarily either entirely necrophilous or entirely biophilous but in various blends.⁴⁵ (Fromm 1964, p.38)

The difference between the biophilous and the necrophilous is similar to what Hume had noted in the natural order of emotions and the reversed form. The necrophilous desires to produce misery annexed to love or happiness annexed to hatred. It has been shown that the inward consequences of “reversed emotions” are masochistic in nature such as melancholia or hypochondriasis. It is easy to see that if such mechanisms found a form of outward expression, hatred and cruelty would be the result.

Misery annexed to love and happiness to hatred is similar to what Fromm calls necrophilia. Sadomasochism and obsessive character are concrete examples of the desire to produce misery annexed to love. Sadomasochism is a cruelty of delight while the obsessive character reflects a cruelty of indifference, of incuriosity. In the case of “incurious obsessives” the consequences suffered by others are *as if* the “incurious obsessive” desired happiness annexed to hatred or misery annexed to love. Their actions seem to represent a desire to produce happiness annexed to hatred and misery annexed to love, which has been shown to tend toward destruction.

Natural instincts promote life processes. The proof of this is apparent. The natural orders of instincts that have been reversed promote a destructive process. It has been shown that there are concrete cases of a natural order of “emotions reversed.” When examined closely, they manifest some disturbance.

⁴⁵ Fromm 1964, p.38.

The natural instincts according to Hume seem to have an original, natural order. For the connection of the emotions to be reversed a contrary element must be introduced. The contrary element may be as simple as aberrant behavior or an accident of nature. It is not difficult to see that if a mother abused her child as she was feeding the child, the misery of being abused would also be associated with food and care (love). A strict authoritarian upbringing may do likewise.

In child abuse, comfort or love may be associated with misery. When nourishment is supplied to the hungry infant, pleasure is the instinctual response. But in the case of abuse, the child may receive nourishment but only after harsh words or cold handling. The good begins to be conjoined with pain. Such an example shows how a contrary element is conjoined with love. The contrary element need only be desirous or aversive enough to maintain a psychological state. For instance, if the infant was hungry enough he may risk the associated misery for food and begin to associate the misery with love. The same principle, also, applies culturally to races and sexes.

Normally love and hatred are accorded natural values; happiness is associated with love and misery with hatred. The mother as the object of love offers comfort, warmth, and nourishment and affords the natural sentiments. Happiness is conjoined with love. The value of the mother is often undervalued. Generally, she is the first teacher of trust and love.

What is important here is that there are two basic types of life characters- a loving type and a destructive type. In practicality, there are different blends of the two types but a person or a culture tends to lean more toward one type or the other. There is a measure

of predictability as to constructive or destructive outcomes for each type. As shown the loving type (constructive type) is favored by nature though there are conditions in which the order can be reversed, such as accidents of nature. While nature favors the socially cooperative type, the destructive quality of the reversed type can be extremely damaging negating all gains of society, as history has shown. When the emotions are reversed there is a greater tendency towards destruction and cruelty. History has been a blood bath. If social outcomes can be predicted, and they can to some degree, then there is an opportunity for more favorable solutions. When the emotions are conjoined in a reversed form, the propensity is toward destruction and cruelty. When the emotions find natural expression there is a tendency toward social development. Humans are social creatures. Accidents of nature can create climates that foster cruelty. But thinking, caring creatures can also anticipate such accidents and work towards preventing them. One solution is the social/political application of Shklar's maxim and exception rule, which states that cruelty is the worst thing that we do and the only exception to the rule is the prevention of greater cruelties. Shklar's maxim is a moral mechanism. Since cruelty is the worst thing that we do, when it occurs, we have an obligation to do something about it. Since cruelty is the worst thing we do cruelty is not a desirable response. Benevolence or prosocial responses are preferable responses. But an evaluation must be made and if cruelty is the deemed best to prevent greater cruelties, it should be used.

This brings us to the point that biophilia stands above benevolence and cruelty. The claim is that benevolence (that which supports growth and freedom) is the best thing that we do, and its opposite side is that cruelty is the worst thing that we do. Biophilia has

its origins in being loved. It finds expression in loving. Love is primarily manifested by benevolent actions. Biophilia is manifested through the promotion of life-embracing activities. One desires to spread joy and pleasure to others. Joys of sorrow may also be shared. Biophilia says "Yea" to joys and pleasures that support it. But biophilia also has its "Nays." It says "No" to cruelty. It says that cruelty is the worst thing that we do. The demonic with its cruel aspects is unfreedom. Biophilia is opposed to unfreedom. But if cruelty is required, biophilia says "Yea." Life promoting actions sometimes take cruel form.

The foundation of this biophilic claim starts in the Empedoclean claim of love and strife being among the first elements of things. Empedocles declared that fire, air, earth and water were the primary elements. Empedocles says of the four elements, "Hear first the four roots of all things: Shining Zeus, life bringing Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis who with her tears fills the spring of mortal man with water."⁴⁶

The elements are governed by love and strife. Love and strife are easily referenced to desire and aversion. The behavioral and materialistic association with Democritus and Epicurus is clear. While love and strife are first principles unto themselves, something stands above them for higher understanding. There can be two views of love and strife. In the positive view love is dominant. In the negative view of love and strife, strife is dominant and love is secondary. This latter view is the view held when the emotions are reversed. Love is given to misery and happiness comes through hatred. This is the view that has made history a bloodbath. It has not been uncommon.

⁴⁶ Reginald E. Allen, Greek Philosophy: Thales to Aristotle, New York: The Free Press, 1966, p. 50.

In the positive view of love and strife, love loves life. In higher form she reverences life. Growth and freedom is her offspring. Love understands her old friend strife though she fears him. However, because of him she appreciates and loves life even more. She notes that cruelty is the worst thing that we do. Because she loves life and understands sorrow, she is willing to use her friend strife to prevent greater cruelties.

CHAPTER TWO

Historical- Spinoza and Hobbes

It is beneficial to present a variety of definitions of cruelty so as to broaden our understanding of what cruelty consists of and to better reference it to “emotions reversed.” Definitions of other emotions will also be given, so as to shed light on various aspects of cruelty.

Benedict de Spinoza and Thomas Hobbes’ definitions are used for an historical discussion of cruelty. Before giving Spinoza’s definition of cruelty, it is worthwhile to present background for his definition. Spinoza says in Epicurean fashion:

I, therefore, recognize only three primitive or primary emotions... namely, pleasure, pain and desire.⁴⁷

From these three primary states Spinoza developed the more complex definition of cruelty. Cruelty is, for Spinoza, a particular desire. Spinoza says in the *Ethics*, in *The Definitions of the Emotions*, Proposition XXXVIII:

Cruelty or savageness is the desire, whereby a man is impelled to injure one whom we love or pity.
Explanation - To cruelty is opposed clemency, which is not a passive state of mind, but a power whereby man restrains his anger and revenge.⁴⁸

It is difficult to understand exactly what he means. Annette Baier noted that it is “very tricky” as to what should count as cruelty.⁴⁹ Her comment should alert the reader to

⁴⁷ Spinoza, Benedict de. *On The Improvement Of the Understanding, The Ethics, Correspondence*. Unabridged Elwes Translation, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955, p. 175.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 182.

⁴⁹ Annette Baier, *Moral Prejudices*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 269.

the difficulties in defining cruelty. Baier comments on Spinoza's definition of cruelty.

She says:

Spinoza seems to have defined it as doing evil to those one loves, that is, to those whom one perceives to have done one good, and this is such a disturbing definition that some translators take it that what he must have meant was doing evil to those loved by those of us who are applying the label "cruelty."⁵⁰

Baier indicates that some translators translate Spinoza's definition of cruelty as meaning that the act had been evaluated by observers of the act, who in turn label the act as cruelty. That is, they see someone doing evil to someone they love, and then they label that action cruelty. One problem that arises is what do we call the same act inflicted on one whom we hate? Obviously that too should be called cruelty. Others translate his definition as being viewed by the writer, who is the fictitious doer of the act.

Two current translations of Spinoza's definition are presented. The Elwes translation is held as the standard translation. The definition of cruelty cited above is the Elwes translation. The other translation is by Edwin Curley. Curley's interpretation is from the labeler view. However, the Curley translation also gives a footnote that is supportive of the doer view. Curley's footnotes are historical and informative and recapture this early problem of interpretation in Spinoza's definition and will be discussed later.

Spinoza's wording, in his definition of cruelty, is written as the labeler type. If it is interpreted that way it is not consistent with the spirit of his writing nor does it make as much sense. There are good reasons to believe that he did not intend it to be interpreted

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 269.

from a labeler perspective. The problem of interpretation comes when Spinoza used the phrase “whereby a man” where he had used the word “we” in his previous definitions. The question then becomes, “is the we a ‘doing we’ or is it an ‘observing we’?” Is the “whereby a man” a “we” or is it a “he”? The reference to “he” also extends to “them”. The distinction of “we” or “them” makes a significant difference in how we respond to cruelty. The former is more solution oriented and the latter is more judicially oriented, hence the latter is more punitively oriented. If we ask, are we “doing” the cruel act or are we “observing” someone doing the cruel act and then labeling the act? In the case of an “observing we” the conditions are external. In the case of the “participating we” or the “doing we” the conditions are internal. In the one case we judge the act, in the other, we are the doers of the act in potential. In this sense we are the owners of the act.

Several important distinctions need to be made regarding the doer of the act. The sense in which the term “doer” is used does not mean to be actually engaged in the act of cruelty. For instance if it is said, if we go to war and harm someone then we are cruel. In this case the cruelty is just conditional; the harm was potential not actual, so the act of cruelty was not done. We accept it as if we did the act. The “we” in this case is imaginary and just rests in ideas. However, its foundation rests on past experiences. The use of “we” in this sense can be preparatory or future looking and hence potentially preventative.

It is important to note that the “doing we” does not refer to one who does a cruel act and enjoys it. Nor does it refer to a person who does not recognize and own the act as cruelty. The type of person who does not own the cruelty often does not identify the act as cruelty but instead labels it as something else, such as “fighting” or “getting even.”

There is little reference to this sort of doer. Those who are cruel in this sense tend to project the cause of their actions on to others and cruelty is largely denied.

The “doer” as referred to here is one who finds cruelty an undesirable act. This person neither desires cruelty nor is apathetic to cruelty. The reference to cruelty as used here is to those who own cruelty in potential, or if actually engaged in it, hold cruelty as detestable. Those that hold cruelty as the worst thing that we do but are compelled to do it so as to prevent greater cruelties follow Shklar’s maxim and exception rule. When the cruelty is owned, cruelty becomes internal as well as external. When we say, “we are cruel when we harm in war,” we make an internal and external ethical claim. This differs from the external claim that says that *person*, “the other,” is cruel.

The two views on how the word “we” is used bears similarity with the two views that Rawls gives in *Two Conceptions of Rules*. One view is retributive and the other is utilitarian. Rawls’ position is similar to Shklar’s maxim and exception rule. Rawls notes in *Two Conceptions of Rules* that “...the utilitarian must hold that we are justified in inflicting pain always and only to prevent worse pain or bring about greater happiness.”⁵¹ Rawls comments that the retributive view is backward looking while the utilitarian view is forward looking. He says, “One can say, then that the judge and the legislator stand in different positions and look in different directions: one to the past, the other to the future.”⁵² In the retributive view, the act has been done, the rule is applied, and judgment is made. In the case of cruelty, some punishment is then imposed. In the utilitarian view, the “we” is viewed more from Rawls’ “original position.” Because the “we” can be us,

we look at the rule as preventative rather than punitive. The utilitarian view is argued for. Spinoza's definition of cruelty is best represented by that view.

The claim is that Spinoza is using "we" in the utilitarian manner. He uses the word "we" in his other definitions, as the doing "we." It is useful, here, to examine some of Spinoza's other definitions to make this point. The definitions preceding definition XXXVIII, Cruelty or savageness, uses the word "we" in a particular manner. Note the use of "we" in the following definitions. The Elwes translation of the definitions reads:

XXXV. *Benevolence* is the desire of benefiting one whom we pity.⁵³

XXXVI. *Anger* is the desire, whereby through hatred we are induced to injure one whom we hate.⁵⁴

XXXVII. *Revenge* is the desire whereby we are induced, through mutual hatred, to injure one who, with similar feelings has injured us.⁵⁵

Spinoza seems to be using the word "we" consistently when the definitions of benevolence, anger and revenge are compared with the definition of cruelty. However when he gives his definition of cruelty, he uses a different type of wording, which is where the confusion comes. He uses different words when he says, "Cruelty or savageness is the desire, whereby "a man" is impelled to injure one whom we love or pity." Where the definition states, "a man is impelled" it seems to be referring to the man as "we," but it could also be read as a man who is being observed is impelled. The "we" as it is used in the phrase, "one whom we love or pity," is an inward "we." The phrase "whereby a man," can mean either the you or I who do the act just as it meant in the

⁵¹ Robert M. Baird. *The Philosophy of Punishment. Two Conceptions of Rules, John Rawls*, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988, p. 42.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵³ Spinoza. 1955, p. 182.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

definitions of benevolence, anger, and revenge, or it can mean the person who is observed doing the act. It simply makes better sense to use the phrase “whereby a man” to mean the you or I who do the act, just as it does in the previous definitions.

Curley comments on the uncertainty in translation. He traces the history of this problem and notes from earlier translations that:

Mejer and Baensch proposed emending the text to read: “a Desire by which we are roused to do evil to one whom we love or pity.” The idea would be that P41CS implies that cruelty arises when one person hates another, finds his hate returned by love, and suffers a conflict of love and hate in which hate prevails (without, it seems, entirely extinguishing the love). I believe the sequence from Def. XXXVI to Def. XXXVIII makes better sense if we accept the emendation.⁵⁶

Curley has noted that he accepts the emendation. I concur that the emendation makes better sense. In the definitions XXXVI through XXXVIII given above “we” refers to the agents as ourselves. It is reasonable to assume that Spinoza is using “we” in the same way in his definition of cruelty.

Another simple test in support of rejecting the “observed we” can be made by applying the “observed we” (the we who are applying the label) to one of the previous definitions. Difficulty is encountered if the “observed we” (who are applying the label) is applied to the definition of benevolence. After all, benevolence has been noted to be the opposite of cruelty.⁵⁷ If we can apply the label in the definition of cruelty it would seem that it could also be applied in like manner to the opposite of cruelty. ‘If the “we” (who are applying the label) applied it to Spinoza’s definition of benevolence, it makes

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 182.

⁵⁶ Benedict de Spinoza. *The Collected Works of Spinoza*. Vol. 1, ed. & trans. by Edwin Curley, Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 540.

little sense, almost to the point of absurdity, to say that benevolence is the desire of another person to benefit one whom we (who are applying the label benevolence) pity. It simply makes more sense for the one who desires benevolence to be benefiting the one whom *he* pities. There is little reason to change the form of the word “we” when it is applied to the definition of cruelty.

Of course, no one is using this “observing” form of benevolence in the definition of benevolence. The absurdity of its use offers some refutation to using this same form of an “observing we” in the definition of cruelty. The “observing we” or the “we who apply the label” is used by some only because Spinoza used the term “a man” instead of “we” in his definition of cruelty.

Spinoza used the phrase “whereby a man is impelled.” We often use the word “we” when we speak of the good that we do. When we speak of the evil we do there is a natural tendency to project the evil to another – a man, for instance. In cases where one uses an expression like “whereby a man,” there is a natural tendency to deny our cruelty. The mechanism is simple: if something is painful we tend to buffer the pain. We naturally do not desire to think of ourselves as cruel; we tend to project cruelty on the other. This is another reason for rejecting the “observing we.” The “man” Spinoza is referring to is the you and me.

Another partial proof that Spinoza intended the phrase to mean “we” (the participator or doer) is found in the psychology of Spinoza. When Spinoza had been speaking of these definitions he is referring to himself as well as humankind in general.

⁵⁷ John Kekes, *Ethics* 106 (July 1996) 834-844, *Cruelty and Liberalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago

This suggests that he would define cruelty in this same fashion. That is, when he says “a man” he means “all of us” or “we.” To be the observer or the labeler of cruelty is to blame, which is not typical of Spinoza. It is uncharacteristic of Spinoza, in this sort of usage, to say that it is the “other” that is spoken about and not himself.

Rorty makes a similar point about the use of the word “we.” He notes that Wilfrid Sellars uses the term “we intentions.” Rorty notes of “we intentions” that:

I claim that the force of “us” is, typically, contrastive in the sense that it contrasts with a “they” which is also made up of human beings – the wrong set of human beings.⁵⁸

Some interpret Spinoza’s definition in the “they” sense. To do so is to do it injustice.

Jonathan Bennett, a rather harsh critic of Spinoza, indicates that Spinoza uses the “they” view. Bennett rejects the emendation (which is accepted in this thesis). He says regarding Spinoza’s definition of cruelty:

I am taking Spinoza to mean what he says in defining cruelty, namely, that we call a person cruel if *he* is ill-disposed towards someone whom *we* love.⁵⁹

Bennett’s interpretation falls short. To define someone as cruel using another person’s actions and our standards does not seem to be what Spinoza intended. True, the words “one,” “a man,” and “we” are ambiguous. They can be read either as Bennett states or as the emendation states. It makes better sense using the emendation. And, as has been shown, the word “we” would be used in the same sense as the definitions just preceding the definition of cruelty.

Press, 1996, p. 841.

⁵⁸ Rorty, 1998, p. 190.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Francis Bennett, A Study of Spinoza’s Ethics, Hackett Publishing Company, 1984, p.264

Let us apply an opposite example of what Bennett is saying. Spinoza noted clemency as the opposite of cruelty. If clemency is applied in the way that Bennett says that Spinoza is intending his definition to be used, an even greater oddity occurs. So, paraphrasing Bennett, “we call a person clement if *she* is well-disposed towards someone *we* hate.” This makes little sense. Spinoza does not mean his definition of cruelty to be used in this form.

As noted earlier, if the “we” is applied to Spinoza’s definition of benevolence in the way that Bennett is saying that Spinoza means “we,” in his definition of cruelty, the definition of benevolence becomes absurd. That benevolence is someone else’s desire of benefiting one, whom *we* pity, makes little sense. Clearly, Spinoza does not use “we” in this sense in his definition of benevolence. It is logical to assume that he did not use it in his definition of cruelty in that manner also. Curley tends to reject Bennett’s interpretation, also.⁶⁰

One interpretation of Spinoza’s definition that is advanced is that Spinoza has used the “form” of “emotions reversed” in his definition. It is difficult to say but it is possible that he deliberately used that “form” for what cruelty is, or perhaps he unconsciously applied the form in his definition. Spinoza’s definition fits the form of desire of producing misery annex’d to love, and of happiness to hatred.” His definition restated says that cruelty is the desire to do harm to a person one loves. That appears

⁶⁰ Spinoza. 1985, p. 182. Curley had commented that while he was translating his version of Spinoza he and Bennett were corresponding. Curley’s book was published in 1985. Curley notes that Bennett had said in correspondence: “the point of D38 *may* be that ‘cruel’ is a term which nobody uses without giving it a load of moral condemnation, and that emerges- given Spinoza’s meta-ethics- simply as the condition that the speaker loves or pities the victim of the so-called ‘cruelty.’” Curley states that Bennett’s position is plausible but rejects Bennett’s position in favor of the emendation.

disturbing as definition unless one keeps Hume account in mind. Even with Hume's account in mind it appears odd, but then understandable. Spinoza's definition had a twist to it. To show what he meant he reverses the reversed form and, to paraphrase, says 'that clemency is a desire where one offers love where there should be hatred.' Clemency is then a high love and its opposite is cruelty, a low hatred. Interestingly, clemency is a workable form of "turn the other cheek." Also worthy of note is that clemency is active and cruelty is passive.

Unfortunately, the supposition that Spinoza meant cruelty as a form of reversed emotions is not supported by his other definitions. But it seems plausible that Spinoza looked at what cruelty is, and consciously or unconsciously noted that this hatred is made worse by a reversed form just as love is made better by a reversed form (in which it does in clemency, at risk of harm to the self).

There may be other problems with the use of language in Spinoza's definitions. The meaning of some words has shifted over the years. For instance Spinoza used the word pity in his definition of benevolence. Humeans view benevolence as the opposite of cruelty. Spinoza had said, "Benevolence is the desire of benefiting one whom we pity."⁶¹ What does Spinoza mean by pity? Today, pity has a condescending tone to it. We pity those beneath us. We pity the starving. Sympathy is another such word. We have sympathy with those who suffer ill fortune. We send them a card of sympathy. We do not send cards of sympathy to weddings and birth announcements. In today's language we "empathize" with those like us or we have "compassion" for them.

⁶¹ Spinoza. 1955, p. 182.

A review of Spinoza's other definitions helps to realign the meanings of these words, pity sympathy and empathy. Spinoza states:

*XXIV. Sympathy (misericordia) is love, in so far as it induces a man to feel pleasure at another's good fortune, and pain at another's evil fortune.*⁶²

XXVIII. Pity is pain accompanied by the idea of evil, which has befallen someone else whom we conceive to be like ourselves.

*Explanation.- Between pity and sympathy (misericordia) there seems to be no difference, unless perhaps that the former term is used in reference to a particular action, and the latter in reference to a disposition.*⁶³

So by the words pity or sympathy Spinoza means what is called empathy, today.

Compassion is also a good synonym. Descartes held pity to be the opposite of cruelty.

Descartes says in The Passions of the Soul, "Ingratitude is opposed to gratitude and Cruelty to Pity."⁶⁴ Pity is a type of compassion. Spinoza had noted that clemency or mercy is the opposite of cruelty. Clemency and mercy are special cases of compassion. But more so, they are action oriented like benevolence and not just a passion.

Another concern is the use of various words in translations of Spinoza's definition of cruelty. The Ewles translation of Spinoza's definition uses the word "impel." One is "impelled" to injure. Other versions, such as Curley's, use the word "roused." Some translations use the word "urged." The word "urged" seems to lie somewhere between "impelled" and "roused." It is worthwhile to compare words "impel," "rouse," and "urge." "Impelled" is a driven or passive state while roused is an awakening. These words make a difference in ascription of moral responsibility and accountability. The words "impelled" and "roused" tend to present different directions in which cruelty can

⁶² Ibid, p. 178.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 177.

⁶⁴ Descartes, 1989, p. 131.

be viewed. They share some similarities with how the word “we” can be viewed from different perspectives. For the sake of clarity the Ewles and Curley translations of Spinoza’s definition of cruelty are given here. First the Ewles translation reads:

Cruelty or savageness is the desire, whereby a man is impelled to injure one whom we love or pity.

Explanation - To cruelty is opposed clemency, which is not a passive state of mind, but a power whereby man restrains his anger and revenge.⁶⁵

Then the Curley translation reads:

Cruelty or Severity, is a Desire by which someone is roused to do evil to one whom we love or pity.

Exp.: To Cruelty is opposed Mercy, which is not a passion, but a power of the mind, by which a man governs anger and vengeance.⁶⁶

Different words and capitalization is used in the different translation. Here, the words “impelled” and “roused” will be examined. Not only does the word “roused” cause confusion in what is meant by cruelty but it is not entirely clear what is meant by the word “impelled,” when Spinoza says, “a man is impelled to injure one whom we love or pity.” Impelled should mean a force beyond him, a force that he cannot quite control, in that cruelty is a passive condition. Moral culpability may be related to the strength or weakness of being “impelled.”

There is an element of control in his definition of cruelty; we are impelled to an action but there is a sense that one should refrain from it. One may be impelled and not have control but may become aware of it and then control the situations that prevented

⁶⁵ Spinoza, 1955, p. 182.

⁶⁶ Spinoza, 1985, p. 540.

him or her from being in control. Spinoza saw that there could be some confusion in his definition of cruelty and he attempted clarification and gives an explanation. He states:

Explanation. –To cruelty is opposed clemency, which is not a passive state of mind, but a power whereby man restrains his anger and revenge.⁶⁷

His explanation indicates that clemency is not a passive state of mind. Clemency is, more, a deliberate sort of act. Just as a person restrains anger and revenge in clemency, one does not restrain one's anger or revenge in cruelty. There is a sense present that one should have restrained it. In the case of clemency in potential, if anger and revenge are not restrained, then there is no clemency or mercy. In a case when clemency is called for but not given, the person is passive and not free. The person does not live up to the standard of humanity. If a person does not let loose anger or revenge, which rightly should be restrained, when one is capable of so doing, then there is no cruelty. Cruelty exists when the person lets loose this anger or revenge that should be restrained.

That explains why Spinoza says, "Cruelty is the desire, whereby a man is impelled to injure one whom we love or pity." It follows that we should refrain from injuring one we love or pity. An element of freedom is removed when one is impelled to something. Cruelty is passive in this sense. To be "impelled" is largely to be passive. To be "roused" is to be awakened and indicates the beginning of an active state. Spinoza means by "cruel," not refraining. In either case the agent should control the urge to do the act. An element of freedom is implied.

⁶⁷ Spinoza. 1955, p.182.

Instead of benevolence being the opposite of cruelty, some such as Philip Hallie, Frederick Douglas, and perhaps Kierkegaard, have held that freedom is the opposite of cruelty. The view one holds of how much freedom humankind has serves as the reference for whether the terms “impelled” or “roused” are favored.

Of course, either being impelled or being roused could be the force behind cruelty. One could be impelled or roused to cruelty depending on circumstances. But the view subscribed to in this thesis is the view held by Socrates, that humans do not willingly do evil. The word “impelled” better represents the Socratic view. Use of the word “impelled” also makes for a better solution for controlling cruelty, other than with punitive means. It is easier to control a behavior by eliciting cooperation for a behavior. One is more willing to cooperate in changing a behavior that one feels is “impelled” rather than one that is “roused.” The mechanism is apparent. One is more willing to resist forces that remove control from one’s life, such as being impelled to do something. Rousing on the other hand leads one to willing the act.

One can be impelled in one of two directions. One can be driven by a force or one can be forced to drive behavior in a certain way. In other words one can be impelled out of control or one can be impelled to be in control. A point needs to be distinguished here. There are people who have obsessions who are compelled to do things like repeatedly wash their hands, and there are another type of people who are rigid in their thinking, who vie for a sense of control. The hand washing type of obsessive-compulsive behavior is not referenced here, except to note that the person is “compelled” or “impelled” in a strong sense. What is important here, is this second type of people. They are those who

are rigid in their thinking and strive for control. The reference here is the obsessive character that vies for a sense of control. As noted earlier, Rorty said in *Nobokov On Cruelty* that Nobokov's greatest characters are obsessives. The obsessive type that Rorty is referring to is the type that attempts to maintain a sense of mental and interpersonal control.⁶⁸

"Impelled" for the obsessive-compulsive character is more a matter of maintaining a sense of control. The authoritarian personality (obsessive-compulsive character) and its association with Nazi fascism and cruelty is well documented by T. W. Adorno and Erich Fromm. This type of character is rule-oriented. This type of character uses rules efficiently. Obsessive traits in lesser form are adaptive in organizations where rules and regulations are important.⁶⁹ Rules are not used in a dysfunctional manner. If there is dysfunctionality it is not in organization but in the relationship with human beings. For them, concern for rules often takes precedence over people.

Shklar noted a relation between cruelty and rules. She said, "When we trust the rules, we tend to become too sure of our competence and that makes us arrogant, cruel and tyrannical."⁷⁰ So, it is seen how stringent rule followers can be cruel.

Locke referred to such people as zealots in his *Letter of Toleration*. The religious intolerance that he refers to is such that those people attempt to maintain control of others actions through rigid attention to their rules regarding religion. It was not just a matter of

⁶⁸ APA, DSM-IV, 1996, p. 669 states that "The essential feature of the Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder is a preoccupation with orderliness, perfectionism, and mental and interpersonal control, at the expense of flexibility, openness, and efficiency.....Individuals with Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder attempt to maintain a sense of control through painstaking attention to rules." The reader is encouraged to compare this type of rule follower with Rawls' *Two Conceptions of Rules*.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 672.

their holding different beliefs. Their fundamental beliefs were similar. All Christians believed in God and the Bible. They were intolerant because of the rules they held. They were intolerant of those who violated their rules. Zealots (intolerants) tend to be rule trusters. No one doubts the cruelty religious persecution has caused through intolerance. This sort of cruelty persists in this day. "Intolerance" is a close friend of "Rules." There are those who are intolerant to the rights of females. Female genital mutilation is still practiced in parts of the world. Rules say this should be so. Intolerants hold beliefs but rules supply the courage. Rules give permission. Intolerants hold many beliefs that others do not have, yet do not act on just those beliefs. Their belief leads to cruelty after the belief has been systematized.

The type of character that vies to maintain a sense of control has many names. Terms that have been presented are "obsessive," "authoritarian," "religious intolerant," and "zealot." Each may differ from each other in particular ways but share many common features. The term zealot is sometimes referred to as "fanatic." Fanatic is another term that is added to the list that share this common association with cruelty.

Maxwell Taylor notes:

The term fanatic seems to have entered the English language in the seventeenth century, when it was used to refer to excessive enthusiasm in religious belief.⁷¹

The two different translations of cruelty in Spinoza's definition tend to represent two different types of cruelty. One translation tends more towards a cruelty of delight and the other tends more toward cruelty of indifference. The Ewles translation presents

⁷⁰ Judith Shklar, The Faces of Injustice, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 27.

cruelty as a savage desire. A savage desire seems a primitive desire. In regards to cruelty it is thought of as psychopathic or antisocial in nature. Curley translation represents cruelty as severity. The American Heritage Dictionary defines severity as “Corresponding strictly to established rule; maintained rigidity.”⁷² Strict adherence to the rules is the opposite of primitive savageness. Rigidity in rules implies social structure. Rigidity in rules has been manifested by religious zealots and also by Nazi’s in adherence to their ideology. However each of the words has some crossover to the other; savageness can be severe and severity can be savage.

Sometimes reference to the opposite of a thing can better give us an understanding of the thing. Spinoza sees clemency (mercy) as the opposite of cruelty. Humeans see benevolence as the opposite of cruelty. Clemency is a form of benevolence. Spinoza’s definition of benevolence has been given. Other philosophers have noted other conditions as the opposite of cruelty. Montaigne had noted valor as the opposite of cruelty. He used the term “valor” to mean high spirit or noble character. Spinoza’s use of “clemency” implies noble character though he does not explicitly say that. Descartes noted pity as the opposite of cruelty, and as noted is a type of compassion. Philip Hallie had noted during the course of his writings, three conditions that are the opposite of cruelty. One of these is freedom. Freedom may be seen in Spinoza’s note on clemency in that one has the power to restrain from injuring a person who one has the right to injure. Unlike clemency, cruelty is unfree. In later writings Hallie has noted hospitality as the opposite of cruelty. Hospitality is a form of

⁷¹ Maxwell Taylor, The Fanatics: A Behavioral Approach to Political Violence. Oxford: Brassey’s (UK),

benevolence and a bit more distant from clemency in that it is more active and involved in “the other.” Hallie has also noted long term love as well as freedom as the opposite of cruelty. He says in reference to his book The Paradox of Cruelty:

One of the key contentions of this book is one of the key ideas of Douglass’s autobiography: the opposite of cruelty is not kindness, nor is it Christian love (except if that word is subjected to what Montaigne would call “a long interpretation,” an interpretation entirely in terms of the victim’s point of view). The opposite of cruelty is freedom.⁷³

One is tempted to say that freedom is not the opposite of cruelty for if one were free one could then freely do cruelty if one chose. The Socratic account denies this. Kierkegaard notes bondages of sin and the demonic as unfree. Cruelty is manifested in the bondage of sin and in the demonic. Spinoza’s definition seems to hold cruelty as a passive and unfree condition also. Yet it still appears that cruelty sometimes occurs through circumstances that appeared as if the agent acted freely and willingly. So, the Humean position that benevolence is the opposite of cruelty is favored. It is noted however that benevolence generally acts freely.

Spinoza’s definition of cruelty has been examined to some degree. Several views have been presented. Let us now take a look at Hobbes. Hobbes would seem a good source for an analysis of cruelty. Frank N. Magill writes:

In their natural state, according to Hobbes, men are approximately equal in strength, mental capacity, and experience, and everyone has an equal right to everything. If they were without government the conflict arising from their desires, their distrust, and ambition would lead to a state of war of every man against every man. In it there would

1991, p. 13.

⁷² American Heritage Dictionary, New College Edition, 1976.

⁷³ Philip Hallie, The Paradox of Cruelty. Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, p. 159.

be no property, no justice or injustice, and life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."⁷⁴

Hobbes says:

Hereby it is manifest that, during the time men live without a common power to keep them in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man.⁷⁵

It is obvious that, in the world today, a common power to keep men in awe is needed. Where there is no common power military factions arise. Observation of many Third World nations testify to this fact. Even in the United States militant groups would rise. Some common power is needed to maintain the peace. Hobbes is also correct that in some primitive sense, in a state of war, every man is against every man. But in a more practical sense, it is known that people tend to form coalitions from which wars and civilizations are built. Hobbes believed that humankind needed a common power (lead by a king) to keep us in awe. The Leviathan, was designed to provide peace and security for humankind. Hobbes underestimated the power of democracy but still The Leviathan may be viewed as a prosocial attempt to help humankind. Hobbes defines cruelty as:

Contempt or little sense of the calamity of others is that which men call CRUELTY, proceeding from security of their own fortune. For that any man should take pleasure in other men's great harms, without other end of his own, I do not conceive it possible.⁷⁶

For one that would hold that humans are held together by awe or fear, he gives a rather humane definition of cruelty. The phrase in the first sentence of his definition of

⁷⁴ Frank N. Magill, Ed. Masterpieces of World Philosophy. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990, p. 234.

⁷⁵ Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Parts One and Two. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987 p. 106.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1987, p. 58.

cruelty “proceeding from security of their own fortune” expresses egoism not baseness. That man should have a sense of calamity of others denotes humanity. “Humanity” is also expressed by not taking pleasure in men’s great harm.

His definition of cruelty views the agent as generally passive. Hobbes’ definition indicates that cruelty is fundamentally of indifference but his definition has a provision for a cruelty of delight through “other end of his own.”

The sentence, “For that any man should take pleasure in other men's great harms, without other end of his own, I do not conceive it possible” is supportive of a Socratic account of evil. Hobbes seems to be saying humans do not take pleasure in other human’s great harm – until some other interest supersedes, until one perceives the security of their fortune is threatened in some way.

Spinoza’s definition, if viewed as cruelty as savageness, is more a cruelty of delight; Hobbes’ definition of cruelty is more a cruelty of indifference. Interestingly, Spinoza’s definition speaks of having a feeling that one should not have, whereas Hobbes’ speaks of not having a feeling one should have. Hobbes definition indicates that there are people who have little sense of the calamity of others, and are indifferent to that calamity, because their energy is invested on “protecting” their fortune. The phrase “proceeding from security of their fortune” implies overriding the sense of calamity that one should feel for others. Rorty’s comments on cruel incuriosity sounds much like Hobbes cruelty of indifference.

More needs to be said about indifference in that cruelties of indifference often go undetected until they are revealed as cruelty. Hobbes uses the word “contempt” in his

definition of cruelty. It is used in the sense of 'little sense of calamity of others.' Hobbes and Spinoza use the term contempt to mean indifference. Spinoza says in the *Definitions of the Emotions*:

Definition V. Contempt is the conception of anything which touches the mind so little, that its presence leads the mind to imagine those qualities which are not in it rather than such as are in it.⁷⁷

Hobbes uses “contempt,” similarly, as a neutral sort of state. Hobbes uses “contempt” to mean, “worthless” or “beneath notice”. Hobbes says:

Those things which we neither desire nor hate we are said to contemn, CONTEMPT being nothing else but an immobility or contumacy of the heart in resisting the action of certain things; and proceeding from that the heart is already moved otherwise by other more potent objects or from want of experience of them.⁷⁸

Contempt, then, is neither desire nor hate but a sort of neutral state in which we are unmoved by something either because our attention is focused on something else or we do not desire to know of those things. It has no or little emotive force and is pulled or blocked by another interest.

Curley comments on the word “disdain” and its relation to contempt. He says:

...contempt seems to have changed its meaning since the seventeenth century. (Cf. Hobbes' *Leviathan* vi: “those things we neither desire nor hate we are said to contemn.”) Spinoza's definition reflects Cartesian usage. So something closer to disesteem seems preferable.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Spinoza 1955, p.175

⁷⁸ Hobbes 1989, p. 53.

⁷⁹ Spinoza 1985, p 633.

Common usage of the word “contempt,” today, means to despise or scorn. By Hume’s time “contempt” was used in more contemporary form. Hume states, “Contempt or scorn has so strong a tincture of pride, that there scarce is any other passion discernible.”⁸⁰

Hobbes had mentioned interests proceeding from their own fortune and pulls of contumacy or haughtiness of the heart, that is, not wanting to do something or resisting doing something. This aspect differs a little from Spinoza’s use of the word “contempt” or Curley’s use of the word “disesteem.” Hobbes’ definition is similar but the phrase, “immobility or contumacy of the heart,” indicates resistance not neutrality.

There is something more than just the indifference, as is stated in Spinoza’s definition of “contempt.” Hobbes adds a “contumacy of the heart.” Contumacy is a haughtiness or disobedience of the heart. It is a disobedience of the heart in resisting certain actions. It is one explanation of why the “incurious obsessive” is incurious.

The outcome of Hobbes’ definition is that one should have a sense of pity, but does not have a sense of pity for those who suffer harm. Stated otherwise but within the general confines of his definition, those that feel contempt have no compassion (love) for these who suffer misery nor do they bear them hatred. The pattern expressed in Hobbes’ definition is peculiar. It is as if the agent’s actions indicate hatred but his intentions indicate some other end. Hobbes’ definition of cruelty fits what Rorty says of incurious obsessives, that they are “exquisitely sensitive to everything which affects or provides for their own obsession, and entirely incurious about anything that affects anyone else.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Hume 1990, p.390

⁸¹ Rorty, 1998, p. 158.

If, in Hobbes' definition of contempt, the words "the action of certain things is replaced with the words "injury to others" then there is a definition of cruelty. The distinction between Hobbes' definition of contempt and his definition of cruelty is human suffering or calamity.

In Hobbes' definition of cruelty we find cruelty proceeding from security of one's own fortune (one's treasure). In his definition of contempt, contempt is found proceeding from that the heart is already moved otherwise. The ideas of proceeding from security of their own fortune and proceeding from security from that the heart is moved otherwise are different concepts. However they do share some similarity. It is said, "For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also."⁸² Ancient wisdom shows how to detect where one's heart lies.

Hobbes uses his notion of "contempt" in his definition of cruelty. His definition of contempt while expressing a type of neutrality contains a germ of cruelty. It is similar to what has been called apathy, today. Contempt for Hobbes is largely a state lacking desire or aversion. It is a state in which there is neither desire or hate. Cruelty for Hobbes is the contempt involving the lack of desire or aversion regarding the suffering of others, the calamity of others. Others such as Hallie noted that any definition of cruelty should omit references of the intention to harm.

Cruelties of indifference are important to note. We see that with terms like contempt or disesteem our intentions lie elsewhere. It is easy to make claims that one was

⁸² Bible, The. Revised Standard Version. *Luke*, 12:32, New York: American Bible Society, 1980. P. 905.

really doing something else and was not cruel. Intentions may point toward a particular goal with cruelty as a disesteemed byproduct.

Thus far two forms of cruelty have been discussed. Cruelty can take the form of cruelty of delight or it can take the form of cruelty of indifference. Cruelties of delight seem to have a sadomasochistic component. Some desire pulls the agent toward that form of cruelty. Cruelty of indifference, on the other hand, seems a different species. Indifference and apathy characterize this form of cruelty. The agent takes no conscious delight in the actions that caused the suffering. The common point that these two types of cruelty share is the effect on the victim.

Cruelties of indifference are odd in that they do not seem to possess the desire to produce misery annexed to love or happiness to hatred, yet in many cases they seem to work *as if* they did. They appear as unconscious cruelties of delight. If one possessed a love or hatred for those suffering calamity there should not be contempt (that which is beneath notice). If we desired that a calamity befall one, it should be on one we hated, unless it were a case of “emotions reversed.” If we were aversive to the calamity befalling one, it would be toward one that was loved in some sense, and we would take action against it. Since action is not taken in this case of “contempt,” it is in effect, more like a case of hatred.

Hobbes’ phrase “proceeding from security of their own” may indicate that an emotive state is present, but the cruelty lies in the “contempt or little sense of calamity of others.” He does indicate, however, that a man could take pleasure in the act of cruelty providing there was some other end of his own. The bulk of “some other end of their

own” seems to lie in “security of their own fortune.” Security of fortune means more than money or life in some cases. In some cases protecting one’s ego may be an example of “proceeding from security of their fortune.” Often, one reads in the newspaper of a man killing his lover simply because the lover wanted to leave him. In this case passions are inflamed. In some cases, security of fortune lays in an institution. American slavery is a good example of contempt and cruelty of indifference. It represents cruelty as Hobbes defined it. Families were broken and sold for security of one’s fortune. No doubt some may have engaged in cruelties of delight but the institution of slavery, as a whole was one of indifference. Cruelty of indifference is greater reaching than cruelty of delight.

CHAPTER THREE

Contemporary – Shklar, Kekes and Hallie

The late Judith Shklar was a champion against cruelty. Shklar held that cruelty is the worst thing that we do, the only exception is the prevention of greater cruelties. This maxim and exception rule is a foundation that is used throughout this thesis. John Kekes stated that she had given several definitions of cruelty.⁸³ Her comments on cruelty will be examined. Kekes argues against Shklar in his discussion in the journal *Ethics*. His definition of cruelty will be given, which, in turn, will be argued against. But first we present Shklar's comments on cruelty. There are several definitions. The first is, "the willful inflicting of physical pain on a weaker being in order to cause anguish and fear."⁸⁴

Kekes objected that the definition was too narrow in that it involves only physical pain. It does not account for emotional pain. Kekes comments that Shklar seemed to be aware of this flaw in the definition. In a later writing, Shklar gave a second definition of cruelty. Her second definition reads that cruelty:

...is the deliberate infliction of physical, and secondarily emotional, pain upon a weaker person or group by stronger ones in order to achieve some end, tangible or intangible, of the latter.⁸⁵

⁸³ See Kekes 1996, p.836. Kekes notes comments made by Shklar on cruelty as definitions. Shklar's comments seem more directed to the context of her essays than as definitions per se. For sake of argument though they are accepted as definitions.

⁸⁴ Shklar, 1984, p. 8.

⁸⁵ Kekes 1996, p.836.

Kekes noted that Shklar broadened her first definition to include emotional pain. Kekes uses the term “suffering,” in his own definition. This seems an acceptable substitute for the term “pain.” However, Kekes rejects Shklar’s second definition. He states, “...it retains the arbitrary proviso that cruelty can flow only from the strong to the weak.”⁸⁶

Kekes objects to Shklar’s use of the terms “weaker” and “stronger” in the definition. However, the concepts of weak and strong, in respect to cruelty, are worth a review. In one sense the weaker could inflict cruelty upon a stronger just as a pebble can topple a balanced rock. But in another sense, it is the stronger that inflicts cruelty upon the weaker. The late Philip Hallie wrote several books on cruelty. In one book entitled The Paradox of Cruelty, he commented on the relationship between the strong and the weak. Hallie says:

Cruelty involves a power-relationship between two parties (where we take “power” to mean the speedy overcoming of resistance, in analogy with its definition in physics); one part is active, comparatively powerful, and the other is passive, comparatively powerless (Hallie 1969, p.34).⁸⁷

The power-relationship in analogy with physics is a materialistic description. Hallie’s comment better describes the relationship in cruelty between the “stronger” and “weaker.” His terms “active, comparatively powerful” and “passive, comparatively powerless” more clearly delineates what is meant by “stronger” and “weaker” in cruelty. If the comparative powers are used in the same way as they are in physics, the stronger power has greater effect than the weaker power. Hallie notes power as the overcoming of resistance. A small pebble pulled out from under a balanced stone or striking a balanced stone may topple it.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.836.

The larger stone, now unbalanced, is powerless to resist. It is easy to equivocate over the terms “stronger” and “weaker.” But if the power relationship is clearly delineated, as Hallie noted, the relationship is in the form if P, then Q. While cruelty could occur between equals or originate from a weaker, in one sense, it is apparent that cruelty essentially involves “comparative powers.” For instance, the pebble could contain a greater “comparative power” than a larger stone in a particular relationship.

Hallie says even more strongly regarding the power-relationship in cruelty:

What is always an important part of the cruel action is rendering the resistance of the victim ineffectual, making him passive. What is crucial to cruelty is the process of maiming the ordinary patterns of behavior that are the victim’s ways of living.⁸⁸

While Hallie has not stated that he ranks cruelty as the worst thing that we do, as Shklar did, he is viewed as holding a similar position. The relationship that Hallie holds regarding strong and weak is clear. The victim is made passive and comparatively powerless.

In addition to a definition of physical cruelty, Shklar writes on moral cruelty in her book Ordinary Vices. The definition shows the maiming effects of emotional pain. She states:

What is moral cruelty? It is not just a matter of hurting someone’s feelings. It is a deliberate and persistent humiliation, so that the victim can eventually trust neither himself nor anyone else. Sooner or later it may involve physical hurt, but that is not inherent in it.⁸⁹

Shklar’s comment shows the cowardice and hypocrisy in cruelty (the strong inflicting pain on the weak). A clear example of moral cruelty is found in use of the derogatory word and its connotations that have been used against Afro-Americans. The

⁸⁷ Hallie, 1969, p. 34.

maiming is insidious. But Shklar had separated physical and moral cruelty. She noted that physical and moral cruelty leads to different forms of misanthropy.

Shklar wrote Ordinary Vices. The title is a take off on Montaigne's comment in *Of Cannibals*. Montaigne said, "Treachery, disloyalty, cruelty, tyranny...are our ordinary vices."⁹⁰ In Ordinary Vices, Shklar ranks the vices. The vices she lists are hypocrisy, snobbery, betrayal, misanthropy and cruelty. Cruelty is ranked first. She notes that to put cruelty first forces a reordering of values in a deeply fundamental way. Physical cruelty is ranked ahead of moral cruelties such as injustice and hypocrisy. Shklar says:

When Montaigne spoke of his cruel hatred of cruelty he had physical brutality in mind. If one, however, puts moral cruelty first, whether it be injustice as revolutionaries sometimes do, or self-torment and hypocrisy as Nietzsche did, one can readily adopt every one of Machiavelli's cruelest maxims. For those who put cruelty first, dishonesty and hypocrisy will also be reprehensible⁹¹

Moral cruelties, as Shklar notes, are found in injustice, self-torment and hypocrisy among other vices. In moral cruelty, if we put the vices such as injustice, self-torment or hypocrisy first then the ethical path may lead to cruelty. This is because those vices themselves have been valued first and takes precedence over cruelty. However, Shklar says putting cruelty first leads to a reordering and subordinating of the vices. "It becomes a radical spirit of denial,"⁹² Our everyday rules are denied and reordered accordingly.

If cruelty is put first, injustice is subordinated to it; there would still be justice but cruelty would be removed. If justice is ranked first among the vices, then we still have

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 26.

⁸⁹ Shklar, 1984, p. 37.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 1.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 42.

⁹² Ibid. 1984, p. 42.

cruelty but injustice is removed. In other words, there could be justified cruelty. If one held capital punishment as cruelty, then capital punishment would be considered justified cruelty. Most European nations view capital punishment as cruel. It still occurs in the United States but there is significant opposition to it. Many Third World nations view capital punishment as a form of justified punishment.

Shklar's definition of moral cruelty reads like Hallie's comment that what is crucial to cruelty is the process of maiming the person's ordinary patterns of behavior. Shklar uses the terms "humiliation" and "trust." Humiliation is a special type of pain.⁹³ Destruction of trust is a great ruin. Today a great many third world countries suffer from a destruction of trust. Hallie's term, "the infliction of ruin" is inclusive of cruelty.

There are other definitions of cruelty. The use of other definitions offers other views that enhance our understanding of cruelty. Kekes provides his definition of cruelty. I argue against his definition. It reads:

Cruelty is the disposition of human agents to take delight in or be indifferent to the serious and unjustified suffering their actions cause to their victims.⁹⁴

The definition notes cruelty as a disposition of delight or of indifference to suffering. Kekes' definition does not present a Socratic account of evil. His definition is one in which blame is accented. The definition is too narrow. Kekes' definition is rejected on at least four points. The first is that the use of a disposition in the definition of cruelty unduly limits what will count as cruelty. The second and third points are that the

⁹³ Rorty noted in *Orwell on Cruelty*, "The point that sadism aims at humiliation rather than merely at pain in general has been developed in detail by Elaine Scarry in The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World." Rorty, 1998, p. 177.

⁹⁴ Kekes, 1996, p. 838.

use of the terms “serious” and “unjustified” in his definition restricts the boundaries even further. The fourth point is that his definition fails when applied under certain psychological conditions.

What primarily counts as cruelty is the infliction of ruin and not the disposition of an agent. There are many cases in which cruelty can be done without agents intending to be cruel. For instance, suppose that there are entrepreneurs who produced legal products that caused physical harm to others. Suppose that their intention is to make money and that they have no intent to be cruel to their customers. If researchers had correlated harm to smoking certain substances, the harm is known. The harm is not accidental. If their customers were addicted to the substance and suffered horrible consequences (years later) due to the substance, there are grounds to say that cruelty occurred. There may have been no disposition to cruelty, yet suffering was produced.

Kekes’ emphasis on the use of the disposition of a human agent stands in opposition to Hallie’s position. Hallie differs from Kekes and others in a significant way in this regard. Kekes stresses the importance of disposition. In contrast Hallie stresses the importance of consequence. Hallie rejects the use of intentions. He said, “that any understanding of cruelty should leave out the phrase ‘intention to hurt’.”⁹⁵

When we speak of cruelty we speak of some sort of suffering or ruin. Victimization is one of the consequences of cruelty. William James had noted consequence as the empiricist criterion. He said, “In the end it had to come to our

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 839

empiricist criterion: By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots.”⁹⁶ Following James, the criterion of cruelty is found in the consequence of certain actions, not one’s disposition.

Maxwell Taylor argues against using dispositional features. He has stated in his book, The Fanatics: A Behavioral Approach to Political Violence:

We should note, however, that when we attempt to account for other people’s actions, it has been shown that we tend to show distinctive biases in the kinds of explanations we choose that are not wholly based on objective evidence. In particular we have a strong tendency to overemphasize dispositional features of people at the expense of situational and environmental causes.⁹⁷

Hallie said, “Cruelty is for us the infliction of ruin, whatever the ‘motives.’⁹⁸

Taylor’s comment supports Hallie’s position. Who did it and why he did it is less important than what was done. What is important is “the activity of hurting sentient beings,” “the infliction of ruin.” The disposition of cruelty need not be present for there to be cruelty. Emphasis should be placed on the victim. Kekes’ definition is about a disposition.

About fifty or sixty years ago Afro-Americans being seated on the back of a bus may have been deemed separate but equal. The policy of “separate but equal” had justification behind it for a long time. Now we are aware that such policies erode one’s esteem and it is no longer deemed justified. A bus driver telling Afro-Americans to step to the back may not have meant to be cruel. The person may have believed that company

⁹⁶ William James. The Varieties of Religious Experience. New York: The New American Library, 1958, p. 34.

⁹⁷ Taylor, 1991, p. 72.

⁹⁸ Philip P. Hallie. The Paradox of Cruelty. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1969. p. 14

policy and the law of the land justified his actions. He may have even felt virtuous following company policy.

Kekes' definition requiring that before something can be defined as cruelty it must be "unjustified" is problematic. Some countries use capital punishment; other countries view it as ultimately unjustified. Afro-Americans being required to sit on the back of a bus was justified under the "separate but equal" policy prior to the late Fifties. Acts that were justified at one time prove to be unjustified in another. These are examples of why justification should not be used to qualify cruelty. One is not thrown into relativism, in regards to justification, because of the changes that occur. If one has fixed principles and applies them to the changing world, changes are expected, though the principles themselves need not change.

Hallie has noted that cruelty is both justifiable and unjustifiable. It is what he calls the paradox of cruelty. Hallie says in The Paradox of Cruelty:

In general it may be said that the paradox of cruelty is this: the destruction of men (as well as animals) is both readily justifiable (in terms of stimulation, economic or social need, etc.), and totally unjustifiable. Deliberate destruction of a human being is impossible to defend conclusively, and history is full of deliberate-self congratulatory destruction of human beings.⁹⁹

Hallie does not mean this as a contradiction of logic. He believes that cruelty is justifiable. He stands by his actions in World War II. Yet, there is something wrong in justifying the madness and horror of war. Perhaps an example best illustrates Hallie's point. Shklar notes that Montaigne wrote that war is "the testimony of our imbecility and

⁹⁹ Hallie, 1969, p.72

imperfection.”¹⁰⁰ It might be said that when we justify war we justify our imbecility and imperfection. War is a perfect example of something that is totally unjustifiable, and yet justification (in another sense) is easily found (particularly by the side that we are on). There are some that would say that some wars are justified. There are times when we must conclude that is so. At the same time we may be forced to conclude that this is a type of madness (and is unjustifiable).

Hallie makes good moral sense. Let us hold the commandment, “Thou shall not kill.” Let us say that this is the highest commandment. We can see that in some sense it is unjustifiable to kill. As with cruelty we might say that it is the worst thing that we do. But if we are placed in a situation where we are forced to defend ourselves or our families, it may be said that we are justified in our action. If the circumstances are that we are locked into a circumstance where either one person is killed or two or more are killed, we may be justified into taking the lesser loss. If we believe we are justified in some complete sense, there is closure and we did the right thing. If we believe that we are unjustified the dissonance keeps us in a dynamic state of tension. The tension promotes change. Since killing (or cruelty) occurred we should desire change. Even if we were justified, the unjustified view pushes us toward a new solution.

That something is justified and also is unjustified is a contradiction in logic and linear reasoning. Humans have cognitive experiences and associative experiences. With cognitive experiences the reasoning is linear. With associative experiences, reasons are more three-dimensional. For instance instead of eight following seven, as in linear

¹⁰⁰ Shklar, 1984, p. 16.

reasoning, an experience may attach to it. The idea of “carrot” or “lucky” may be associated with the number seven. The idea of a carrot may be associated with the number seven only because of its shape. Or one’s house may be associated because the number was part of the street address where they lived, and so forth. Associative experience also supply reasons for justifications. They can compete or conflict. They are numerous. That which is “justified” or “unjustified” is also subject to associative experiences. Only if something is absolutely justified and absolutely unjustified can we hold that the law of contraction is violated. Often in the concrete world there are times in which we can justify actions, then in other times show that similar actions are unjustified. For instance, values may change. Just as humankind has competing thoughts there are competing reasons why something is justified or unjustified. The question of cruelty is tricky.

Psychological reasoning may be viewed more associative than cognitive. It is more spatial than linear. Within its framework there are many reasons why something is or is not justified. These include multiple competing principals and emotions. At one moment situations and the environment may favor one set of reasons, at another the situation or environment may have changed and another set of reasons is favored. For example, changes in world power may change that which had been considered unjustifiable into that which is considered justifiable or vice versa and then compete again. There is no contradiction in one holding fixed values and stepping into the Heraclitean river of change.

Hallie may be considered a skeptic. He deliberately used conflicting terms. But he, also, has stated the sense in which each term is used, so some confusion is removed. An act can be justified from reference A and not justified from reference B. But at the same time we may embrace the dissonance. The dissonance impels us into seeking resolution of the dissonance, hopefully in finding something better.

With Hallie's type of 'mitigated cruelty' we acknowledge an action as cruel but there are fair justifications for it. The difference between Hallie's view and Kekes' is that Hallie acknowledges mitigated cruelty as a cruelty and not something else, such as justified punishment. Mitigated cruelty is a cruelty designed to lessen a greater cruelty. Similar to mitigated cruelty is Shklar's exception rule. The exception rule to Shklar's maxim that cruelty is the worst thing we do, states that the only exception to it is the prevention of a greater cruelty. The exception rule strives to make cruelty a lesser whole.

To include justification in a definition of cruelty, as Kekes has, narrows the definition by excluding the suffering that is labeled as "justified." Adding to the problem is determining whether something is a justification, a rationalization or an excuse. Austin noted that justification and excuses are similar. Michael Walzer said: "Now, as Austin says, these two can seem to come very close together – indeed, I shall suggest that they can appear side by side in the same sentence."¹⁰¹ There may be some distinguishing features differentiating justification and excuses but the point is that they can appear side by side in the same sentence. Instead of the term "unjustified," the term "unexcused"

¹⁰¹ George Sher. *Moral Philosophy*. "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands" by Michael Walzer, New York:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987, p. 691.

could be used in Kekes' definition. Justification of suffering is no guarantee against cruelty.

Psychology has shown that one of the ways that the psyche protects itself is through a defense mechanism called rationalization. "Rationalizations" are self-serving incorrect explanations of things. Rationalization is a natural phenomenon that all of us use at times. Ervin Staub, a psychologist who takes special interest in the cruelties of World War II, makes comments on "justifications." His use of the term "justification" seems to be what is commonly referred to as "rationalization." Yet, his comment casts doubt on what is meant by these terms. Staub says:

Often we have no objective criteria to differentiate between good reasons and justifications; the distinction can be a matter of judgment or point of view, and can be argued.¹⁰²

The point here is that rationalizations, justifications or excuses tend to blur into each other. Each may be selected from a particular perspective.

Nietzsche shows in the Genealogy of Morals how from earliest times humankind has justified its "evil." He says:

So as to abolish hidden, undetected, unwitnessed suffering from the world and honestly to deny it, one was in the past virtually compelled to invent gods and genii of all the heights and depths, in short something that roams even in secret, hidden places, sees even in the dark, and will not easily let an interesting painful spectacle pass unnoticed. For it was with the aid of such inventions that life then knew how to work the trick, which it has always known how to work, that of justifying itself, of justifying its "evil."¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ervin Staub, Personality: Basic Aspects and Current Research. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1980, pp. 270–271.

¹⁰³ Friedrich Nietzsche, Basic Writings Of Nietzsche. New York: Modern Library, 1968, p. 504.

Nietzsche shows the trick of how humankind fabricates its justifications of evil. He shows how justifications can be used negatively. Nietzsche roughly is saying the same thing that Hallie says, that cruelty is both justifiable and unjustifiable. In Nietzsche's terms, one justifies evil (which one should not). He means that viewed from one orientation (social or economic need etc.) evil is readily justifiable, yet from another orientation (moral or ethical) the destruction that is caused is totally unjustifiable. As Nietzsche points out life has learned this old trick to justify its wants and aversions.

The objections against requiring the term "unjustified" in his definition have been discussed. Kekes second condition, that the cruelty is a "serious" condition will now be discussed. His definition of cruelty required that the suffering is "serious" and "unjustified." There are problems with using the concept of "serious" in his definition.

Kekes states that the pain involved in cruelty should be serious. He says:

It is clear that the pain should be serious, not trivial. People who habitually take delight in or are indifferent to causing others embarrassment, annoyance, or inconvenience may be offensive but they are not cruel. Cruelty requires the infliction of pain that harms the victim in a way that endangers the victim's functioning as a full-fledged agent.¹⁰⁴

It is correct to say that a victim is harmed in some way that prevents him from functioning in a healthy manner. However, pain is not the only way to harm a person that prevents the person from functioning as a full-fledged agent. There are non-painful ways to inflict harm on a person. And what of those of us who have something inflicted upon us, yet still retain or use our complete and mature faculties to our own detriment. For instance,

¹⁰⁴ Kekes 1996, p. 837

many full-fledged agents use carcinogenic substances. It is not accurate to call those who use carcinogenic substances incomplete or immature.

One should bear in mind what Hallie had said of cruelty:

In short, cruelty is not simply the infliction of pain. It is a set of actions and passions that issue in certain actions and passions and only one of these passions is pain. Gentleness can be another.¹⁰⁵

The harm to the victim is what is important not whether the agent was just offensive or not. Just as an agent can be just offensive, the agent can also be just friendly or just loving. One can have friendly or loving intentions and still do irreparable harm to another. Sex and drugs can have a devastating effect on a child. The “friendly uncle” or a schoolmate who wishes to share his (drug) experiences may have “loving” or “friendly” intentions (though they may be horribly lost and misguided) and do great harm.

Cruelty can be in gentleness, it does not have to be pain. It is clear that cruelty can also appear trivial in many ways. A parent who is dysfunctional but otherwise gentle may teach the child to be dysfunctional, which in turn may cause suffering and pain throughout the person’s life. The child may never learn to be a full-fledged agent. The child may suffer more than one who has suffered serious short term physical pain.

Kekes’ definition fails in another way. The small things that sometimes lead to victimization are not taken into account. Little everyday poisons fall under the category of “not serious.” Kekes’ focus on “seriousness” sets aside the non-serious origins of some forms of cruelty.

¹⁰⁵ Hallie, 1969, pp.24 –26.

If one causes another habitual embarrassment, annoyance, or inconvenience it may then be fair to posit sadism. Humiliation or amusement in the suffering of others, or even intimidation, may easily be forms of sadism. Teasing may cause embarrassment or annoyance and also may be a form of sadism. It is apparent that someone habitually embarrassing another person can do serious damage. The same can be said of habitual annoyance or of habitual inconvenience of a person. Damage can be most clearly seen in cases of repeated, minor embarrassment of a child or constant annoyance or habitually inconveniencing the child. Each act might be said to be not serious, and not in itself cruel. Yet serious consequences might follow from what might be construed as these minor negative or annoying acts. One may plot an outcome in any of the above conditions. Habitual embarrassment may lead to internal scarring. Habitual annoyance may lead to anger. Habitual inconvenience may lead to a disruption of learning. These peculiar patterns of habitual embarrassment, annoyance and inconvenience may be applied to individuals, races of people, or nations.

One cannot wait for the consequence to be serious before it is then called cruelty. One example would be calling a person of another race or nationality by an offensive name that cuts into their self-esteem. To call the perpetrators of these acts just offensive could allow subtle cruelties to slip by.

Teasing a dog can be a sadistic and minor act of cruelty. Before a child became an animal torturer he may have “just” teased the animal. The term “serious” for Kekes supplies a cut off point for determining cruelty. According to Kekes’ definition, the child cannot be considered cruel because of the lesser degree of offense. This lesser form of

cruelty is labeled “teasing.” Teasing is a form of misery annexed to love or a happiness of hatred. It would seem that when the child takes the next step and harms or maims the animal then it becomes serious it is labeled “cruelty.” This example leads to the question of character. Following Kekes’ definition, these early stages of “bad” character would not be detected as cruelty because of the non-seriousness of the nature of the act. Yet, what would later be viewed as a “serious” character first began in small non-serious ways.

The antisocial type person is an example of “bad” character. It may be that the most effective approach to stop antisocial behavior is an aggressive approach against the antisocial type person. However, a non-aggressive approach may be beneficial to the child before antisocial behaviors occur. The focus then would largely be on non-serious behaviors. To wait for behaviors to become serious may be too late.

One reason that Kekes uses “seriousness” and “unjustifiable” in his definition of cruelty is so cruelty can clearly be defined in terms of blame. Kekes’ definition of cruelty is to be used in some legalistic sense. He notes in *Cruelty and Liberalism* that a political morality should curtail the autonomy of cruel people.¹⁰⁶ Kekes seems to have the antisocial type of character in mind. On that count he is correct. But cruelty consists of more than just the antisocial type. Many people are cruel due to circumstances. Poverty tends to make people cruel. Misery breeds contempt. The solution is to reduce poverty not to curtail the autonomy of those who are cruel. Laws can sponsor cruelty. Caucasians were cruel to Afro-Americans in the South prior to mid twentieth century. Again, the solution is to educate and offer prosocial alternatives. Kekes indicates that the reason to

¹⁰⁶ Kekes, 1996, p. 844.

punish cruel people is to protect the citizens of the land. Protection is fine, as far as it goes, but it is clearly more desirable to establish a world where protection is not required.

Kekes' use of the word "serious" paves the way for many cruelties to occur. It has been shown that cruelty does not have to involve pain that is serious. Destruction or harm can be gently done. Seduction is one mechanism in which harm and destruction can come about by gentle words or looks.¹⁰⁷ Marriages are destroyed and families broken by seductive tactics. Some may take the seduction of Biblical Eve as the first act of cruelty. Whether it was or was not the first cruelty or even cruelty is not debated here. What is important, here, is that the story shows that cruelty can be done in trivial, gentle ways. The seductive voice may say, "Take a bite of the delicious apple. Notice the succulent taste. Doesn't it taste good?" Non-serious acts are often precursors to serious acts.

Thus far, Kekes' definition has been rejected because of its dependence on a disposition and on the conditions of justification and seriousness. His definition will now be applied to a paradigm of cruelty and will be shown how the definition is further rejected.¹⁰⁸

Let us select a paradigm of cruelty. Shklar had made some comments that help in the selection. Shklar stated:

The Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits, among other things, the infliction of "cruel and unusual punishment." Since this amendment has after its long dormancy suddenly come alive, its origins may be of special relevance. It is not that American government has become more brutal – far from it – but that the

¹⁰⁷ Abigail Rosenthal's insightful work A Good Look at Evil is an expose on the seducer.

¹⁰⁸ Dewey said, "Psychology, and not Logic, is the method of philosophy." (Dewey, 1973, p. 121). He also said, "Psychology is the completed method of philosophy, because in it science and philosophy, fact and reason, are one." (Dewey, 1973, p. 128).

experiences of this century have made many of us more aware of the cruelties that governments generally are capable of.¹⁰⁹

Shklar notes that the cruelty clause in the Eight Amendment long remained dormant until rather recently. She also noted, incidentally, that some members of the First Congress stood in opposition to it. They believed that there was too much clemency – “that cutting off the ears of offenders might still be necessary” as a punishment. However, better hearts prevailed.¹¹⁰ But it was not until the twentieth century that there was an awakening to the Eighth Amendment. Prior to then, little attention had been paid it. Awakening came because of the shock and horror of what governments had brought about. Since then, attention has been paid to the Eighth Amendment. It seems fair that Nazi torture of the Jews could be set as a paradigm of cruelty.

Shklar noted that Montaigne had said, “the horror of cruelty impels me more to clemency than any model of clemency could draw me on.”¹¹¹ Montaigne’s statement is psychological. Just as the psychological mechanism worked for Montaigne, this same sort of psychological mechanism works in the awakening to the Eighth Amendment.

Let us suppose Nazi treatment of the Jews as a paradigm of cruelty. Let us then gather definitions of cruelty, various other concepts and reasons and apply it to the paradigm. If the Nazi treatment of the Jews is set as the paradigm of cruelty, then a definition of cruelty should be such that it “works” when applied to that paradigm. Let us apply some definitions that have thus far been discussed to the paradigm.

¹⁰⁹ Shklar, 1984, p. 238.

¹¹⁰ Shklar, 1984, p. 239.

¹¹¹ Shklar, 1984, p. 9.

If Shklar's first definition is applied to the paradigm, "the willful inflicting of physical pain on a weaker being in order to cause anguish and fear,"¹¹² then we see that "willing," "infliction of pain," "weaker beings," and "anguish" or "fear" are conditions that are met in the paradigm. In terms of willing, within this paradigm, both military commanders and soldiers, with respect to treatment of the Jews, may be said to have been willful in varying degrees. In regards to the Jew as victim, there is definitely an infliction of pain on a weaker being. Doing so to cause anguish or fear is accurate. Her first definition is somewhat narrow for the paradigm, but it works.

Shklar's second definition states that cruelty, "...is the deliberate infliction of physical, and secondarily emotional, pain upon a weaker person or group by stronger ones in order to achieve some end, tangible or intangible, of the latter."¹¹³ It is stronger. The second definition fits the paradigm better. Perhaps what stands out the most in her second definition is that a person or group is stronger than another person or group. This is taken to mean as Hallie had said, the active, comparatively powerful against the passive, comparatively powerless. Shklar's point regarding stronger and weaker is accented by noting that the stronger inflicts pain upon the weaker. It does not say a stronger group inflicts pain upon just another group, but that it inflicts pain upon a weaker group. The terms stronger and weaker, again, understate the paradigm but the terms work in the paradigm. Shklar's definition conveys a sense of cowardice in cruelty in that the "stronger" inflicts harm on the "weaker." It carries a sense of shame for the stronger in this action. If one took her definition to heart it would tend to act as a deterrent to cruelty, which is the

¹¹² Shklar, 1984, p. 8.

reason that she says to put cruelty first among the vices. The phrase “to achieve some other end, tangible or intangible fits into individual killings or the so-called Final Solution and shows extreme misanthropy.

Both physical and emotional pain is included in the definition. The pain is deliberately inflicted, which fits within the paradigm. In all, Shklar’s definition seems to apply to the paradigm.

Let us now apply Kekes definition. He said:

Cruelty is the disposition of human agents to take delight in or be indifferent to the serious and unjustified suffering their actions cause to their victims.¹¹⁴

There is a serious failure if the definition could be applied by Nazis to show there was no cruelty. Surely, the Nazis would say what they did was serious but they may claim that the suffering they imposed was justified. They might call what they did “justified punishment” for their erroneous claim that the Jews were socially and economically harmful. They may acknowledge that the punishment was harsh, often fatal but also claim that it was justified. The justification condition in Kekes definition may be utilized so as to show there was no cruelty. The Nazi extermination of the Jews was not just random acts of cruelty performed by individual psychopaths. Their actions were “legalized” by the Nazi government. The extermination was justified under their law. The Germans of that time were an well-organized and highly educated people. According to Kekes, if the suffering one’s actions cause is justified, then it is not cruelty. Of course, we would hold that the

¹¹³ Kekes 1996, p.836.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 838.

Nazis were not justified. But, as shown, the Nazis could use Kekes' definition to show that there was no cruelty.

The hatred of humankind on the whole is wrong-sided. Misanthropy is a dark aspect of humankind. Misanthropy is the hatred of humankind and often can be reduced to a hatred of life, or a love of the destruction of life. As has been noted with Hume's "emotions reversed" a desire of producing misery annexed to love, and desire of producing happiness annexed to hatred tends toward cruelty. The misanthrope is one who is likely to hold "emotions reversed."

It might be objected that hardly anybody hates all humankind but if the misanthropy is understood in terms of "emotions reversed" the hatred of the misanthrope is an internal process and not solely directed to humankind. Hitler was a misanthrope. It is not just that he hated Jews and other groups but even fellow Germans. This claim is supported by the fact that he sent divisions upon divisions of Germans into Russia, who were destroyed. German cities were being bombed and destroyed by the Allies. He had the power to end the war. His finest generals knew that victory was not possible after a certain point. Yet Hitler continued. These are examples of misery annexed to love and happiness annexed to hatred. One may say that it was his megalomaniac ego that forced him to throw his divisions into Russia. This may also be true, but megalomania does not exclude "emotions reversed." If anything "emotions reversed" would be suspected in his type of non-psychotic delusion. "Emotions reversed" would help to drive the delusion.

As the Nazis would be able to use Kekes' justification clause in the definition to show that they were not cruel, they could also then use his definition with perfect

misanthropy. They would not be able to use either of Shklar's definitions without admitting cowardice on their part. It would be difficult to explain how the stronger should inflict pain on the weaker. Nor would they accept that cruelty was the worst thing that we do. They could easily maintain that they were seeking justice for Germany.

Misanthropy is an evil but can also be used in positive ways. As in Shklar's exception rule for cruelty, misanthropy can be used as a good. Misanthropy, in healthy form, can be used to right humankind, or help prevent it from falling into a deeper misanthropy. It can be applied like a vaccine. Shklar states:

...a calm misanthropy may, at times, be politically entirely benign. Indeed it may be a vice we ought to cultivate under certain political circumstances. When in the eighteenth century the theory and practice of government became more impersonal, misanthropy, particularly as a private passion, ceased to be an obvious public concern. A diffuse distrust of humanity became the basis of constitutional government, especially in America.¹¹⁵

Kekes had noted that both Hallie and Rorty have not given a definition of cruelty.

Yet several of Hallie's books are specifically on cruelty. Hallie noted what the dictionary says of cruelty:

However, definitions of "cruelty" have to do only with the infliction of pain. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the adjective "cruel" as "indifferent to, delighting in another's pain;" and the unabridged Oxford English Dictionary defines cruelty as a "disposition to inflict suffering." Experience and reading had convinced me that a fuller understanding of this topic would not only reveal other aspects than suffering, but might show us how to mitigate cruelty, just as doctors learn to treat a disease through understanding it more fully¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Shklar, 1984, p.197.

¹¹⁶ Hallie 1969, p.4

He notes there are other aspects to suffering. He suggests that cruelty can be mitigated by greater understanding of it. Hallie also said that cruelty is more than the infliction of pain. He says that cruelty is about ruin and maiming. He said, "What is crucial to cruelty is the process of maiming the ordinary patterns of behavior that are the victim's ways of living."¹¹⁷ Pain often accompanies cruelty but may not be necessary. Many cruel seductions that befall children come not from pain but from some sense of pleasure. The child is told that something (the maiming act) is fun. Hallie said:

In short, cruelty is not simply the infliction of pain. It is a set of actions and passions that issue in certain actions and passions and only one of these passions is pain. Gentleness can be another.¹¹⁸

It is noted that while Hallie and Rorty wrote on the subject of cruelty neither had given a definition of cruelty. That position is supported. Numerous definitions of cruelty have been presented. They each aid in the understanding of what cruelty is, but none give a complete picture. The definitions given are something like the tale of blind men trying to describe an elephant. One feels the body and says that an elephant is like a wall, another feels the legs and says that it is like the trunk of a tree. One feels the trunk and says that it like a snake, another feels the tail and says that an elephant is like rope. All the accounts have merit. But it is difficult to put the collection together. Yet cruelty is not a chimera. From different reference points, part of what is called cruelty changes. Some people call a particular act cruel, while others call it just teasing or just offensive. Yet, cruelty is found in the concrete, albeit in different forms. Sometimes it takes the form of a cruelty of delight. In those cases one desires the cruelty. Sometimes it takes the form of

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

cruelty of indifference. One then is apathetic or indifferent to the other's calamity. Sometimes it may fall into the category of what Thomas Nagel called "moral luck." The cruelty is accidental but there is an element of responsibility attached.

Hallie's comment that cruelty is a set of actions and passions that issue in certain actions and passions is a good way to describe cruelty. Such a description of cruelty encompasses cruelties of delight, indifference and even accident. It is where cruelty meets the changing elements of the concrete. It is where the small narratives are described. The terms actions and passions are vague but we know the reference is to cruelty. When attention is on the victim, the various sets of actions and passions become apparent and specific. It is helpful if we underlay Hallie's comment on cruelty with Shklar's maxim and exception rule. If we hold that cruelty is the worst thing we do with the only exception being the prevention of greater cruelties, then we have a clearer reference for the actions and passions that issue in certain actions and passions. Shklar's maxim is specific for what sort of actions and passions we are looking for. Human pain and suffering become signs of cruelty. Hallie had noted that there are other signs of cruelty than pain. Ruin and maiming are also signs of cruelty. Cruelty can be like some types of cancer, which slowly and undetected eat into the system without pain.

One area in which cruelty can stem from gentleness or pleasure is through seduction. Through pleasure, one may find that they have ruined their lives by the sensual pleasure of drugs and sex. Some may become addicted to drugs. Ruin though sex comes when the victim does not fully understand the consequences of being seduced. The

¹¹⁸ **Ibid., pp. 24 –26.**

simplest example is a family that has been shattered by a father or an “uncle’s” seduction of children. The seducer may or may not have intended destruction but that is less important. What is important is the ruination of the individual. Often the victim is a family member. The ruin may follow that person for the remainder of his or her life.

Gentleness can find expression in institutional cruelty as well, as the following example illustrates. In the past, certain companies spoke attractive words to consumers. It was reported that they even created cartoon characters for the younger generation. Because the ads were attractive, they were easy to trust. The consumer was encouraged to be “cool,” a “winner” or “sexy” in pleasant ways. Cruelty does not have to be painful. Sometimes the pain comes much later. Sometimes cruelty is not visible. For a good number of years medical science and the public knew of the strong correlation between certain substances and cancer. It would seem fair to call a person cruel if that person deliberately provided another person a drug or substance that was known to have a correlation with some disease- and that the person who provided the substance made a profit from it. Perhaps the person did not have any deliberate intention to harm another.

It would seem that what this person was doing would be a cruelty of indifference, that one held disesteem in passing a harmful substance to another. The effects of cruelty or the consequence of the act may not have been considered in the desire to profit. More important than assigning blame is bringing about correction.

A point Hallie stressed in The Paradox of Cruelty is that cruelty goes on in these quiet sorts of ways, often in institutions. Hallie said:

But institutional covert, quiet cruelty is of all the modes of maiming that we have been discussing the most elusive for its victims, and therefore

the most important of this book... it functions so smoothly that both the people who control it and the people who suffer in it often do not know that there is any other way for life to go.¹¹⁹

This type of institutional cruelty is hidden cruelty and is greater than what is normally believed.¹²⁰ Cruelty is normally thought of in terms of individual acts. Repressive religious, political or social regimes and economic systems provide structure and rules for its victims to live by. Women's rights in some third world countries serve as an example. To a lesser degree, women's rights in this country serves as another example. Certain actions and passions are noted in issues regarding financial discrepancies between males and females who do the same work. The resultant discrepancy may be seen more clearly in single mothers who raise children. While this financial discrepancy is injustice, cruelty enters where there is suffering or ruin and not just inequity.

It is clear that there is no cruelty if there is no victim. It is not as clear that there can be cruelty if there is no intending agent. There are many mechanisms that can make for unintended cruelty. Unconscious forces and humankind's cleverness in deceit, which includes deceiving oneself, are vehicles of unintended cruelty. We must grant that there are unconscious motivations and there is man's cleverness to manipulate the world for personal gain sometimes at the expense in the suffering of others. What is important in cruelty is the suffering of the victim. The victim is put first and then we work backward toward the agent. Disposition is of less concern. It is the consequence of cruelty and our response to it that becomes the starting point.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 98.

Now let us take a second example of institutional cruelty. Again we start from the victim. Say there are people working under harsh or unfit conditions. It is a small step to say that a child working under harsh conditions is working under cruel conditions. People working under cramped conditions for long hours with low pay are also working under cruel conditions. This is a case of what had occurred in a third world country. An advocacy group makes these harsh conditions known to the public and to the brand name manufacturer. Once known, the manufacturer then saw to it that conditions improved. The manufacturer may have been motivated by self-interest in responding, or may have also agreed with the ethical solution. No matter, the manufacturer reacted as if there had been unintended cruelty and responded in an ethical manner. In the example where one sold a carcinogenic substance there was denial of wrongdoing, of cruelty. This seemed so because legal or economic punishment would follow. In the second example the manufacturer made no denial that conditions were harsh or cruel but only that they were “unaware.” Rather than holding that there was no wrongdoing on their part, the plan became one of correction.

It would then seem that punishment is at least a partial reason for the responses in both cases. Punishment is a correlate of cruelty. In the carcinogenic substance case, it may very well be that the manufacturer’s denial is an attempt to escape punishment. Legal fines could be enormous. It is implausible that they believe that the product does not contribute to the harm of individuals. Escaping punishment seems a factor in the second case also. If the company does not respond to the consumer’s liking, the consumer

¹²⁰ It is interesting to compare Hallie’s “institutional cruelty” with Michel Foucault’s microsystems.

may opt for another brand name thus causing loss to the manufacturer. The manufacturer may have also made changes for ethical reasons, also. The consumer may acknowledge the ethical response and continue to buy the product. The examples just provided simply show the responses that manufacturers have made.

Institutions can act for better or worse. Hallie commented on the sinister aspects of institutional cruelty. He said:

Institutional cruelty does everything it can to conceal the fact that it is destroying its victims, and in doing this it keeps its spectators from feeling disgust and from being confused by the paradox of trying to justify the unjustifiable, of trying to praise the smashing of the weak.¹²¹

The Nazis' in their policies against the Jews demonstrated a most blatant and horrific form of institutional cruelty. Cries of nationalism often work in similar if not as malignant fashion. Political and religious fervor is working with cruel effect in some Third World countries, today.

Hallie had noted that more than definitions are required for a fuller understanding of cruelty. Just as doctors treat a disease through measures that lie outside the range of the disease, such as surgery, medication and the like; so too, should cruelty be treated. While cruelty is the topic, other subjects are needed to bring closure to this topic.

Research psychologist Maxwell Taylor uses the terms "violence" and "aggression." Many forms of aggression are not violent but Taylor uses the term violence in a broad sense in that violence can be accidental, that is, not intended, whereas aggression is intended. Taylor says of the terms "aggression" and "violence" in The Fanatics: A Behavioral Approach to Political Violence. He says:

... aggression, a term which is more commonly used in the psychological literature than violence. A generally accepted definition of aggression is ... any form of behavior directed towards the goal of harming or injuring another living being.¹²²

Taylor's definition of violence is similar to a definition of cruelty. Taylor

broadens his definition. He says:

... we can distinguish in one sense between violent acts and aggressive acts. We would presumably not want to regard an accidental injury as an aggressive act, but of course an accidental injury can be described as the result of violence, even if not intended. Violence, as the use of force, therefore is a broader concept than aggression, in that it embraces intended and unintended use of force.¹²³

Taylor uses the term 'violence' to mean something more akin to cruelty than to aggression. Chapters of his book are on political violence, terrorist acts and the actions of the SS during World War II. What is noted from Taylor's definition is the "unintended use of force." An example of unintended violence would be a terrorist bombing a structure while the individual victims may be unintended. As violence may be unintended so cruelty may also be unintended. With unintended use of cruelty there is still a victim, and the victim is what is important. An example of unintended cruelty is a manufacturer ordering production and using tough business tactics without knowing some of the consequences in order to seek maximum profit. The consequence has been in some cases something approaching slave labor. Once the unintended cruelty is identified cooperative resolution may be forthcoming as in the cases of a manufacturer whose intent was to make a product only to discover that the product was made under cruel conditions.

¹²¹ Hallie, 1969, p. 101.

¹²² Taylor 1991, p.8.

¹²³ Ibid., p.8.

There is another point regarding cruelty that needs be mentioned. There is more to cruelty than the agent and the victim. There is the bystander. The idea of the bystander broadens the idea of cruelty even further. Psychiatrist Carl Goldberg gives a definition of cruelty by emphasizing the notion of malevolence. Goldberg's definition of malevolence is:

...malevolence is the "deliberate" infliction of cruel, painful suffering on another living being...a complete definition of malevolence must include its effects on nonparticipants as well.¹²⁴

Goldberg's definition is directed more to an antisocial type of person or the malevolent narcissist. What is particularly selected from Goldberg's definition is the phrase the "effects on nonparticipants as well."¹²⁵ Goldberg had noted that something is lacking in just the definition of malevolence alone; effects on nonparticipants must be included. The effect of cruelty is broadened. For a fuller understanding of cruelty, the effects on nonparticipants are important. We are our brother's keeper.

An important nonparticipant is the bystander. Research psychologist Ervin Staub noted that the bystander has an influence on cruelty.¹²⁶ The bystander is you and I. The bystander is important to the reduction or continuation of cruelty. Staub indicates that if the bystander shows disapprobation cruelty decreases. If the bystander is silent, thereby giving tacit approval, cruelty persists.

Bystanders need not be direct observers of cruelty; they may be more distant. They may be across oceans and continents. Bystanders can decrease or eliminate cruelty.

¹²⁴ Carl Goldberg, Speaking With the Devil: Senseless Acts of Evil. New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1996, pp. 4-5.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

¹²⁶ Staub, 1980, pp. 270 -271.

Members of Amnesty International are an example of bystanders who work to decrease cruelty.

The bystander may benefit from fiction and learn to decrease cruelty. Hallie had noted that the Gothic tale is horror in which the reader has an opportunity to work through horror. Rorty makes similar comments on the fictional works of Nobokov, Orwell and Dickens. Other works of fiction may help the bystander work through moral problems. There need not be an existent problem. Fiction helps them to be prepared to respond to cruelty and may provide solutions eliminating it. The reader encounters the various sets of action and passions that lead to cruelty and the various sets of actions and passions that lead to successful resolution of those problems. They also are exposed to unsuccessful attempts at resolving issues regarding cruelty and how to identify and avoid them.

The effects on nonparticipants even extend to people who do not know that the cruelty exists. Consumers may buy merchandise at discount prices only to discover that people on the other side of the world work under harsh or cruel conditions. Until this discovery they were unintended participants in cruelty. Once cruelty is known to the consumer, the consumer has an opportunity to respond.

There are other components to cruelty. Punishment is an important one and should be mentioned. B. F. Skinner states, "In the long run punishment, unlike reinforcement, works to the disadvantage of both the punished organism and the punishing agency."¹²⁷ Skinner also says, "In the long run, however, punishment does not

¹²⁷ B. F. Skinner, Science and Human Behavior. New York: The Free Press, 1967, p. 183.

actually eliminate behavior from a repertoire, and its temporary achievement is obtained at tremendous cost in reducing the over-all efficiency and happiness of the group.”¹²⁸ It is clear that punishment is not the best for resolving issues. One of the problems with punishment is that it appears effective on the surface. It gets an immediate result, though as Skinner noted, it does not eliminate the behavior from a repertoire. Prosocial responses are better long-term responses to cruelty than punishment. Prosocial responses are compatible with Shklar’s maxim and exception rule.

Situations and environmental conditions are other components of cruelty. They are vital to cruelty. James Gilligan, once a director of a prison system and a member of the Harvard medical board had written:

You cannot work for one day with the violent people who fill our prisons and mental hospitals for the criminally insane with out being forcibly and constantly reminded of the extreme poverty and discrimination that characterizes their lives. Hearing about their lives and about their families and friends you are forced to recognize the truth in Gandhi’s observation that the deadliest form of violence is poverty.¹²⁹

It can be easily seen that the same could be said of violence’s frequent companion, cruelty. Gandhi’s observation that the deadliest form of violence is poverty should also be borne in mind in reference to cruelty. Common sense tells us that when people are desperately lacking, we can expect increases in cruelty.

With a fuller understanding of cruelty we vaccinate ourselves against cruelty and learn to become active nonparticipants against it. Our other option is to become participants in cruelty.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 190.

Greed, desire for power, and fear are often involved in cruelty. Each of these subjects may be a component of “emotions reversed” but also subsist in a “natural” order. These subjects require a close examination but are beyond the scope of this thesis.

¹²⁹ James Gilligan, Violence, New York: A Grosset/Putnam Book, 1996, p. 191.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

In conclusion, various aspects of cruelty have been discussed. Views of cruelty will be summarized and where possible restated in different words and from a slightly different perspective. One hypothesis that has been advanced was that cruelty consists of “emotions reversed.” “Emotions reversed” is simply a term that is used as a condensation of Hume’s comments regarding ordered associations of emotions. He said:

This order of things, abstractly consider’d is not necessary. Love and hatred might have been unattended with any such desires, or their particular connexion might have been entirely revers’d. If nature had so pleas’d, love might have had the same effect as hatred, and hatred as love. I see no contradiction in supposing a desire of producing misery annex’d to love, and of happiness to hatred.¹³⁰

The benefit of holding that cruelty consists of “emotions reversed” is that a basis is established for calling cruelty a pathological condition. The contention is that cruelty should be considered a pathological condition, judging by our natural sentiments and the moral load that we place on the word. Paraphrasing Hume, we see that “nature originally did not so please that the natural order is reversed.” “Emotions reversed” are malfunctions of the natural order of emotions. But upon examination it became clear that there are many cases of cruelty in which no claim of “emotions reversed” could be made.

¹³⁰ Hume, 1990, p. 368.

Cruelty consists of more than the misordering of emotions. In many cases, circumstances force one into cruelty. Cruelty can be the result of a rational and naturally ordered mind. People who live under impoverished conditions may have to routinely make cruel choices.

While the hypothesis that cruelty consists solely of “emotions reversed” has been rejected, it is duly noted that there is a tendency to cruelty where “emotions reversed” are found. Examination of what “emotions reversed” is proved quite fruitful. It led to identification and examination of certain disorders. Note “emotions reversed” is a disordering of associations with emotions and the term’s connection to the term “mental disorder.” Close connections with Kierkegaard’s “bondage of sin” and the “demonic” were also noted. In making the connection of “emotions reversed” with the “demonic,” the demonic is taken out of the realm of superstition and made “sensible.” The demonic is a reference to a mental dysfunction. Kierkegaard had taken the “demonic” out of the realm of superstition but the reference is clearer as when “emotions reversed” are used in conjunction with it. Either way, the existence of the “demonic” is acknowledged. Aspects of the “demonic” are revealed. The “demonic” and “emotions reversed” are often manifested in disorders of the mind. They are a mechanism found in sadomasochism, melancholia, hypochondriasis, and accident proneness as well as other disorders that have annexed misery to love and happiness to hatred. The “demonic” and “emotions reversed” are also manifested in the “capricious” and the “contentless.” These latter two forms of the “demonic” can be traced into more specific disorders of the mind. The demonic as “capricious” is found in some impulse control disorders. The “contentless” can be

manifested in what Rorty has called “incurious obsession” and Fromm had called “authoritarian” character. An obsession appears the opposite of being contentless. It would seem to have too much content. But as Fromm had noted the authoritarian is empty and fills himself with facts, never filling the emptiness (aloneness). Similarly, the “obsessive” may be viewed as constantly trying to fill a void.

The “demonic” is revealed as an evil in some form, but as in “emotions reversed,” it is not an evil in itself. The disordering of emotions tends to produce evil and cruelty by the very nature of the disordering. However, when the disordering is applied against itself, it tends to produce some good. Demonizing the demon is an example. Demonizing the demon requires a special type of demonizing. Two cruelties together do not make a good. Nor does one cruelty working against the other. Both sides exhibiting cruelty in war does not lessen cruelty. Demonizing the demon is not a sadomasochistic infliction of more pain upon the demon. A pain may be inflicted but it is a pain related to the good, for the good. Kierkegaard noted this process as revelation. “Emotions reversed” turned against itself in like manner may also produce revelation. Shklar’s exception rule of using cruelty to prevent greater cruelty functions in a similar manner. Shklar’s exception rule works in demonizing the demon, but it can also be used for practical effect.

In a similar vein Shklar had given an example of benign misanthropy in the form of a basic mistrust of man in government. The effect is that it helps to form the foundation of a just or benevolent government. Some good is then expressed through this misanthropy. The Bill of Rights is an expression of mistrust of government. What occurred at that period of time was political revelation. A great good was created.

The good, at core, is love. It is love of life. It is also a love of things, not in the sense of possessing things but in loving things. This universal sense of loving things is in turn, love, which is the good. We are taken back to the Empedoclean principles of Love and Strife. Strife is important but love is the guiding principle. Love (and desire) is that which movement is towards. Strife is movement away, but from it is movement toward life. Love in general is life promoting.

“Emotions reversed” tends toward hating and destruction of things, including life. It pulls us in the other direction. It pulls us toward “unfreedom,” which in turn tends toward cruelty. But as noted, “emotions reversed” is not the only form of cruelty, nor is “unfreedom.” We cannot establish a definition of cruelty solely on the basis of love annexed to misery or happiness is annexed to hatred, nor solely on the basis of “unfreedom,” in that there are other forms of cruelty.

Other aspects of cruelty and related definitions were then examined. Spinoza’s definition of cruelty has caused confusion among philosophers. Some confusion is removed if the understanding of “emotions reversed” is applied to the definition. Doing harm to one that one loves makes more sense, when we see that that misery is annexed to it or the agent gains happiness from hatred.

One interesting development that emerged from the examination of Spinoza’s definition was that his definition could be interpreted with “we intentions.” Those that hold “we intentions” view others not as “one of us” but as “one of them,” - the wrong sort of people. Those who view others as the wrong sort of people are more likely to inflict punishment on those people. They are more likely to tend toward cruelty. Further,

their account of what cruelty is is colored by a view that would tend more toward cruelty, and hence is less acceptable. “We intentions” are not cruel in themselves but are links to cruelty. A social structure based on “we intentions” has a propensity for blame and hence more tendency towards cruelty.

Another development that emerged from the examination of Spinoza’s definition is whether there has been a Socratic account of evil. The Socratic account of evil lies in opposition to “we intentions.” The idea behind holding the Socratic account of evil is not to say the we have no control in doing evil but to understand the causes and effects, so as to avoid evil. The purpose of the Socratic account is not to just say that man does not willingly do evil; the next step is also implied.

There is a tendency to blame when we view others as “them.” When we blame, we hold others responsible for their actions. There are times when we must strictly hold others responsible for their actions. Shklar’s exception rule might have to be firmly applied. Blaming is basically a subjective accusation of guilt. Blaming simply assigns responsibility to an action whether or not the subject is truly responsible or not. Blame simply assumes guilt. The problem here is that one may be held responsible when one is truly not responsible. It can be said that we hold one responsible for what is in their control and not responsible for what is not in their control. In some cases “responsibility” may be pushed back to its origins. In a Freudian vein, children that have been taught to disorder the emotions at an early age are not responsible for that learning.

“Responsibility” when used in this sense merges with the Socratic account. Therapy is the desired method of correction, if possible. One view of what therapy consists is

obtaining a “deep understanding” of the evil one had done. Once this sort of understanding is obtained one then does not willingly do evil. This “deep understanding” is an equivalent to revelation. Sadly, this sort of understanding is not achievable by all people.

Hobbes’ definition can be said to be a Socratic account of evil. Spinoza’s definition of cruelty is more of a definition of cruelty of delight (it is the desire whereby...), whereas Hobbes’ is more one of cruelty of indifference. The phrase “little sense of the calamity of others” does not suggest “we intentions.” It does not imply a view of others as “them.” It may be inferred that those who view others as “them” would tend not to have as much sense of calamity for “them” as for their in-group. Cruelty of indifference can be manifested in different forms. The “incurious obsessive” is a fair model of the cruelty of indifference. Rorty’s term is rich in understanding. The concern of the incurious obsessive is his own obsession. The incurious obsessive is incurious or indifferent to the suffering of others. For the “incurious obsessive,” cruelty can go unnoticed.

Cruelties of indifference can be insidious. Part of the reason is simply because the suffering falls outside the “obsession,” which means that it is outside of what is important for the obsessive. This sort of obsession is a peculiar way that one seeks security of his or her own fortune. One’s fortune need not be monetary. It may be found in values such as held in religious fanaticism or overly strong nationalistic ideology. It may be found in protection of the ego. The “incurious obsessive” is not to be confused with the repetitive behavior type of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Cruelties of indifference may be so insidious that they become part of a culture. The American institution of slavery is a prime example of cruelty of indifference. No doubt that cruelties of delight abounded within this institution but since slaves were viewed as property, American slavery must be viewed, on the whole, as a cruelty of indifference.

North and South American slavery had existed under a system of justice for several hundred years. Slavery would not as likely have occurred if one held the view that cruelty is the worst thing that we do. However, it would be possible for a group to hold strong “we intentions” and maintain that cruelty is the worst thing we do for those within the in-group. Those outside the group conceivably could be treated as if they were property and they were treated as if they were property. So, when we say cruelty is the worst thing that we do, it is meant globally and not in a restricted sense.

Shklar’s comments on cruelty were discussed after those of Spinoza and Hobbes. It was shown that the terms “weaker” and “stronger” could be used equivocally. The problem of using “weaker” and “stronger” is largely resolved by reference to “comparative powers.” Hallie noted that the relationship in cruelty involves two parts. “One part is active, comparatively powerful, and the other is passive, comparatively powerless.”¹³¹ Cruelty is viewed then as a sort of cowardice. The strong is the active and powerful inflicting pain upon the weak, the passive and powerless.

As with the terms “weaker” and “stronger,” the terms “passive” and “active” can be equivocated upon. Hallie says that one part of the relationship in cruelty is active and

¹³¹ Hallie, 1969, p.34.

the other is passive. This comment must be reconciled with what Spinoza and Hobbes said regarding cruelty. Spinoza noted cruelty as the opposite of clemency, which is an active state. Cruelty then is passive. In Spinoza's definition there is a desire whereby a man is impelled to the cruel action. This indicates that the agent is operating in some active manner. But Spinoza's definition can be pushed in the direction of a Socratic account of evil. The person is impelled, and as Spinoza noted cruelty is a passive state. The person is passive in this sense. An example of "mistrust" may better explain this point. For instance, we may view a person who actively does things to validate a mistrust of others, and see that person as being active. Upon analysis we may discover that this person's mistrust developed in childhood and that the person is passive in this sense, responding to "emotions reversed." While it may be desirable to note the agent as active and the victim as passive in many cases, it is preferable to use the term that Hallie indicated as "comparative power."

Hobbes' definition indicates passivity in cruelty in that one has little sense of the calamity of others. The "incurious obsessive" has been noted as to being incurious to anything outside of his or her obsession. In this sense they are passive agents of cruelty. To answer these questions, we may look at what Hallie called "institutional cruelty." For instance there are some businesses that claim that what they are doing is just making a product for the public. Yet medical and scientific opinion indicates that what the business produces is a product that is harmful, which in the long term has cruel effects upon its users and those around the users. It may be said that these businesses are passive agents of cruelty though their product works in a slow but active way. It may be said in this case,

the activity of hurting sentient beings goes on in an active but covert way and what is manifested, in regards to cruelty, is passivity. Cruelty can also take passive-aggressive form.

Kekes' definition had been examined after Shklar's. His definition was found faulty in numerous areas. First, it limits the definition of cruelty to a disposition. The focus of cruelty should be primarily on the victim. If there is no victim, there is no cruelty. His definition required cruelty to be of a serious nature. This was found faulty in that the long series of small actions and events but were not each "serious" in itself, would not be counted as cruelty until it became "serious." If we were to wait to treat someone for cruelty of a "serious nature, it may be too late in that the patterns are established. The things that he says are "just offensive or embarrassing" and not "serious" should also be targeted as cruelty. Prevention is better than treatment.

Kekes also required in his definition that the suffering of others must be unjustified. The problem here is that it may be difficult to differentiate between justifications, excuses and self-serving rationalizations. Further, organized cruelty seeks justification as a balm for its actions, as Nietzsche pointed out. A paradigm of cruelty was set as the Nazi treatment of the Jews. When the paradigm was applied to Keke's definition it was shown that the Nazis could use Kekes definition to show that there was no cruelty- that what they did was justified by their standards.

Hallie had stated that the paradox of cruelty is that cruelty can easily be justified in one sense and totally unjustified in another. His comment seems to violate the Law of Non-Contradiction. The sense in which he says cruelty is justified is clearly

differentiated from the sense in which he says it is unjustified. He is not speaking of cruelty in the same time and in the same respect. Cruelty is one thing from one perspective and another thing from another perspective. His “paradox of cruelty” can be reduced to a form of Shklar’s maxim and exception rule. Just as cruelty is unjustifiable, it is the worst thing we do; just as cruelty is justifiable, cruelty, the worst thing that we do may be used to prevent greater cruelties. The “paradox of cruelty” and Shklar’s maxim and exception rule leaves one in a state of tension in regards to cruelty, which is where one should be.

Associative experience of cruelty forms the final comments. Punishment is an associative experience. Punishment frequently runs concurrent with cruelty. Skinner noted that punishment does not do what we think it does. It is deceiving in that it has an immediate effect of reducing a tendency to behave and suppresses behavior in the short run. He has said, “that in the long run, punishment, unlike reinforcement work to the disadvantage of both the punished organism and the punishing agency.”¹³² If the term “punishment” is used as Skinner uses it, and it is applied to what is meant by justified punishment, it would seem that other than using punishment for an immediate short term effect, using the two terms “justified” and “punishment” together forms something of an absurdity. We justify something that does not work. It would seem fair to say that the same could be applied to the use of cruelty. So, Shklar’s exception rule must, upon completion of task, collapse, and fall back to the maxim.

¹³² Skinner, 1967, p. 183.

There are indirect associative experiences with cruelty. The bystander has an indirect association with cruelty. The bystander can influence the outcome of cruelty. The bystander can stop or lessen cruelty by his or her disapprobation or allow it to continue by their silence. An individual witnessing the act is a bystander. A nation witnessing the act may also be a bystander. The bystander can be very active against cruelty. Amnesty International is one such bystander. The United Nations and the United States have also taken on the role of bystander. At times they have stepped out of that role and become participants, in effect, applying Shklar's exception rule.

Environmental situations and circumstance are associated with cruelty. It had been noted that the deadliest form of violence is poverty. Violence, like punishment, shares many properties with cruelty. It is not hard to see, as we turn our eyes to the poorest places in the world, the greatest cruelty occurs. Even in nations that otherwise have been stable, threats of cruelty arise in times of economic downturn.

The roots of cruelty lie in environmental conditions. Accidents of nature sometimes produce hostile and impoverished environments. People must respond accordingly. Greed, lusts for power, and similar customs may develop. From such environmental conditions, natural associations become disordered in many ways. Sometimes the associations are entirely reversed; instead of happiness being annexed to love it is annexed to hatred, instead of misery being annexed to hatred it is annexed to love. Cruelty becomes a more probable outcome. The problem is easily exacerbated. The reversed order of associations to emotions, then, may become the environmental

conditions that establish a cruel set of customs for the next generation of young minds exploring life.

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