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# THE 'EVIL' MIND: PT. 4: THE TERRIFYINGLY NORMAL ROOTS OF 'EVIL'

J.M.G. van der Dennen

## Contents:

### Evil

*The 'good' versus 'evil' dualism*  
*Evil as ignorance and excess*  
*Evil as ambivalent power*  
*Evil as disinterested malice*  
*Evil as insidious subversion*  
*Evil as the price for freedom*  
*Evil in the Christian cosmology*  
*Kant and the post-Kantians on Evil*  
*Evil and utopia*  
*Evil as projection of inner demonology*  
*Evil in nature*

### The Social Psychology of Evil

#### Explanations of Evil

*Justifications*  
*The evil of roles and rules*  
*The 'respectability' of white-collar crime*  
*The magnitude gap*  
*Threatened egotism and revenge*  
*Sadistic pleasure?*  
*Collective ignorance and the accomplice-trap*  
*Beguilement by evil*  
*Low-level thinking*  
*'Blind' striking out?*  
*Evil as deliberate choice*  
*Culture of cruelty*  
*'Evil' packages and riders*  
*Normality and unselfishness of evil*  
*Intergroup relations*  
*Escalation*

#### Three Principles of Pathics

*Terribly and terrifyingly normal*

#### Toward a More Generic Theory of Genocide

#### Evidence of Genocide in Preindustrial Societies

*Massacres*  
*Routing*

#### Evidence of Genocide in Prehistory

#### Do Only Humans Commit Genocide?

#### Evolutionary Background: Inclusive fitness theory

*I. Principles concerning the deep wellsprings of human action*  
*II. Principles concerning group relations*

#### Evolutionary Background: Ethnocentrism

The supreme sacrifice is to become evil in the service of a greater good and commit the evil deed that is truly and tragically moral (Boris Savinkov, cited in DuPreez, 1994)

## **Evil**

Acts, behaviors or things we judge as 'bad' may become reified in a category called 'evil'. In its turn, the reification 'evil' may be personified as 'the Devil'.

Though it is to be understood and kept in mind that 'evil' is a reification, there is quite a literature pertinent to this concept, and in this chapter we shall review this literature.

Stein (2000) draws a distinction between the psychobiology of 'banal' evil and that of 'sadistic' evil. Whereas banal evil may involve a dissociation of cortico-striatal processing from limbic input (reason without passion), sadistic evil may involve a dissociation of limbic processing from frontal controls (passion without reason).

### ***The 'good' versus 'evil' dualism***

'Evil' is a term which conjures up visions of a Manichean world torn apart in deadly conflict between (the forces of) good and evil.

The study of ancient religions and ethical systems, and of some medieval heresies, reveals the astounding wealth and power of the dualistic idea, with an important place assigned to the principle of evil (e.g., Rousseau, 1963; Borne, 1963; Bychowski, 1968).

Zarathustra professed the belief in a single God, Ahura Mazda ("the Lord who knows"), founder and guide of the Universe and the source of emanation of six sacred Immortals. All of these fight against Ahriman, the anti-god or evil spirit. The latter attacks the world of Ahura Mazda because of his innate destructive drive.

In another Iranian system, professed by Zurivan, the god of good and the god of evil have a common origin: they are like twin sons of a primeval, morally undifferentiated god (Bychowski, 1968).

In the doctrine of the Manichaeans and the later Gnostics the existence of Evil as the original principle is vigorously affirmed. In the doctrine of Mani God sacrifices himself in offering his emanation to the aggression of matter, that is, to the principle of evil. This divine sacrifice stops the aggression of evil.

The radical dualism of the Cathari taught the original power and independence of the evil principle. In the mythology of the Bogomils, a Tenth-Century sect, Christ and Le Diable are two brothers (Bychowski, 1968).

In Christian mythology Lucifer, the fallen angel, was once upon a time a favorite servant of God. His pride made him rise against the Lord, and today he conspires to increase his power and to add some luster to his misery by converting – or one should rather say, subverting – other spirits and man. ("Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven" as Milton wrote).

The Baalim of the Canaanites became the Demons of the Hebrews, the pagan gods objects of loathing and fear to the early Christians (Bychowski, 1968).

In the teachings of the various Cabbalistic masters, the destructive aspect of evil and its inherence in God is openly proclaimed. A fragment of the book of Bahir says: "Das lehret, daß es bei Gott ein Prinzip gibt, welches Böse heißt..."

### *Vedic Gods against Demons*

Second to the Vedic creation myths in importance and frequency are the myths of the eternal battle between gods and demons. Indeed, the two basic motifs are often combined, for the demons threaten the act of creation and themselves become part of the material out of which the universe is constructed: they provide the necessary power of evil to give meaning to the power of the gods.

In the *Rig Veda*, the demons are often confused with the human enemies of the invading Indo-Aryans, and Indra as king of the gods simultaneously defeats the human foes, destroys the threatening demons and sets free the creative power of the universe...

Later texts make it clear that all the gods and demons are brothers, the demons being the older brothers cheated out of their patrimony, so that the eternal war is a fraternal struggle...

The battle between gods and demons begins immediately after they are created. By performing sacrifices to gain powers, gods and demons vie for superiority, which is inevitably won by the gods. The gods become truthful, the demons false; the gods become the dwellers in heaven, while the demons are banished to the underworld. The gods deprive the demons of the power of ritual and thus defeat them (Cavendish, 1980: 16-17).

### *Zoroastrianism and theodicy*

The starting point for an understanding of Zoroastrian mythology is the theme of good and evil, the age-old problem of so many religions. How can belief in an all-loving, all-powerful God be reconciled with the reality of undeserved suffering in the world? If God is good, perhaps he is not all-powerful. If he is all-powerful, then he cannot be wholly good. The essence of Zoroastrian myth and belief is that God is wholly good. All evil, suffering, misery and death came from the devil.

According to the Zoroastrian myth, the creator was Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, later known as Ohrmazd (in Middle Persian). He existed from eternity above in light and goodness. Below in darkness and ignorance lurked Angra Mainyu, the Destructive Spirit, later known as Ahriman. Ohrmazd created first the heavenly beings and then the universe as a trap in which to ensnare evil..

In this myth Ohrmazd and Ahriman exist independently of each other from eternity. Ahriman is not a secondary or subordinate figure; he is not a fallen angel. Good and evil are considered contrary substances, manifesting themselves in such opposites as light and dark, health and sickness, life and death. The originals of these contraries must, in Zoroastrian teaching, be ultimately opposed beings (Cavendish, 1980: 40-41).

Corresponding to Ohrmazd's creation of the world is the miscreation of Evil. For everything good there is an evil counterpart. Opposite to the divine fire is the polluting smoke. Opposite to the faithful dog is the rapacious wolf. Opposite to all the beneficent creatures (such as cattle, sheep, and horses, animals which aid man), are the biting, poisonous, repulsive and noxious creatures (*khrafstar*), such as snakes, scorpions, spiders, lizards – and cats.

The whole of existence is consequently seen by Zoroastrians as divided between the forces of good and evil. The purpose of creation is to give expression to, and provide an arena for, the conflict which necessarily arises from their mutually destructive natures. 'For where there is good, there cannot possibly be evil. Where light is admitted, darkness is driven away' (Cavendish, 1980: 42).

### *Gnosticism and Manicheism*

Gnosticism is an umbrella term for a number of religious traditions popular in the Roman Empire from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD. Gnostic thought was an amalgam of Greek, Jewish, Christian and Iranian ideas, in varying proportions in different schools of thought. From Iran, Gnostics took the dualistic idea of good opposed to evil in the form of a conflict between light and dark, the myth of the archetypal man and some of the ideas related to salvation. But they interpreted the various mythical details in terms of the Hellenistic Greek belief in the material flesh being a prison for the pure, spiritual soul. Such gnostic interpretations, or perversions, of Zoroastrian teaching were propounded in Iran by Mani in the 3rd century AD. Mani presented himself as the fulfilment not only of Zoroastrian, but also of Christian and Buddhist hopes. His call to the ascetic, celibate life was alien to the spirit of Iran and he was finally executed for heresy. In these extreme interpretations can be seen the spiritual wrestling of different people in ancient Iran with the perennial problem of religion – the problem of evil (Cavendish, 1980: 44).

### *Evil as ignorance and excess*

Our lines of debate about evil seem to have been laid down long ago. Before Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, the impact of eastern ideas such as Zoroastrian dualism on early Greek thinkers spawned a host of arguments.

Socrates, for instance, seems to have held the intellectualist stance that no one would willingly stray from *agathón*, the good, except out of ignorance. His disciple Plato, by contrast, shifted his ideas to see good and evil, *kakón*, not as value judgments so much as hypostatized realities (or forms, *eide*), objects potentially willed by the soul. Evil was thought to be removable from the soul by purgation, *kathársis*, by analogy to bodily disease. The notion of imbalance from the Pythagoreans comes to the fore in Aristotle's treatment of evil as excess (*Nicomachean Ethics*) and also as *ápeiron*, as indeterminate, inexplicable, 'other'. The potential link of matter, *hule*, and evil in his writings was developed by Numenius, leaving the Epicureans to equate evil with pain and the Stoics with the puzzle in theodicy of how evil could exist in a world ruled by a good God (Hobart, 1985).

### *Evil as ambivalent power*

The archetype of evil as ambivalent power, and not simply as the opposite of good, has echoes in people's uncertainty about how to explain misfortune and maleficence. There are cultures in which misfortune is seen primarily as resulting from human malice, such as those

in Africa in which sorcery and witchcraft predominate. There are others that blame non-human spiritual agencies, and even non-human, non-spiritual ones, sometimes to the point of elaborating the complex theodicies in which God relates in a number of ways to an abstract, independent evil force (Parkin, 1985).

A breakdown of our own uses of the word 'evil' reveals at least three senses: the moral, referring to human culpability; the physical, by which is understood destructive elemental forces of nature, for example earthquakes, storms or the plague; and the metaphysical, by which disorder in the cosmos or in relations with divinity results from a conflict of principles or wills (Parkin, 1985).

Often, spirits, demons and gods personify evil, such as the fallen gods or angels of Christianity and Islam.

Augustine expressed relief in concluding that evil was not, after all, created by or part of God, nor was it existing as an autonomous force external to man, but it was of man's own doing and therefore not to be regarded as an insurmountable problem (Evans, 1982; Parkin, 1985).

The Hebrew word that is translated 'evil' in the King James's translation of the Bible is *ra*. *Ra* meant primarily worthlessness or uselessness, and by extension it came to mean bad, ugly or even sad. It meant simply bad as opposed to good. The truth is that the Hebrews did not discuss evil very much. Even today, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* has no entry under the heading 'Evil'. For evil was never to them a metaphysical principle in opposition to God (D. Taylor, 1985).

### ***Evil as disinterested malice***

There appears generally to be one kind of malice that, however heinous in its effects, springs from motives that are well understood (such as jealousy and envy), and another that is gratuitous, what Hume called 'disinterested malice' (Pocock, 1985).

The modern, secular, sense of the word 'evil' (meaning 'morally depraved', 'bad', 'wicked', 'vicious'; and in contrast to e.g., Thomistic theology) refers almost exclusively to physical suffering (Pocock, 1985).

The word 'evil', together with the German *Übel* and the Dutch *euvel*, derives from the theoretical Teutonic type *ubiloz*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* comments on this etymology: "usually referred to the root *up, over*; on this view the primary sense would be either 'exceeding due measure' or 'overstepping proper limits'".

In Chinese and Japanese, a single character (pronounced 'e' in Mandarin Chinese and 'warui' or 'aku' in Japanese) is used to express 'badness', and this character appears to connote 'disgust' rather than 'wrong' or 'evil'. In Confucianism there seems to be a complete lack of the concept of 'gratuitous malice'.

In Hinduism, evil and suffering are considered to be an integral part of creation itself (Gachter, 1998). "For all creation is but the sport of mad mother Kali" a saying goes.

### ***Evil as insidious subversion***

The essence of evil lies in a combination of several features. First, it is shadowy, mysterious, covert, hidden, not fully understood; hence the association with night, darkness, black, secrecy. Second, it is an aggressive or, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* put it, a positive force. Evil tries to destroy the integrity, the happiness and the welfare of 'normal' society. It is aggressively, if insidiously, subverting and undermining; the worm in the bud. Witches (ever since Sprenger & Kramer's *Malleus Malificarum* [meaning Witches' Hammer], published in 1486, considered to be agents of evil or its personification the Devil [first equated by St. Paul]) would not be evil if they merely met and danced naked, but they were also considered to attack society, causing illness and death. These attacks are not justified; either they are motiveless, or the motives must be perverted. In medieval Europe, few doubted the daily reality of Evil, the Evil One and evil beings. There was a Holy War against them for four centuries (Macfarlane, 1985; Cohn, 1975).

### *Witches and evil magic*

A witch, in late medieval and early modern Europe, was not merely someone who allegedly caused death, disease and harm by evil magic. He, or more often she, was believed to be a member of a gigantic conspiracy, organized and led by the Devil, whose aim was to destroy Christianity, degrade all decent values, overturn the established order, set the poor against the rich and the young against the old, and bring society down in ruins. Those suspected of this offence were tortured and brainwashed until they confessed to it, and were then executed. Estimates of their numbers range from 250,000 to a million. It is generally agreed that at least the great majority of them were entirely innocent.

At the heart of the witch mania lies the myth of the organized conspiracy. This is based on the belief that the evils which currently afflict the world do not occur in the ordinary course of events, but are caused by a subversive group, responsible for all seriously damaging occurrences. During the witch persecutions these occurrences included bad weather, crop failures and epidemics.

In the late Middle Ages, when witch-hunting on a large scale began, society was changing. Familiar institutions were in decline and the Church was under attack from reformers. A fear grew that the whole fabric of society was in danger. Behind the danger was seen the hand of the Devil. Christians had long tended to blame all the world's ill on the Enemy, who had been built up into a figure of titanic power by theologians. Later, tension between Roman Catholics and Protestants, each convinced of their own brand of truth and consequently of the diabolical malevolence of any opposition to it, contributed to the climate of fear. The fear demanded an outlet. Catholics and Protestants alike found in witches, or supposed witches, Satan's human agents in a huge covert conspiracy against everything they held dear, and reacted with terrifying savagery.

The myth of the organized conspiracy did not die when witch-hunting ended. In the 18th century secret societies, especially the Freemasons, were accused of conspiring against society. In the 19th century the same charge was brought against the Jews. In the 20th century the myth has played its part in anti-semitism, in the Nazi atrocities in Germany, and in the persecution of supposed enemies of society in America and behind the Iron Curtain. Myths are not invariably a force of good (Cavendish, 1980: 168-69).

### *African witchcraft and sorcery*

The original African concept of good and evil is quite different from the one introduced by Christianity. The concepts of good and evil for a person are dependent on his purpose in life. For most Africans the purpose of the individual is to advance the well-being of the family, the clan or the tribe. The purpose of the family, clan or tribe is to multiply. The more children a man has, the more hands to help him with his crops or herds. A numerous family is in Africa a source of pride and prestige. The 'father of many' is evidently favoured by the gods, and less fortunate people will seek him out, hoping to share his good fortune. (This ideal of prolific families is also prominent among the Islamic peoples, who call a family of less than ten children 'unfinished').

Everything that enhances the interests of the family is good, everything that causes sickness or death is evil. For instance, a woman whose children die one after another is often suspected of 'eating' them, that is of using their life-strength to work evil magic. Every illness is thought to be the result of spiritual operations. If it cannot be blamed on ancestors or other spiritual beings, it must be the work of a witch or sorcerer. Both these categories of human beings are workers of evil. 'Human' is a dubious word here, but is used in contrast to bodiless beings such as ghosts or animals with evil capabilities.

A witch is generally a person whose evil spirit has to be fed on the life-strength of other human beings. The term life-strength is used here to express various words in African languages meaning 'that which makes a person live'. Usually, witches will 'take' weak lives, such as those of children. Since infant mortality stands at about 50% in many parts of Africa, it is not surprising that there are numerous accusations of witchcraft. The word witchcraft is misleading: it is not a craft but a congenital characteristic. One is born with it, it is fate. Just as some people are clumsy, accident-prone, kleptomaniac or gifted with telepathy, others are witches, and the emergence of the evil trait is only a matter of time.

A sorcerer is more powerful than a witch. He is not forced to use magic, he does it for the love of evil. Some believe that a sorcerer is an evil spirit himself, but so powerful that he can control other spirits and make them work for him. He may make a fetish, a wooden statue or other object, and by his incantations compel a spirit to make its home in it. The statue will then fly like a bird to the person selected by its master as his victim and persecute him. In this way sorcerers can control whole communities by sheer terror. In many parts of Africa this terror is real and frequent. There are numerous reports by missionaries and doctors who have observed it (Cavendish, 1980: 213).

### ***Evil as the price for freedom***

We do not have to invoke the devil in order to understand evil. Evil belongs to the drama of human freedom; it is the price we have to pay for freedom.

Evil is not a concept, but a name for the threat that the free consciousness can encounter and that it can inflict itself. Human consciousness may choose cruelty and destruction for its own sake, just for the hell of it (Safranski, 1998).

In the *Theogony* of Hesiod the beginning of the world is an inferno of violence, murder, cannibalism and incest.

In the original story of Original Sin there is no mention of an extrahuman power of evil – only after the influence of gnostic and manichaeistic world views is evil conceived of as (the works



of) the devil, the antigod who competes with god for the souls of humans. The personification of evil in the *persona* (image) of the devil reaches its zenith around the 13th century (with its beliefs in witches, succubi, incubi, devils as half goat-half man, etc.). (Safranski, 1998).

### *Greek theogony*

The avowed aim of Hesiod's *Theogony* is to tell how Earth, Sky and Sea came to be; how the gods were born of them, 'givers of good things'; how the gods divided up their plenty and occupied Olympos. The myth starts with primal nature-personification, inherited from Mesopotamian or other pre-Greek traditions. Sky (Ouranos) begot out of Earth (Ge) the older generation of the gods, named Titans, but he would not withdraw himself from Earth to allow her to give birth. The primeval separation of Sky and Earth was achieved by the Titan Kronos with his mother's aid, when he castrated Ouranos with a great sickle. So began the strife and successions of the gods.

For a time the Titans held sway, ruled by Kronos and his consort Rhea. But Kronos too feared a usurper, and swallowed his children. Rhea tricked him, concealing Zeus and giving Kronos a stone to swallow instead, and Zeus forced Kronos to disgorge the other gods, who emerged full-grown. They overwhelmed the Titans, aided by Earth's monstrous offspring, the Hundred-Armed Giants with Fifty Heads. Zeus's own attempt to prevent the birth of offspring failed. Although he swallowed his consort Metis, he still brought forth the terrible warrior-goddess Athena. After this, Zeus coupled with many goddesses and mortal women, siring some children who were gods and some who were mortal heroes (Cavendish, 1980: 120).

### *The five races of man*

The story of the Five Races of Man in Hesiod's *Works and Days* is presented as one of continuous decline. Five races of man have lived on the earth. The first was the golden race, created by the Titans when Kronos ruled. They lived in ease and peace, free of toil, disease and old age, and when death came to them, as peacefully as sleep, they became benevolent *daimones* (spirits) living on the earth, 'well-disposed, warding off evils, guardians of men, givers of plenty'. The men of the second or silver race, made by the Olympian gods, were removed by Zeus because they were foolish and would not honour the gods. They became underworld spirits, 'the blessed ones beneath earth'.

The last three races were fashioned in turn by Zeus. The third or bronze race was fierce and warlike, and destroyed itself in internecine violence, passing unsung to 'the house of decay', the underworld ruled by 'chill Hades'. The fourth race, to which no metal is assigned, was that of the great heroes or demi-gods who fought at Troy and Thebes. Many of them did not die but were translated to the Isles of the Blessed at the ends of the earth, where they live free from care and sorrow, ruled by Kronos. The present race of men is the fifth race, also destined to pass away. It is the iron race, never resting from labour, born to trouble, sorrow and death, but with some good mingled with its evils (Cavendish, 1980: 122-23).

### *Evil in the Christian cosmology*

Mansfield (1982) noticed the ambiguities toward war that have plagued Christianity from its beginnings and made the civilization founded upon it both more pacific in intent and more profoundly violent in action than any other culture that has existed.

Certainly there is little in Augustine's *City of God* that glorifies war. Even in waging a just war, the Christian must see it merely as a lesser evil in the chaotic conditions of earthly life. But Augustine also brings human history back within the embrace of the divine as a drama in which Divine Providence is working itself out. In the process of explaining war, Augustine relies primarily on the older prophetic and Roman notion of war as a divine mode of correction and instruction, which "will test, purify and improve the good, but beat, crush, and wash away the wicked". He offers very little reason though, to assume that even Christians can consider themselves among the righteous for whom war is simply a testing of one's mettle. "The fact is that everyone, however exemplary, yields to some prompting of concupiscence: if not to monstrous crimes, abysmal villainy, and abominable impiety, at least to some sins, however rarely or – if infrequently – however venially" (*City of God*, p. 47).

The purpose even of war is peace. Even war can be an instrument of good when pursued, with grief and sorrow, as a defense against the injustice of an evil aggressor. Unfortunately, in his discussion of a just war, Augustine implies that a good man is under the necessity of waging a just war. He also implies the 'real' existence of 'evil aggressors'.

The second coming of Christ was envisioned as an occasion of retribution and punishment in which the sinners and persecutors would suffer. Thus St. John of Patmos fantasized: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image" (Rev. 14:11). St. John drew upon certain traditional images to create a mythic warring hero, St. Michael.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Rev. 12: 7-9).

So we have now the image of the beast, the dragon, the serpent, the devil and Satan as more or less equivalent incorporations of evil.

Warlike imagery had been reincorporated into the Christian cosmology as part of the divine action of the final days, while the God of Love had been resymbolized as an Almighty Divine Warrior – and a sadist.

War with nonbelievers or heretics has become 'Holy War' in which the opposition is invested with horrifically demonic aspects and war acquires an apocalyptic character, while Augustine's insistence that even the most just war must be fought in a mood of anguish and regret is completely abandoned.

The slaughter of nonbelievers and heretics (the forces of evil) can awaken no pity or spark of human sympathy, because what is being destroyed is perceived as so dangerous spiritually (Mansfield, 1982).

The sadomasochistic elements in this high medieval vision of God were not overcome by the Reformation. If anything, they were strengthened, as in John Calvin's assumption that all suffering was a sign of sinfulness and his faith that God was fattening the ungodly "like pigs for the slaughter". Moreover, Calvin's punitive attitude toward sinners was paralleled by a

deep self-hatred, revealed in his belief that humans were “miserable sinners, conceived and born in guilt and sin, prone in iniquity and incapable of any good work”.

The profound ambivalencies and temptations of the Reformation period were particularly stark in Martin Luther, who was deeply aware of the nascent capitalism and greed of his society and rejected it as a lie and the work of the Devil. But Luther was also despairingly aware of the extent to which he himself was tempted by the Devil, who “rules the world”. When, as with the papacy or rebellious peasants, he could project his temptation onto a human foe, his ferocity and desire to destroy were unlimited.

Similarly, the Puritans believed the native Indians were “the snare of the Devil”, “men transformed into beasts”, and “the very bond-slaves of Satan”. John Underhill, a captain of the New England troops in that [King Philip’s] war, referred to the Pequots as “these devil’s instruments”, and was certain that “the old serpent, according to his first malice, stirred them up against the church of Christ” (Carroll, 1969, p. 77).

(Such a perception certainly made it possible for the new Americans to ignore their own responsibility in precipitating conflict, that is, their greedy invasion of another people’s territory).

Thus the judicial and political witch-hunting of the McCarthy era (with its paranoid fear of, and its attempt to exorcise, the interior evil) was seen as a necessary parallel to the ‘Cold War’ with godless Communism. The ultimately suicidal self-hatred that motivates such a policy surfaces explicitly in a favorite slogan of contemporary Christian fundamentalists and right-wing patriots: One is “better dead than Red” (Mansfield, 1982).

### *Genesis and evil*

The first eleven chapters of Genesis describe the creation of the universe and man; the coming of evil into the world which God had made, when the serpent tempted Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden; the expulsion of the first man and woman from the garden and the origin of work and death; the first murder, when Cain killed his younger brother, Abel; the wickedness of mankind, which caused God to send the great Flood to destroy them; how Noah and his family and the animals were saved from the Flood in the ark and repopulated the earth; the formation of separate nations by the descendants of Noah; and how the different languages came into existence, when God punished the building of the Tower of Babel by confusing the tongues of men and scattering them over the earth. Until comparatively recently this magnificent myth, or collection of myths, about the early history of mankind was common knowledge in the western world and helped to form western concepts of the universe and man (Cavendish, 1980: 156).

### *The fall of Man and Original Sin*

Evil entered the world because the first man and woman broke God’s law, and they broke it because they wanted to be like God. In the modern age of totalitarianism, nuclear weapons, pollution and over-use of resources, the moral seems clear. The story is about the double nature of man, who stands midway between the animal and the divine, who is half-brute and half-god, made in the divine likeness but made of clay. In his insatiable longing to master all he surveys he tries to raise himself too high, to make himself all-powerful like God. This determination to grasp what he cannot control brings evil on the world and so man knows

good and evil, in the sense of experiencing them. In traditional Christian theology the myth means that man from the beginning has been a rebel against God, that a fissure has opened up between God and man. As Cardinal Newman said in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864); “If there is a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator”.

To this aboriginal calamity theologians traced the root of ‘original sin’, a term first used by St Augustine, late in the 4th century. Original sin means that all human beings, quite apart from the individual sins they commit, are infected with an inescapable taint of corruption which cannot be eradicated by human effort alone. Man is a fallen being, evil and guilty from birth. At the same time, in the Christian view, he is redeemable (Cavendish, 1980: 160-61).

### *Paradise and Hell*

The story of Eden has had a deep and long-lasting influence in other directions. In Genesis one of the consequences of man’s first disobedience was that shame became inextricably linked with sex... The fact that God condemned Eve to be subordinate to Adam seemed for centuries to prove the inferiority of women and justify male dominance. The Fall was blamed on Eve, who persuaded Adam to eat the fatal fruit, and her part in the story contributed to the deep-rooted belief in the evilness of woman (which exists far beyond the West), the conviction that women are inherently vicious.

Eden means ‘pleasure’ in Hebrew. The garden of Eden as a paradise, an ideal place of happiness, free from death, work, conflict, pain, sorrow, guilt and shame, exercised a magnetic attraction as a focus for the longing to escape from the miseries of the human condition to a utopia... The Christian idea of paradise was influenced by the Greek and Roman myth of the Elysian Fields or Isles of the Blessed, a paradise far across the sea, and by Celtic myths of the otherworld. It sometimes coalesced with belief in the millennium (founded on Revelation, chapter 20), the period of a thousand years after the Second Coming of Christ, when Christ would establish a kingdom of ideal happiness on earth...

The Church inherited the concept of hell from both Judaism and the classical world, and persisted in it partly from the conviction that hell was needed as a deterrent against crime and anarchy, and partly from a belief in retributive justice, that the wicked deserved to be punished..

The story of Eden found the origin of evil in man’s first disobedience. It seems clear, however, that much of the evil and undeserved suffering in the world does not spring from human action. Consequently, another story, based on Isaiah and Revelation, traces the taproot of evil to a non-human source. The Devil was originally a great archangel, beautiful and proud. In his pride he tried to make himself the equal of God. In punishment he was hurled from heaven down to earth, where he has worked evil ever since.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and

strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night... Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he has but a short time (From Revelation, chapter 12).

Satan's followers, the angels who were expelled from heaven with him, became the demons which tempt men to sin so as to lure them into the Devil's clutches in hell and deny their souls to God. It was said that the great archangel's name was Lucifer, 'lightbearer' in heaven and Satan, 'adversary, after his fall. Satan's crime was the same as Adam's, the attempt to rival God. Both were rebels against God and their two myths coalesced, with the serpent of Eden becoming either an agent of the Devil or the subtle Enemy himself in disguise. There is no suggestion of this in Genesis, but Revelation calls Satan 'that old serpent' (Cavendish, 1980: 162-64).

### ***Kant and the post-Kantians on Evil***

Struggle was a concomitant of Kant's ethical theory, but this was not the only reason why Kant and the post-Kantians thought struggle so prominent a feature of the world. As told by Kedourie (1993):

Evil was necessary in the passage from barbarity to civilization, from ignorance to knowledge. This change was effected only through struggle, violence, upheavals. The justification of evil lay in the future, when our descendants would enjoy the blessings which our sufferings made possible. Evil was, that good might ensue: "It is only through turmoil and destruction", said Turgot in his lecture of 1750 *On the Successive Advances of the Human Mind*, "that nations expand, that civilization and governments are in the long run perfected". For if there had been no tumultuous and dangerous passions, there would be no progress and mankind would remain in a state of mediocrity. For Kant, this idea was a fundamental one. He explicitly looked on history as a ceaseless struggle. Good and evil, he wrote in his essay *Of the Different Human Races* (1775-7), were inextricably mixed in man, and constitute the source of energy for those "great springs which put into motion the creative forces of humanity and compel it to develop all its talents, and to aspire to the perfection of its destiny". Left to himself, he says in his *Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitical Plan* (1784), man would choose peace; but Nature wills otherwise: for the good of his species war must be his lot. Only through war will man attain the life of Reason (Kedourie, 1993).

Kant never ceased to allow a central place for the notion of struggle in his philosophy of history. In the treatise on *Perpetual Peace* which he published in 1794, he rejected the prospect of a universal monarchy. It is true that such a monarchy might establish peace, but it would be the peace of despotism, and to this even war was rationally preferable. In any case, nature does not allow the establishment of a universal monarchy: "She employs two means to separate peoples and to prevent them from mixing: differences of language and of religion. These differences involve a tendency to mutual hatred and pretexts for war, but the progress of civilization and men's gradual approach to greater harmony in their principles finally leads to peaceful agreement...".

Fichte exalted further the idea of struggle. In the philosophy of history which he put forward in *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, Fichte maintained the central position of the idea of struggle. War between states he regards as that mechanism which introduces "a living and

progressive principle into History”; and this war is not the limited war, the decorous game of chess of eighteenth-century strategy; it is, he says, “a true and proper war – a war of subjugation”. This conflict between states promotes indirectly the self-realization of the whole human race (Kedourie, 1993).

From Fichte’s philosophy to Hegel’s apology of war is but one step.

Also Herder accepted the two prevalent ideas of the philosophy of history of his age, namely that the historical process was one of progressive amelioration, and that improvement was the outcome of violence and struggle (Kedourie, 1993).

Kant argued powerfully that conscience is the final arbiter of morality, and that it judges according to its own legislated criteria. But he did not allow for the paradoxical and dangerous possibility that self-legislation, restrained by nothing but itself, can adopt evil as its own good. This is because there is no way of establishing that conscience and goodness automatically go together. Hence, as Hegel also observed, “in independent self-certainty, with its independence of knowledge and decision, both morality and evil have their common root” (*Philosophy of Right*) (quoted in Kedourie, 1993).

### ***Evil and utopia***

In the light of a Messianic faith in a final and definitive upheaval which will lay the foundations for a utopian society, whole groups become expendable for the realization of an ultimate good, and a whole armory of antitheses and lethal malediction becomes available – enemies of the people, bourgeois nationalists, revisionists, rightists, reactionaries, doomed classes, counter-revolutionaries (Kuper, 1982).

Unfortunately there is a great deal of truth in the quotation from Pascal, that men never surrender themselves to evil with more joyous abandon than in the service of a good conscience (“Jamais on ne fait le mal si pleinement et si gaiement que quand on le fait par conscience”).

### ***Evil as projection of inner demonology***

Evil as projection (in the Freudian and Feuerbachian sense) of intrapsychic conflicts – fear, lasciviousness – has repeatedly been suggested, especially by authors of psychoanalytic signature. Projection (in a more Marxian – societal and ideological – sense) and collective scapegoating has also been suggested as explanatory category in the study of witch craze, belief in the devil, McCarthyism, etc. The following quotations are fairly representative:

So wie der religiöse Haß, der heilige Eifer, als projektive Abwehr angstausslösender Krisenzustände zu sehen ist, so wird auch das Objekt, der Feind, der einem angst macht, projectiv verdinglicht zu dem ‘Bösen’...

So sind die Mythen vom Bösen zu verstehen. Eva und die Schlange, der Teufel, die Hexen, die Juden, die Kommunisten, die Ungläubigen usw.: Es sind Projektionen des Bösen, die eine Gesellschaft produziert, die sich in angstmachenden Konflikten befindet und den Grund für das drohende Unheil nicht bei sich selber sucht, sondern einen Sündenbock außerhalb der eigenen Verantwortlichkeit festmacht, auf den sich dann aller Haß ablädt, der eigentlich der eigenen Schwäche gilt...

Die Urgeschichte macht noch in ihren Projektionen den Menschen für das Böse verantwortlich. Aber die theologische Problematik klingt schon an: Wie kann es in der Schöpfung des einen allmächtigen Gottes Gottwidriges, Böses geben? Die mythische Gestalt des Teufels ist eine – verhängnisvolle – Variante der projizierenden Verarbeitung von Erfahrungen des Bösen. Das Böse wird zur personhaften Gestalt, die einerseits Gott gegenüber keine Absolutheit besitzt und andererseits dem Menschen nicht die Verantwortlichkeit abnimmt... Je verklärter das Bild Gottes wurde, um so finsterer, geheimnisvoller wurde das Bild des Teufels. Mittelalterliche Maler statteten den Teufel mit immer gräßlicheren Fratzen aus. Dabei nimmt die Identifizierung mit dem Sinnlichen immer deutlichere Konturen an... Ganz anders der Protenstantismus und in seinem Gefolge die Aufklärung. Der Teufel sitzt nicht im Fleisch, sondern in der Seele. Für Luther ist er “eine den Menschen unmittelbar beeinflussende personhafte Macht, die Ursprung und Urheber, ja alles Übels in der Welt ist...” In *De servo arbitrio* (Vom unfreien Willen), sieht Luther den Menschen als Pferd, das immer einen Reiter hat, entweder Gott oder den Teufel... Für die katholische Kirche ist der Teufelsglaube fester Bestandteil der Lehre... Zum Symbol des Bösen wurde die Hexe erst durch die Verbindung mit dem Teufelsglauben: Dabei ist die sexuelle Seite des Hexenglaubens überdeutlich. Typisches Beispiel dafür ist der Mythos vom Hexensabbat, wie er auf vielen Bildern dargestellt worden ist... Die Hexe, das war das abschreckende Bild einer geilen, wollüstigen Frau... Der Projektionscharakter dieser Sicht ist deutlich: Die verdrängte Sexualität, die als Ursprung alles Bösen gesehen wird, schafft sich in der Hexe ein projektives Symbol (Vierzig, 1985: 97-103).

### *Evil in nature*

Some authors seem to project evil in nature. For example, Lorenz (1966) in his *Das sogenannte Böse*, referring to observations by Steiniger (1950) on the ‘clan warfare’ of the brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), and similar observations by Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1952) on laboratory mice, states: “It is thus quite possible that the group hate between rat clans is really a diabolical invention which serves no good [i.e., adaptive] purpose” (p.139). This malfunctioning of this social form of intra-specific aggression, he says, constitutes ‘evil’ (p. 134), and the diabolical ‘inventor’ of this evil would be no other than evolution or nature.

Bloom (1995) is especially prone to project ‘evil’ in nature. His book *The Lucifer Principle* is basically and fundamentally wrong, not because Bloom defends group selection, but because it is based on false premises, and because the cheap and sensationalist slogans like ‘innate evil’ are misleading and/or plainly false.

It is fundamentally fallacious to project into (or attribute to) nature the notions of good or evil, and subsequently derive Human Nastiness from Evil Nature. Nature is quite amoral (not to be confused with immoral), it is *beyond* good or evil. The systematic use of the moral/ethical/legal category ‘murder’ to refer to animal killings (whether intraspecific agonistic behavior or interspecific predatory behavior – it does not make much difference to Bloom) is intentionally misleading. A lioness is not ‘murdering’ her prey, and even an infanticidal male lion cannot be said to be ‘murdering’ the cub. ‘Murder’ presupposes ethical knowledge and reasoning, (self)consciousness and intentionality, and ‘malice aforethought’, i.e., premeditation.

Chimps and gorillas (and, of course, humans) make war, Bloom asserts, but he does not seem to wonder why warmaking is confined to these few species, and why it is so conspicuously absent in the many thousands of other (especially mammalian) species, even though, predominantly sublethal, intergroup agonistic behavior has been documented for a number of social carnivores and primates (in which it is, by the way, mostly the *females* of the species who do the threatening and the vociferations; see Van der Dennen [1995] for a review). The resemblance of chimpanzee ‘warfare’ to raids in human preindustrial societies should be explained, not treated as extra evidence of natural and human depravity.

It is, all in all, a facile attempt to locate Evil in Nature and to derive human evil from natural evil.

What is the *Lucifer Principle*?

“Evil is a by-product, a component, of creation. In a world evolving into ever higher forms, hatred, violence, aggression, and war are a part of the evolutionary plan” (Bloom, 1995: 2). These sentences reveal all that is wrong with this book: (1) the projection of evil in Nature, even though Nature is absolutely amoral; (2) the fallacious idea that evolution has an upward direction (or any direction at all); and (3) that the more destructive propensities of organisms are part of that masterplan resulting in Ultimate Good.

How does Bloom explain the Lucifer Principle and the Forces of History (what propels the cultural tides of human beings)? He presents five ‘simple concepts’ that may help explain these human currents, and which together are the foundation underlying the Lucifer Principle:

*Concept number one:* the principle of self-organizing systems-replicators-bits of structure that function as minifactories, assembling raw materials, then churning out intricate products. These natural assembly units (genes are one example) crank out their goods so cheaply that the end results are appallingly expendable. Among those expendable products are you and me.

*Concept number two:* the superorganism. We are not the rugged individuals we would like to be. We are, instead, disposable parts of a being much larger than ourselves.

*Concept number three:* the meme, a self-replicating cluster of ideas. Thanks to a handful biological tricks, these visions become the glue that holds together civilizations, giving each culture its distinctive shape, making some intolerant of dissent and others open to diversity. They are the tools with which we unlock the forces of nature. Our visions bestow the dream of peace, but they also turn us into killers.

*Concept number four:* the neural net. The group mind whose eccentric mode of operation manipulates our emotions and turns us into components of a massive learning machine.

*Concept number five:* the pecking order. The naturalist who discovered this dominance hierarchy in a Norwegian farmyard called it the key to despotism. Pecking orders exist among men, monkeys, wasps, and even nations. They help explain why the danger of barbarians is real and why the assumptions of our foreign policies are often wrong.

Five simple ideas. Yet the insights they yield are amazingly rich. They reveal why doctors are not always so powerful as they seem, but why we are compelled to believe in them



nonetheless. They explain how Hinduism, the religion of ultimate peace, grew from the greed of a tribe of bloodthirsty killers and why nature disposes of men far more casually than women. They shed light on America's decline, and the dangers that lie ahead of us.

Above all, they illuminate a mystery that has eternally eluded man: the root of the evil that haunts our lives. For within these five small ideas we will pursue, there lurks a force that rules us" (Bloom, 1995: 10-11).

Bloom has fallen victim to what Baumeister (1997) calls: "The myth of pure evil", the stereotype of what people think evil should be.

Popular images of evil feature wicked, malicious, sadistic perpetrators inflicting senseless harm on innocent, well-meaning victims.

The myth defines the way people think of evil – which is in some crucial aspects quite different from the real, actual causes of violence and oppression.

First, evil involves the intentional infliction of harm on people.

Second, and of crucial importance, evil is driven primarily by the wish to inflict harm merely for the pleasure of doing so. By and large, evil is not understood as something that *reluctantly* uses violence as a means to an end. Rather, the harm inflicted by evil forces is *gratuitous*. Evil is sadistic: Evil people enjoy the suffering they cause, and they inflict harm to get this enjoyment.

Third, the victim is innocent and good.

Fourth, evil is the other, the enemy, the outsider, the out-group. The conflict of good versus evil is often superimposed on the conflict of *us* against *them*.

Fifth, evil has been that way since time immemorial.

Sixth, evil represents the antithesis of order, peace and stability.

Seventh, evil characters are often marked by egotism. They do not lack for self-esteem.

Last, evil figures have difficulty maintaining control over their feelings, especially rage and anger. This characteristic is not as well established as some of the others, and there may be many exceptions. Indeed, some depictions of evil characterize it as coldly calculating, driven by an implacable hostility toward the good and normal, as opposed to being out of control. Still, there is some tendency to depict evil as given to impulse and wild actions, and indeed this wildness is sometimes seen as the vulnerable spot or fatal flaw that allows good to triumph (Baumeister, 1997).

## **The Social Psychology of Evil**

Staub (1989) and Baumeister (1997) are among the social psychologists who have stressed that evil is rooted in rather normal psychological processes going awry. They limit themselves to proximate mechanisms, however, and seldom or not discuss the ultimate (evolutionary) rationales behind many of these proximate processes.

The essence of 'evil', according to Staub (1989), is the destruction of human beings. This includes not only killing but the creation of conditions that materially or psychologically destroy or diminish people's dignity, happiness, and capacity to fulfill basic material needs. By 'evil' Staub means *actions* that have such consequences. In this view, genocide and massacres are the epitome of evil.

Evil is a term applied to "situations when force, violence, and other forms of coercion exceed institutional or moral limits" (Smelser, 1971). The three classes of situations that qualify as 'evil' by this definition are those in which individuals or groups: (1) exercise coercive power over others when they are not legitimately empowered to do so; (2) exceed the limits of their legitimate authority to exercise coercion; or (3) exercise coercive or destructive control over others that violates a higher standard of humanity or morality even though it may be within politically sanctioned authority (Zimbardo, 1978).

Katz (1993) defines 'evil' as behavior that deliberately deprives innocent people of their humanity, from small scale assaults on a person's dignity to outright murder. This, he stipulates, is a *behavioral* definition of evil.

His main theme is that ordinary people, using ordinary behavior, can produce extraordinary evil. The route to evil often takes the form of a sequence of seemingly small, innocuous incremental steps, in each of which one tries to solve a problem within one's immediate situation. Horrendous deeds may be performed by persons who are addressing themselves to innocuous immediate problems.

Evil, as Zimbardo asserts, is typically in the eye of the observer; it is never in the mind of the perpetrator (Zimbardo, 1978; cf. Baumeister, 1997). The setting for evil is rarely dramatic; evil is most powerful when it is trivial and banal: routinized.

Hannah Arendt (1965) concluded from her observations of the war-crimes trial of Adolf Eichmann that, despite the enormity of the holocaust in the Nazi concentration camps, the operation of evil itself was in its day-to-day manifestation rather banal: petty bureaucrats following orders, signing death certificates, meeting quotas, trying to please superiors, not wanting to offend, and above all, concerned about doing their duty and being obedient (Zimbardo, 1978).

Studies by Milgram and by Zimbardo and his colleagues reveal how readily good people may be made to act in evil ways, and further how facile people are in creating justifications for any act of evil.

Zimbardo (1978) relates our potential for evil to our uniquely human evolved capacities:

"But each of these unique attributes can also become cancerous. The seeds of our perversion are nourished in the soil of the human potential for perfectibility. For example, our remarkable memory enables us to profit from mistakes, establish continuities within our lives, and master complex feats of learning. But this same gift of memory can convert our minds

into storehouses filled with traumatic events, fears, anxieties, unresolved conflicts, and petty grudges.

Our capacity for love allows us to experience the most tender and subtle of emotions, to feel special and needed, to nurture the growth of our beloved and to sacrifice for his or her well-being. But love can also lead to jealousy, possessiveness, domination, obsession, and its loss to depression, revenge, and suicide”.

The general conclusion that emerges from Zimbardo’s research runs contrary to prevailing stereotypes which locate the source of evil *in people*. Rather, these investigations have led Zimbardo to accept the wisdom of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s assertion that, “There is no such thing in man’s nature as a settled and free resolve either for good or evil, except at the very moment of execution” (*Twice Told Tales*, 1837).

If there is one message of contemporary social psychology that Zimbardo (1978) emphasizes is that we all *overestimate* the extent to which behavior – be it evil, good, or neuter – is *dispositionally controlled*, while at the same time we systematically *underestimate* the degree to which it is *situationally controlled*. It is precisely this fundamental attributional error which makes us vulnerable to evil influences.

## **Explanations of Evil**

Ordinary psychological processes and normal, common human motivations and certain basic but not inevitable tendencies in human thought and feeling (such as the devaluation of others) are the primary sources of evil. Frequently, the perpetrators’ own insecurity and suffering cause them to turn against others and begin a process of increasing destructiveness (Staub, 1989).

There are alternative views of the roots of evil, of course. Some believe that because power and self-interest are strong human motives, human beings are basically unconcerned about others’ welfare and will therefore do anything to satisfy their own interests (e.g., Hobbes, Freud).

Reinhold Niebuhr, in his 1932 classic *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, regarded human beings as capable of goodness and morality, but considered groups to be inherently selfish and uncaring. It is a prevalent view that nation-states are only concerned with power and self-interest.

Even the individual’s capacity for altruism is subverted by the group. The ethical paradox of patriotism is that it “transmutes individual unselfishness into national egotism... The unqualified character of this devotion is the very basis of the nation’s power and of the freedom to use power without moral restraint” (Nieboer, 1960; cf. Koestler, 1967).

Andrew Schmoekler, in *The Parable of the Tribes*, offers ‘selection for power’ as a central evolutionary concept. He says that social selection is not random, like biological selection; its main principle is power. It is likely to “discard those who revere nature in favor of those willing to exploit it. The warlike may eliminate the pacifist; the ambitious the content...”. In the long run competitive strivings inevitably dominate over cooperative ones. (Schmoekler, 1984).

Staub (1989) regards evil in groups as similar, though not identical, to evil in individuals. Moral constraints are less powerful in groups than in individuals.

There is a diffusion of responsibility in groups (e.g., Wallach, Kogan & Bem, 1962; Latané & Darley, 1970; Darley & Latané, 1968; Mynatt & Sherman, 1975).

Members often relinquish authority and guidance to the group and its leaders. They abandon themselves to the group and develop a commitment that enables them to sacrifice even their lives for it (e.g., Campbell, 1965). This can lead to altruistic self-sacrifice or to joining those who turn against another group. Combined with the group's power to repress dissent, abandoning the self to the (interests of the) group enhances the potential for evil (Staub, 1989).

### ***Justifications***

One of the greatest contributors to both the evil of action and the evil of inaction is our limitless imagination, which can generate justifications for virtually any action. "Men seeking to seize, hold, or realign the levers of power have continually engaged in collective violence as part of their struggles. The oppressed have struck in the name of justice, the privileged in the name of order, those in between in the name of fear" (Tilly, 1969).

People who violate basic laws of humanity often are convinced that evil is about to be wrought *on them*. Typically, they rationalize their behavior according to some principle acceptable to others in their society. In addition, they often have some degree of social or political support or institutionalized structure that helps make it possible to redefine the act in other than in human terms (Zimbardo, 1978).

"Thus do I now believe that I must act in the sense of the Almighty Creator: by fighting against the Jews I am doing the Lord's work", wrote Hitler in *Mein Kampf* (1933, p. 25).

### ***The evil of roles and rules***

In a mock prison Haney, Banks & Zimbardo (1973) created at Stanford, normal and average college students from throughout the USA behaved in pathological ways within a few days after playing the roles of prisoners or guards in a realistic prison setting. The guards behaved brutally, often sadistically, and the prisoners, after an initial rebellion, were docile and compliant, but half of them became so psychologically disturbed they had to be released prematurely. The guards readily justified their aggression and were amazed to recall how alien their behavior was to their usual selves (Zimbardo, 1978).

### ***The 'respectability' of white-collar crime***

Crimes committed by corporations or state-organs are usually tolerated by the general public, either through ignorance of what is going on or because such activities are less personally threatening than what people see as 'real' crime, such as robbery, muggings, and rape. The lawbreaking businessman does not see himself as a criminal either, because he does not conform to the popular stereotype of the criminal. This popular stereotype is always taken from the lower socioeconomic class (Zimbardo, 1978).

### ***The magnitude gap***

Regardless of the *root* causes of evil (as genocide and violence in general), the *immediate* cause is often a breakdown of self-control. You do not have to give people reasons to be violent, because they already have plenty of reasons. All you have to do is take away their reasons to restrain themselves (Baumeister, 1997).

A central fact about evil is the discrepancy between the importance of the act to the perpetrator and to the victim. This can be called the *magnitude gap*. The importance of what takes place is almost always much greater for the victim than for the perpetrator. When trying to understand evil, one is always asking, “How could they do such a horrible thing?” But the horror is usually being measured in the victim’s terms. To the perpetrator, it is often a very small thing; “no big deal” (Baumeister, 1997).

Many violent people believe that their actions were justified by the offensive acts of the person who became their victim. Even when a neutral observer would conclude that no serious provocation occurred, it is still important to recognize that, in the perpetrator’s own view, he or she was merely responding to an attack. Perpetrators often see themselves as having been provoked by the victim. Perpetrators perceive themselves as victims (Baumeister, 1997).

People inevitably begin to think that their (ethnic) group is good. But if *we* are good, and *you* are our opponents, and evil is the opposite of the good, then *you* must be evil. Groups of people everywhere will come to that same conclusion, even groups on opposite sides of the same conflict. The stronger the tendency to see one’s own group as good – and this tendency is often surprisingly strong – the more likely one is to regard one’s rivals and enemies as evil. Such views may then be used to provide easy justification for treating one’s enemies harshly, because there is no point in being patient, tolerant, and understanding when one is dealing with evil. Throughout history, people have asserted that their rivals or enemies were in league with the Devil (Baumeister, 1997).

One reason to depict the enemy as purely evil is that such an image helps create an obligation and an incentive to fight. If the enemy is clearly evil, then it is right to hate him and it is appropriate to do one’s part to defeat and destroy him. Most wars – whether major international conflicts or brutal series of battles between street gangs – require popular support. To marshal such support, it is necessary to justify one’s own violent actions.

A second, related benefit of construing the enemy in terms of the myth of pure evil is that there is no need to feel bad about killing the enemy, or indeed about any sort of abusive or atrocious treatment of the enemy.

A less obvious but still very powerful benefit of demonizing the enemy is that all the misfortunes and suffering on both sides can be blamed on the enemy.

Hope and confidence constitute a final benefit of demonizing the enemy. If the enemy is bad, then God must be on our side, and so it seems certain that we will win in the end (Baumeister, 1997).

### ***Threatened egotism and revenge***

What prompts people to take strong measures to get revenge? The main answer appears to be the threats to their self-esteem. A great deal of human violence is perpetrated by people who feel that someone has threatened or damaged their self-esteem. Being humiliated, embarrassed, treated with disrespect, made a fool of, or otherwise attacked on this dimension of worthiness is an important cause of violence, because it creates strong urges to take revenge.

Often the quest for revenge involves significant costs and risks to the self. When responding to a blow to one's self-esteem or public image, people will accept further costs and losses to hurt the person who humiliated them (Baumeister, 1997).

Baumeister's (1997) conclusion that violent people tend to have highly favorable opinions of themselves (and are, in fact, conceited, arrogant, and often consumed with thoughts about their superiority [*inflated ego*]) runs directly contrary to a well-entrenched view that low self-esteem is a major cause of violence.

Such a low self-esteem view was, for instance, recently formulated as follows: "Violence may be used as a strategy in fervent efforts at self-repair. Given its power to transfigure subjective life, to supplant dread, helplessness, and passivity with omnipotence and mastery, the enactment of violence can contain immense recuperative potential for the mortally vulnerable child and can, as such, be considered a potent medium of adaptation" (Tolleson, 1997).

Hare (quoted in Meloy, 1988) describes violent psychopaths as having a "narcissistic and grossly inflated view of their self-worth and importance". He adds that they regard themselves "as superior beings" and generally seem to think and act as if they were the center of the universe.

The most potent recipe for violence is a favorable view of oneself that is disputed or undermined by someone else – in short, *threatened egotism*. Fluctuating self-esteem makes a person hypersensitive to ego threats, and a basically high but somewhat malleable self-esteem is probably the most dangerous. A classic study by Hans Toch (1993), entitled *Violent Men* drew just such a picture of insecure arrogance and egotism. These men encountered, sought out, or deliberately instigated challenges to their egos, and responded with violence.

Jankowski (1991) observed that the members of teen and young adult gangs always blamed something else for failure, rather than their own error or inadequacy. More ominously, the bloody purges of violent groups show the same pattern of finding scapegoats rather than blaming themselves.

The highly conceited person may hurt or exploit others out of plain indifference (Baumeister, 1997).

Serial killers often report that they found the actual killings less than satisfactory. Indeed, Ressler (e.g., Ressler, Burgess & Douglas, 1988) believes that the lack of satisfaction is paradoxically one reason for the serial killing. If the killer's desire to get revenge against his mother or some other offending woman were satisfied by killing the first victim, there would be no need to kill more of them.

The historical record suggests that holy wars are often dirtier, more brutal and fuller of cruelty and atrocity than ordinary wars. The usual effect of religiosity is to make war more brutal, not less.

A key to understanding this link between idealism and violence is that high moral principles reduce the room for compromise. Idealism leads to violence because good, desirable ends provide justification for violent or oppressive means.

One far-reaching difference between idealistic evil and other forms of evil is that idealistic evil is nearly always fostered by groups, as opposed to individuals. When someone kills for the sake of promoting a higher good, he may find support and encouragement if he is acting as part of a group of people who share that belief. If he acts as a lone individual, the same act is likely to brand him as a dangerous nut (Baumeister, 1997; cf. DuPreez, 1994).

### *Sadistic pleasure?*

It seems there is some deeply rooted gut reaction that inhibits many people from shooting someone even when it is appropriate or possibly vital to do so.

Hurting someone is generally unpleasant, and it often evokes severely negative reactions (distress, depression). But it does become easier with repetition.

The historical evidence strongly suggests that people do enjoy the pleasure of watching other people suffer and die. The spectacle of violence holds a fascination that seems to transcend time and culture (Baumeister, 1997).

Killing itself is sometimes pleasurable. In the words of one American veteran of Vietnam, “There is incredible, just this incredible sense of power in killing five people... The only way I can equate it is to ejaculation. Just an incredible sense of relief, you know, that I did this. I was very powerful” (in Gondolf, 1985). He said he felt like a successful hunter.

Indeed, it appears that several serial killers got their start in Vietnam.

Jankowski (1991), who studied teen gangs, acknowledged that some do enjoy the violence, but they are a minority: “Only a small number of gang members enjoy fighting... Most do not enjoy fighting at all and try to avoid it”.

Three clear conclusions emerge from Baumeister’s (1997) survey of evidence about getting sadistic enjoyment from inflicting harm or pain on others. First, there are too many such incidents, spread across too many different times and places, to ignore, and so one must conclude that sadistic pleasure is genuine. Second, it is nearly always a small minority of perpetrators who derive such pleasure – something perhaps on the order of 5 percent, or one out of twenty people, who are actively involved in inflicting harm. Third, it seems that sadistic enjoyment is something that is gradually discovered over a period of time involving multiple episodes of dominating or hurting others. In those respects, sadistic cruelty seems to resemble addiction (Baumeister, 1987).

### *Collective ignorance and the accomplice-trap*

If evil begins when someone crosses a moral line, then it may be promoted by anything that tends to make the line fuzzy or unclear, including ambiguity and misinformation.

Another way of helping people cross the line into committing violence is to keep them in ignorance of what they are doing for as long as possible. When people do not know what they are doing, they have no basis for objecting to it.

Even when people do object, however, they avoid phrasing their objection in moral terms. Instead, they focus on a lower level objection. To fail to make the objection can trap the person into subsequent compliance. To fail to make the objection on the highest level the first time is often to implicitly accept the broad assumptions (Baumeister, 1997).

Evil or violent tendencies are usually met with strong restraining forces, most of which can be conveniently categorized as self-control. Greed, ambition, egotism, and the rest may be powerful factors that promote evil, but they can be met with equally powerful inner restraints. The immediate, proximal cause of violence is the collapse of these inner restraining forces. This point is crucial, because it means that many of our efforts to understand violence are looking at the question the wrong way. To produce violence, it is not necessary to promote it actively. All that is necessary is to stop restraining or preventing it. Once the restraints are removed, there are plenty of reasons for people to strike out at each other (Baumeister, 1997).

### ***Beguilement by evil***

Katz (1993) suggests a modification of Milgram's obedience to authority theme. One can be caught in a process of beguilement by evil, of seduction into doing evil by the immediate circumstances in which one finds oneself. This can happen when we find ourselves in a social setting where the immediate circumstances dominate our entire field of moral vision. Here the larger society's values and even our own upbringing that taught us to treat people humanely can be disregarded and new, locally generated values take their place. "Obedience to authority" may not be an issue at all; one may do evil to please one's peers, or for one of many other reasons – even for personal enjoyment. Here the one feature that dominates all others is that the immediate context in which one finds oneself shuts out the outside world's values, leaving one vulnerable to new 'values' (Milgram's instructions for the participants mapped out an *immediate context*). Katz also present four additional forms of beguilement into evil. These are:

- the packaging of evil: making evil an acceptable commodity to individuals who are not necessarily predisposed to doing evil;
- careerism and its potential for creating a person's route to evil; much of it through small, incremental, and innocent decisions;
- bureaucratization of evil: moral bankruptcy amid orderliness; when bureaucratic procedures are harnessed for producing evil;
- creation of a separate and distinct culture of cruelty: where evil-doing becomes enjoyable and rewarding to a group of people.

### ***Low-level thinking***



Another factor that reduces self-control and fosters the crossing of moral boundaries is a certain kind of mental state. This state is marked by a very concrete, narrow, rigid way of thinking, with the focus on the here and now, on the details of what one is doing. It is the state that characterizes someone who is fully absorbed in working with tools or playing a video game. One does not pause to reflect on broader implications or grand principles or events far removed in time (past or future).

There is a tendency for people to shift to low levels of meaningful thought while carrying out morally problematic, dangerous acts. Low-level thinking is amoral (Baumeister, 1997).

### ***'Blind' striking out?***

Most violence behavior is not truly the result of irresistible impulses. People allow themselves to lose control. And they do so in part because they learn to regard certain impulses as irresistible.

Thus, violence occurs when people allow themselves to lose control of angry, violent impulses. A culture of violence does not have to place a positive value on violence. It can encourage violence merely by making it appropriate to let oneself go in response to a broad range of provocations. Culture does not have to encourage violent behavior in order to produce it (and this may be where the previous theories about subcultures of violence went wrong).

Media violence seems to affect people who are inclined toward aggression anyway (Baumeister, 1997).

### ***Evil as Deliberate Choice***

Evil can happen accidentally, a by-product of behavior that is not *intentionally* evil, but there is also evil that is far from accidental; there is evil that is deliberate. There are occasions when persons do horrendous deed *because* these deeds are horrendous. There are occasions when persons do evil *because* it is known to be evil. Katz (1993) refers to Dostoevski's *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which Dostoevski relates the deliberately cruel crimes committed by the Turks in Bulgaria a century ago – such as blowing a baby's brain out in front of the mother after first petting it.

This is not accidental evil. This is evil flaunted. As Seeskin (1980) wrote:

“The killing [in the example above] is not swift and impersonal but amusing and innovative: a grotesque form of self-expression. Despite what one might think after an initial reading of the passage, the person who plays with a baby in order to enjoy the slaughtering of it even more cannot be without a conscience. These are the actions of someone who understands only too well what human dignity is and takes pleasure in mocking it. In fact killing is symbolic. He has chosen to profane the tenderest and most sacred of living creatures and to do so in a manner designed to show the victim and everyone else that he is fully aware of the horror in what he is doing” (Seeskin, 1980: 445)

Evil may be flaunted by people who know better (Katz, 1993: 31).

### ***Culture of cruelty***

Evil can be, and sometimes has been, developed into a *culture of cruelty*, a distinctive culture in its own right. As such it is systematically organized to reward individuals for their acts of cruelty: for being creative at inventing cruelties and for establishing a personal reputation for their particular version of cruelty. Here cruelty can be a macabre art form: one's creativity at inventing new forms of cruelty is socially recognized and rewarded. Here, too, cruelty can be a distinctive 'economy', where one's credit rating depends on one's level of cruelty – the more cruel, the higher one's standing. By contrast, acts of kindness can lead to publicly declared bankruptcy, and in some situations the punishment for this bankruptcy is a death sentence.

The Auschwitz personnel informally developed a distinctive culture of cruelty that augmented the officially prescribed patterns of cruelty. In this culture of cruelty behavior evolved where new forms of cruelty were invented, refined, and repeatedly reenacted; where evil was deliberately courted, with full knowledge that it was evil; where a guard's personal reputation, one's status as an Auschwitz guard, was based on innovative contributions to cruelty. One's reputation was usually nurtured deliberately, often through advertising of one's specialty in cruelty.

Cruelty was accentuated by the capricious manner in which it was administered. The inmates were kept wondering who will be murdered next? What new technique will they use? Such psychological torture, alongside the physical torture, was fair game within the Auschwitz zone of cruelty.

In fairness, it must be noted that not all SS men at Auschwitz used their autonomy to justify participating in the culture of cruelty. Some used their autonomy to avoid participating in cruelty.

Katz (1993) emphasizes the inventiveness of individuals at creating new and ever more horrifying evil deeds. Appalling as this is, it is probably not the most appalling inventiveness in the realm of evil. The most appalling feature may be the invention of a *mind-set* that regards outrageous evil as acceptable, even necessary, human behavior. This was done by Stalin in the Soviet Union (Conquest, 1986), and people like Hitler, Himmler and Höss in Nazi Germany (Katz, 1993).

### ***'Evil' packages and riders***

Evil can be, and sometimes has been, *produced in separate social contexts*. Evil is produced in the confines of a package of a number of items of valued behavior, which is organized under an all-embracing theme. That theme integrates and gives focus to behavior; it becomes a rider to all activities within the package, coloring all activities within that package, and it facilitates the outlook that everything outside the package can be ignored.

Such a rider helped to produce a context for evil in Nazi Germany. Hitler offered the German people a package that consisted of plans for revitalizing the German economy, recapturing German political glory that had been severely tarnished by defeat in the First World War, and racially 'purifying' Germany. Hitler offered these items as separate issues under a unifying theme: the revived grandeur of Germany.

This is the rider paradox: Given a new rider to everyday living, little may change, but everything will be different. When a new rider prevails, a new set of priorities is imposed.

Packaging means bringing together very different items of behavior and linking them. Because the different components are linked the individual perceives the package as a single entity. Katz (1993) gives the example of Höss, commandant of the extermination camp Auschwitz. Under the tutelage of Eicke, the commandant of Dachau, he discovered the limitless brutality of the camps. He resented that brutality, but the brutality was packaged in a way that made Höss continue to adhere to it – to *all* of it, even the part he resented.

Höss derived some of his thinking from the infamous speech by Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS and a senior member of Hitler's inner circle. In that speech Himmler said that the slaughter of people carried out by the SS was indeed horrible and understandably a source of revulsion. But the slaughter was necessary, even laudable, because it was carried out on behalf of a very noble cause. The very revulsion proved the grandeur of one's contributions. Hence Höss was not alone. The head of the SS promoted the same mind-set as the one Höss adopted. Revulsion is the catalyst that makes the system work.

### ***Normality and unselfishness of evil***

In the administration of concentration camps the Nazis attempted to weed out the sadists and psychopaths from their ranks. 'Ordinary' and 'sane' officials were far more effective killers. They were more dependable instruments for carrying out the German state's policy of exterminating its opponents. Typically, these officials were not out for personal revenge or personal gain. They were loyal to what they regarded as a worthy cause, to a new golden age for their country. It may be hard to believe, but they often acted selflessly and loyally to their country.

Our century is not unusual in having large-scale killings carried out by well-intentioned citizens. Over the centuries, "the part played by crimes committed for personal motives is very small compared to the vast populations slaughtered in unselfish loyalty to a jealous god, country, or political system" (Koestler, 1979: 77). The well intentioned, the 'good' people, have been most ardent participants in large-scale evil. Some of the human attributes we value most highly – selfless service to others, loyalty to one's country – are major ingredients in the most grotesque kinds of evil. In moral terms, we kill for altruistic, not for selfish purposes.

The cunning of governments consists of getting their citizens to attribute sanctity to government policies, no matter how evil they may be. Coercion alone will not accomplish this, not even in totalitarian countries. Leaders need followers. Followers donate legitimacy to leaders (Katz, 1993).

### ***Intergroup relations***

When relations between any two categories of people are friendly and cooperative, then the hatreds, fears, and prejudices between them may still remain alive, but exist in a dormant state within an existing package, temporarily suspended but subject to reactivation if a new rider prevails in the future. The history of anti-Semitism, for example, is a history of periodic activation and deactivation of fears, prejudices, and hatred, each operating under the sponsorship or prevailing riders.

We believe that hatreds, fears, and prejudices can be fully eradicated – particularly through appropriate education, appropriate confrontation of issues, appropriate ‘getting to know you’ interactions between people who have a history of enmity. In actuality, history teaches us that hatred, fears, and prejudices between categories of people sometimes reemerge after long periods of time, when it was thought that they had been completely eradicated. For example, the Jews of Germany were the most assimilated of Jews. Many of them believed that, above all in Germany, anti-Semitism was largely eradicated. Yet precisely there, in Germany, the most malignant form of anti-Semitism erupted in the twentieth century. Remember, too, the long-standing hostilities between Protestants and Catholics of Europe that have survived periods of amiable relations between these religions. And remember, too, the recalcitrance of hatred between Hindus and Moslems on the Indian subcontinent (Katz, 1993).

### *Escalation*

Large-scale evil is probably most often the end of a long road that no one foresaw at the start. People become caught up in the process gradually, and things become more and more extreme. Because severe violence is typically the product of a process of escalation, it is essential to understand what contributes to such escalation. It is, for example, rare that a gentle, peaceful person will abruptly kill his or her spouse. Spousal murder typically occurs at the end of a long sequence of increasingly violent disputes and acts.

One of the first factors that leads to the escalation of aggression is *desensitization*. In plain terms, desensitization is essentially a matter getting accustomed to something and ceasing to react strongly to it. Killing may fade into an ordinary routine.

The second factor is the discovery that one can get away with it. Staub has emphasized that the silence of bystanders is often a crucial contribution to evil.

A third factor is that people may (gradually) learn to enjoy committing harm (Baumeister, 1997).

Ambiguity plays a large role in escalation too.

The sort of instruction that is most likely to produce violent, oppressive, evil measures consists of harsh but vague rules. Injunctions to root out and punish “enemies of the people” are a perfect example.

Another important way in which ambiguity contributes to evil among idealistic groups is the shuffling and hence eclipsing of personal responsibility. When people act alone, it is obvious who made the decisions and who is to blame. In large and complex groups, however, responsibility can sometimes be divided up into such small parts and pieces that no one seems to be to blame even if there are utterly horrific results. Several broad principles combine to make groups better able than lone individuals to produce evil. The principle of diffusion of responsibility was introduced in 1968 by Darley & Latané (see also Latané & Darley, 1970) to explain why bystanders might fail to help a victim in need.

A second principle is the division of labor. Groups can work far more efficiently and effectively than individuals if the task is divided up so that everyone does what he or she does best. The division of labor reduces feelings of responsibility, too.

When large governments or other organizations embark on a campaign of killing people, a careful division of labor can help conceal any individual's responsibility for the killings. In particular, many groups have found it effective to separate the people who decide whether to kill and whom to kill from the people who carry out the executions. Each individual may see that there is a huge bureaucratic organization, with thousands of people doing thousands of jobs, and his or her own part is quite small. By refusing, one would accomplish little of value, and, in particular, no one would be saved. Refusing would alienate all one's friends and colleagues, for one would be implicitly accusing them of doing something terrible.

A final way in which groups contribute to the escalation of violence emerges from the discrepancy between what the members of the group say and what they privately believe. The group seems to operate based on what the members of the group say to one another. It may often happen that the members harbor private doubts about what the group is doing, but they refuse to say them, and the group proceeds as if the doubts did not exist (Baumeister, 1997).

The other explanations of evil presented by Staub (1989) and Baumeister (1997) are essentially the same as the explanations presented in Part 1 on genocide. There is no use in repeating them in this section.

### **Three Principles of Pathics**

L. Watson (1995) introduces the term 'pathics' from the Greek root *pathos*, meaning 'suffering'. Pathos is the opposite of ethos, which deals with nature, character and community, giving rise to 'ethics' and 'ethology'. Pathos instead produces 'pathology' and 'pathics'. If ethics deals with rules of conduct, then pathics is concerned with misconduct and ought to have rules of its own. These are not just the opposite of 'good', but involve a series of subtractions from order and stability, and the first of these may be phrased very simply in this way: *Order is disturbed by loss of place.*

Where the first principle is qualitative and addresses ecological concerns about distribution, introducing the idea of right and wrong *places*, the second principle is largely quantitative and is concerned with the matter of right and wrong numbers: *Order is disrupted by loss of balance.*

The third principle of pathics has to do with the ecology of association, with right and wrong *relations*, and it ranks as the most important of the three pathic principles. The first and second deal with influences that just 'disturb' or 'disrupt' natural order. The third principle goes further by suggesting that *Order is destroyed by loss of diversity.*

There is clearly a gliding scale between 'good' and 'bad', but there appear to be three principal ways in which benign things most often deteriorate and become malign:

1. Good things get to be bad if they are displaced, taken out of context or removed from their locus.
2. Good things get very bad if there are too few or too many of them.
3. And good things get really rotten if they cannot relate to each other properly and their degree of association is impoverished.

### *Terribly and terrifyingly normal*

We were social long before we became human. And in that long social experience lie the biological origins of virtues such as compassion, empathy, love, conscience and a powerful sense of justice. All these things now have a firm genetic base and could be seen as natural moral values (Watson, 1995). “That’s the good news”, says Robert Wright (1995) in an impressive new look at the science of evolutionary psychology. “The bad news is that, although these things are in some ways blessings for humanity as a whole, they didn’t evolve for the ‘good of the species’ and aren’t reliably employed to that end”. We switch them on and off as it suits us and, thanks to genetic pressures, do so even without thinking. “Human beings are a species splendid in their array of moral equipment, tragic in their propensity to misuse it, and pathetic in their constitutional ignorance of the misuse”.

If there is one thing we should have learned from evil acts, it is that they tend not to be committed by extraordinary villains or by unimaginable devils or aliens, but by perfectly ordinary people. Hannah Arendt (1964) subtitled her book about the Eichmann trial *The Banality of Evil*, saying: “The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted, nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal”.

#### *A summary of gross human rights violations*

Kraak (1993) has excellently summarized the literature on ‘evil’, genocides, massacres and gross human rights violations (to be abbreviated to GHRV).

Persons who order others to commit GHRV and persons who perform these heinous acts by order or on their own initiative must be able to think of them as something compatible with their self-concept. Thinking and feeling like that is made possible by belonging to a group of an organization whose members consider GHRV to be necessary and even meritorious, thus presenting behavior models. Of course, just belonging to the group or organization is not enough. The membership must be highly valued. Reasons may be material, emotional and/or ideological:

- The group or organization offers an unambiguous world view (Segev, 1992), for instance a “blueprint for a better society or better world” (Staub, 1989);
- the group or organization provides unusual opportunities for making a successful career, perhaps by reducing requirements, and in so doing presenting career opportunities that would not be available to these persons elsewhere;
- the group or organization fulfils their emotional need for security or for the conviction of being one of the chosen.

The readiness to perform such acts is increased, becomes more easily available, if GHRV are not perceived as extraordinary events, but felt to be part of the ordinary functioning of a society (the normalization, routinization, and ‘banalization’ of evil). This is possible in societies which do not attach high public significance to human rights, so that GHRV are not regarded as extremely detestable. Violence on television may contribute to making GHRV more subjectively available.

Whether or not people commit GHRV if subjectively available to them is determined by subjective balances of expected outcomes. Expected outcomes of actions violating human rights that may be highly valued are:

- Feelings of power and superiority. Experiences of powerlessness make absolute power over victims very attractive (Staub, 1989; Sears, 1991; Cf. Fromm, 1974; May, 1972).
- Praise by persons or groups considered personally important. This too is particularly attractive to persons with a low self-concept of efficacy and feelings of inferiority.
- Promotion and progress in the career, if that is an important aim in life.
- The suffering of victims may provide an opportunity for achieving satisfaction if a strong need for revenge is felt, retribution for humiliations and fears or some other harm inflicted by agents not identical with the victims. The victims are forced to act as substitutes for those agents.

Particularly for persons in positions to command others to perform GHRV or to buy their services, the expected outcomes may be attainment of economic, political, military or religious goals.

Even if much desired results are expected from HRV, many people will anticipate feelings of guilt and have moral scruples as well. These anticipations might prevent positive balances of expected outcomes. But there are ways of reducing scruples and bad feelings, ways purposely chosen by those who want to use violence or kept ready in the mind of those who feel attracted by violence or fear the consequences of refusing it. Such ways are:

- The devaluation of the victims. They are labelled as subhuman, a danger to society, standing in the way of a better future. Dehumanization may be the consequence of prevailing prejudice, of traditional prejudice reanimated, or may be evoked by propaganda.
- Blaming the victim serves a purpose similar to devaluation. Having to suffer HRV is considered to be their own fault. They are attacked because they are said to have provoked the perpetrators.
- The suffering of victims is considered to be necessary. It has to be accepted in order to achieve very important goals, like a better society or the greatness of a nation. Such convictions are especially successful if they are looked upon as the absolute truth, allowing no room for doubts.

Compassion for victims is often strongly reduced if people feel that they themselves are victims, namely victims suffering from 'difficult life conditions' (Staub, 1989). People feeling that they are on the dark side of life, having lost courage and hope, tend to regard other people's suffering with little sympathy. The same applies to strongly opportunistic persons (Segev, 1992) who attach little importance to anything that does not advance the achievement of their goals of power or money or career or publicity.

Another potential counterpoise is unavailable if persons committing GHRV need not fear punishment or public criticism. There is no need to fear prosecution if a powerful organization offers protection or the administration of justice is unwilling to prosecute GHRV. Public criticism need not be feared if an independent and uncensored press does not exist.

People committing these acts while in a dependent position can justify their behavior by considering themselves 'a small cog-wheel in a big machine'. Alternatively, they may feel justified because bystanders do not interfere. Observation without signs of protest or disagreement can be perceived as silent approval (Staub, 1989; Kraak, 1993).

### **Toward a More Generic Theory of Genocide**

Sociologists are generally myopic with regard to individual psychology, while historians tend to be blind for theory. Incredible as it may sound, very few sociologists and historians studying genocide have actually invoked the universal human tendency to ethnocentrism (and concomitant xenophobia) as explanatory categories. This is probably due to the fact that genocide is considered to be by these scholars a (1) typically 20th-century and (2) state-sponsored, (3) human and (4) cultural invention. As soon as these assumptions are challenged, we can try to accomplish a more generic theory of genocide and massacres, including evolutionary considerations. In the following we shall try to prove that the conventional assumptions are indeed wrong: genocide is of all times and not a 20th-century invention; genocide is of all societies and cultures; genocide may not even be a human prerogative; and, last but not least, it is amenable to explanation by relatively simple psychobiological (derived from evolutionary psychology) principles (just like the nature of the weather can be explained – but never fully predicted – by a few simple meteorological and climatological principles).

### **Evidence of Mass Killing or Genocide in Preindustrial Societies**

Kuschel (1989), Scott (1992), Van der Dennen (1995), and Keeley (1996) have collected casualty figures due to war and feuding for a number of contemporary tribal societies: Murngin (Warner, 1930; Q. Wright, 1942; Harris, 1975), Tiwi (Pilling, 1968), Kalinga (Dozier, 1967), Chimbu (P. Brown, 1982), Fore (Bennett et al., 1959), Huli (Glasse, 1968), Mae Enga (Meggitt, 1958, 1977), Dani (Matthiesen, 1962; Heider, 1970, 1972; Ploeg, 1983), Angkor (Huber, 1975), Manga (Vayda, 1976; Pflanz-Cook & Cook, 1983), Tauade (Hallpike, 1977), Eipo (Schiefenhövel, 1995, p.c.), Tsembaga Maring (Rappaport, 1968), Kapauku (Pospisil, 1958), Marind Anim (Van Baal, 1966), Gebusi (Knauff, 1985, 1987; Schiefenhövel, p.c.), Auyana (Robbins, 1982), Hewa (Steadman, 1971), Nalumin (Bercovitsch, 1989; Schiefenhövel, p.c.), Kunimaipa (McArthur, 1971; Schiefenhövel, p.c.), Etoro (Kelly, 1977; Schiefenhövel, p.c.), Telefolmin (Morren, 1984), !Kung San (many sources), Dinka (Kelly, 1985), Mtetwa Zulu (Otterbein, 1967), Jivaro (Ross, 1984); Yanomamö (Chagnon, 1968, 1974; Early & Peters, 1990), Chippewa (Hickerson, 1962), Piegan (Blackfoot) (Ewers, 1955; Livingstone, 1968), Modoc (Ray, 1963), Mohave (Stewart, 1965), Kato (Cahto) (Kroeber, 1965), Yurok (Q. Wright, 1942), Buin (Thurnwald, 1936; Q. Wright, 1942), Bellona Islanders (Kuschel, 1988), Fijians (Carneiro, 1990), Andamanese (Q. Wright, 1942), and Semai (Dentan, 1979).



Estimates of the mortality resulting from primitive war and/or feuding range from < 1% to 33% of adult male deaths from all causes, with an average of about 20% for war-infested areas such as Amazonia and Highland New Guinea, and < 1% to about 7% of adult female deaths from all causes. Among the Achuarä Jivaro studied by Ross (1984), even 59% of adult male and 27% of adult female deaths were caused by feuding. These are astounding figures for these relatively small populations.

Sometimes comparably high casualty figures have resulted from spectacular battles (e.g., after a pitched battle of allied Plains tribes at the end of the last century, thousands of dead and wounded braves were left on the battlefield), raids (e.g., a relatively small raiding party of Chippewa warriors once returned with 335 Dakota scalps [Warren, 1885; Ritzenthaler, 1978]), campaigns (e.g., the Zulu and Dahomean conquests literally obliterated many tribes; the Adirondack, Atikamec and Erie were almost totally annihilated by the Iroquois [Morgan, 1851; Steinmetz, 1929]), or revenge massacres (such as the Beothuks massacring Micmacs in the late 17th century [Jukes, 1842; Reynolds, 1978]).

The war between the Iroquois and the Huron over the fur trade has been described by Sulte, 1899; Hunt, 1940; Snyderman, 1948; Scheele, 1950; Trelease, 1962; and Naroll, 1969 (see also Driver, 1961; and Alland, 1972). Economic causes were paramount here, the death toll amounted to thousands of lives, and the Huron were eliminated as an independent tribe. Hunt (1940) concluded that “The fall of the Hurons, the rise to affluence and power of the Ottawa, the depopulation of western Ontario and Michigan and the repopulation of Wisconsin, the conquest of Pennsylvania and Ohio – all these were the results of the efforts of the Five Nations [Iroquois] to get furs and assume the position held by the Hurons before 1649”.

Among the Californian Yuma (Quechan) and Mohave, casualties must have been heavy in terms of total population. In 14 cases where death tolls are specified the greatest figure is 149 and the average 44 (McCorkle, 1978).

In a war between two Papuan village confederacies (each with populations of 600 to 700 people), that lasted more than a year, over 250 persons were killed, and one side was left with almost no adult males (Pospisil, 1963).

Complete annihilation of primitive populations, accomplished by one single massacre or by attrition from repeated raiding, or both, have been recorded from all over the world (Davie, 1929; Steinmetz, 1929; and Keeley, 1996).

Soltis, Boyd & Richerson (1995) used information on group extinctions by warfare in Highland New Guinea to provide an estimate of the plausibility and power of group selection. Group extinctions due to chronic warfare between village communities are, according to these authors, quite common in New Guinea. For the five populations for which quantitative estimates could be derived from the literature, rates ranged from 1.6 percent to 31.3 percent per generation. Taking into consideration the quality of the data used in the estimates, the long-term, area-wide rate was probably between 10 and 20 percent (cf. Richerson & Boyd, 1998; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1998).

Auf Neuguinea werden die Dörfer dezimiert und sind manche ganz ausgestorben. Für das frühere Deutsch-Neuguinea schildert Neuhaus [1911] den Krieg als nicht so unschuldig...

Bei den Tamualin Deutsch-Neuguineas waltet die Absicht vor, den Gegner völlig zu vernichten [Vallentin, 1897].

Die Kiwai Neuguineas machen einen Unterschied zwischen zwei Arten von Feindseligkeiten: die zwischen Stämmen im selben Dorfe oder verwandten Dörfern, und die zwischen Stämmen, welche einander als Erbfeinde betrachten. In den ersteren Kämpfen wird viel Lärm gemacht und vergleichsweise wenig Blut vergossen, auch wird dann nur abends gekämpft, es wird nur nach den Beinen gezielt, sehr selten ein Mann getötet und nie ein Kopf geraubt. In den wirklichen Kriege dagegen werden möglichst viele Feinde getötet, alles Eigentum vernichtet und die Köpfe der Erschlagenen mitgenommen. So ein echter Krieg endet eigentlich nie, und ein kleiner zwischen zwei Dörfern kann sich dazu entwickeln, wenn einmal einer getötet wurde. Den Überlieferungen nach wurde immer viel gekämpft: mehrere Stämme wurden ganz ausgerottet. Mitunter töten die Frauen einen schwerverwunderten Mann [Landtmann, 1927].

Im Bismarckarchipel und auf den Salomoninseln sind die Verluste bei Kriegen nicht hoch anzuschlagen, obwohl bei den Überfällen alle Bewohner des Dorfes, auch Weiber und Kinder, niedergeschlagen werden [Goudswaard, 1863; Letourneau, 1895; Semon, 1896]. Manchmal verläuft die Sache blutiger, wie auf Neupommern, wo mitunter alle Einwohner eines Dorfes erschlagen werden [Thurnwald, 1912]. Auf den Admiralitätsinseln herrscht ein permanenter Kriegszustand, welcher entschieden dazu beiträgt, den Stamm klein zu halten. 'Allein aus Kampflust zieht man in den Krieg, auch ohne Veranlassung'. Das Töten eines Feindes ist die Hauptsache; das Land wird erobert, wenn der Feind gänzlich vernichtet und vertrieben ist. 'Alles wird niedergemacht, Weiber, Alte, Kinder; unter scheußlichen Greuelthaten werden manche zu Tode gemartet' [Parkinson, 1907]...

Die Neukaledonier vernichten und töten alles in ihren Kriegen, die Besiegten werden selten geschont [De Rochas, 1862]... Moerenhout [1837] spricht von de ewigen Kriegen der Polynesier, welche an nichts anderes denken als daran, ihre Feinde zu ermorden und zu verspeisen. Ganze Dörfer werden oft hingemordet und vernichtet... Die Kriege der Polynesier verliefen sehr blutig, die Gefangenen, sogar Frauen und Kinder, wurden meist getötet. Auf Neuseeland wurde das Land des Besiegten sogar verwüstet, die Bäume gefällt, die Häuser verbrannt. Und 'diese furchtbar blutigen Kriege waren überaus häufig', jede Kleinigkeit gab eine Veranlassung dazu. 'Das Land wurde verödet, viele Stämme ganz vernichtet und das ganze Volk roh und ängstlich gemacht' [Reischek, 1924]. Die Seeslachten der Hawaier waren ebenfalls meist sehr blutig. Die Tahitier als die Grausamsten verfahren wohl nicht gelinder. Auf Paumotu, Tonga, Samoa, steht es eigentlich nicht besser [Waitz & Gerland, 1872; Turner, 1884]' (Steinmetz, 1929: 67-71).

Circumstantial and anecdotal evidence of the dramatic and devastating destructiveness of tribal warfare in terms of human lives may also be deduced from the following accounts: Loskiel (1789), Thwaites (1897), Curtis (1907), and Hodge (1910) on North American societies generally; Morgan (1851) on the Iroquois; Charlevoix (1744) on the Algonquians; Nelson (1899) on the Bering Strait Eskimo; Jones (1914) on the Tlingit; Tout (1904) on the British Columbian tribes; Newcomb (1961) on the Karankawa and other Indians of Texas; Bartlett (1854) on the Apache; Bancroft (1875), Biart (1900) and Cook (1946) on the Meso-American tribes; Markham (1895) on the Shipibo, Mundurucu, Macu and Botocudo; Von Martius (1867) on the Tupinamba, Apiaca, Mundurucu, Mauke, Mayoruna, Maraña,

Araza, and Aimore; Simson (1878, 1880) and Karsten (1923) on the Jivaro and Zaparo; Latcham (1909) on the Araucanians; Paulitschke (1893) on the Galla (Oromo); Koettlitz (1900) on the Abyssinians; Roth (1887, 1903) and Weeks (1909, 1913) on Central African tribes; Johnston (1902) on the Hima; Hobley (1903) and Merker (1904) on the Masai; Magyar (1859) on the Kiakka; Dundas (1910) on the Suk; Shooter (1857), Macdonald (1900), Stigand (1907, 1909), Johnston (1913) on southern African tribes; Holub (1881) on the Zulu; Gottschling (1905) on the Venda; Torday & Joyce (1905, 1906) on the Mbale and Huana; Ellis (1890) on the Dahomeans; Peal (1874), Watt (1887), Godden (1897) and Furness (1902) on the Nagas; Carey & Tuck (1896) on the Chin Hill tribes; Hose (1894) on the Kayans; Hose & Shelford (1906) on the Dyak; d'Albertis (1881), Seligman (1910), Berndt (1964), Hayano (1974), and Paula Brown (1978, 1982) on New Guinea tribes generally; Krieger (1899) on the Tugeri; Chalmers (1903) on the Kiwai and Koita; Seligman (1910) on the Binandere; Hunt (1899) on the Murray Islanders; Somerville (1897), Ribbe (1903), Hardy & Elkington (1907), and Woodford (1890) on the Solomon Islanders; Seemann (1862) on the Fiji Islanders; Speiser (1914) on the New Hebrides; De Rochas (1862) on the New Caledonians; Turner (1884) on the Samoans; Calder (1874) and de Quatrefages (1884) on the Tasmanians; Angas (1847), Roth (1890), Best (1902) and Reischek (1924) on the Maori; etc. etc. (Van der Dennen, 1995; Davie, 1929; Steinmetz, 1929).

In the 1890s, Lieutenant Mizon crossed the Gbaya and Mkako country and found only “ruins, burning villages, destroyed gardens”. He wrote: “We have evidence that war between these pagans is not a game... The beginning of the ‘main street’ of Boné is closed off by a line of grizzly heads, half-dried by the sun: everywhere, there are corpses, scattered limbs and the scraps of cannibal meals” (Mizon, 1895; cited in Copet-Rougier, 1986).

### ***Massacres***

A gradual scalar transition in primitive warfare leads from the small raid to massacres. The latter are large surprise attacks whose purpose is to annihilate an enemy social unit. The simplest form involves surrounding or infiltrating an enemy village and, when a signal is given, attempting to kill everyone within reach (Drucker, 1951, on the Nootka; Slobodin, 1960, on the Kutchin; Chagnon, 1968, on the Yanomamö; Heider, 1970, on the Dugum Dani; Vayda, 1967, 1976, on the Maori; Herdt, 1987, on the Sambia; Grant, 1978, on the Chumash; Kroeber, 1925, and Bean & Theodoratus, 1978, on the Pomo; Gillespie, 1981, on the Yellowknives; McClellan, 1981, on the Tutchone).

Such killing has usually been indiscriminate, although women and children evidently escape in the confusion more often than adult males. In one case of massacre in New Guinea, the victim group of 300 lost about 8 percent of its population. In a case from a different area, a tribal confederation of 1,000 people lost nearly 13 percent of its population in just the first hour of an attack by several other confederacies. Surprise attacks on California Pomo villages usually killed between 5 and 15 percent of their inhabitants. When the first Spanish explorers reached the coastal Barbareño Chumash of California, the latter had just had two of their villages surprised, burned, and completely annihilated by raiders from the interior, representing a minimum loss of 10 percent of their tribal population. The Upper Tanana or Nabesna of Alaska massacred most of one band (numbering perhaps 100 people) of Southern Tutchone. This probably happened in mid-century (McClellan, 1981)

During hard winters, the Chilcotin of British Columbia would attack small isolated hamlets or family camps of other tribes, kill all the inhabitants, and live off their stored food. The East

Cree of Quebec slaughtered any Inuit (Eskimo) families they encountered, taking only infants as captives (Hearne, 1795). Hearne personally witnessed the butchering of an Eskimo settlement on the Coppermine river, and he describes in horrid detail how a young girl is cruelly killed: "My situation and the terror of my mind at beholding this butchery, cannot easily be conceived, much less described... even at this hour I cannot reflect on the transactions of this horrid day without shedding tears".

Melbye & Fairgrieve (1994; as told in Chagnon, 1996: 213) have recently described their analysis of the remains of some 35 Inuit individuals (women, children, and elderly people; apparent victims of a sudden raid by a group of neighboring Amerindians). Ethnohistorical evidence suggests that the attackers were members of the Eastern Kutchin tribe. Melbye & Fairgrieve (1994: 74) state: "The violence is expressed not just in the death of the enemy; there is deliberate torture before death. Further, death does not appear to end the process. Instead, we see the continued mutilation of the bodies after death, and some rituals probably involving sympathetic magic, probably including cannibalism".

In Alaska the coastal Eskimo and their inland Indian neighbors were in an almost continual state of war that was frequently genocidal (Petroff, 1884). In Weyer's (1932; retold in Irwin, 1990: 191) account of such a conflict it should be noted that the women and children were killed. "The attacking Indians stuffed the door with brushwood and set fire to it. Entrapped, the Eskimo women were shot by the Indians from the smoke hole, and most of those not killed by arrows suffocated in the smoke". These Indians were later killed to the last man in a counterattack (Weyer, 1932).

Nelson (1899) attributes a similar level of fighting to Eskimo groups of the Bering Strait region although these encounters fell short of total genocide, "they killed all they could of the males of the opposing side, even including infants, to prevent them from growing up as enemies. The dead were thrown in heaps and left. The females were commonly spared from death, but were taken as slaves".

Wenn wir Nelson glauben dürfen, so leben die Eskimo der Behringstraße fast fortwährend im Kriege miteinander... Zwischen Eskimo und Nordindianern wurde im Westen viel gekämpft [Bancroft, 1875]... Die Art der Kriegführung zwischen den nördlichsten Indianern Amerikas und den Eskimo war eine äußerst blutige und vernichtende; alles wurde auf dem Schlachtfelde niedergemacht und grausig verstümmelt, auch Weiber und Kinder, wenn auch von diesen einige als Sklaven verschleppt wurden. Einer der besten Kenner des primitiven wie des historischen Amerikas, G. Friederici [1922] nennt das Niedermetzeln alles Lebenden bezeichnend für die Nordindianer" (Steinmetz, 1929: 66-72).

"Morgan [1851], der große Kenner der Irokesen... erkennt 'the terrible and ferocious characteristics of Indian warfare'... Die anderen indianischen Völker waren nicht besser. So lesen wir von den Otchagras oder Puans, daß sie in einer Schlacht gegen die Illinois ihr ganzes Heer von 600 Kriegeren verloren und sich von diesem Verluste nicht mehr erholten. Die Algonquins haben in einem einzigen Kriege das Volk der Iroquets derartig hingemordet, daß nur sehr wenige übrigblieben [Charlevoix, 1744].

In 1862, 137 of a group of 300 Tonkawa were massacred by a mixed group of Delaware, Caddo, and Shawnee (O'Leary & Levinson, 1991).

Pawnee and/or Arikara slaughtered, mutilated, decapitated, and scalped a Mandan or Hidatsa village of about 500 people in the 14th century (excavation near Crow Creek, South Dakota: Zimmerman & Whitten, 1980; Zimmerman et al., 1980; U.S. Army, 1981; Zimmerman & Alex, 1981; Willey, 1990; T. White, 1992; Bamforth, 1994; Chagnon, 1996; Ferguson, 1998).

A Pawnee village was massacred by the Dakota in 1873 (Reid, 1991).

Neither age nor sex was any guarantee of protection during primitive raids (Keeley, 1996).

One Yanomamö village was raided twenty-five times in just fifteen months, losing five percent of its population (Chagnon, 1968, 1983).

The numbers killed as a result of raids were sometimes extremely significant, as in the case of some 400 Lillooet (approximately 10 percent of the tribal population) slain in the course of a week-long raid by a neighboring tribe (Kent, 1980, Cannon, 1992).

This may be the same massacre as reported in Ignace (1998: 205): “The Shuswap of K’emlups joined the Okanagan and Thompson people in an attack on the Lillooet from that area, killing more than 300 (Teit, 1900: Dawson, 1892: 27-28; McLeod, 1823)”.

The Nootkans comprised 22 ‘tribes’ and confederacies, constantly waging war against each other. “The Otsosat were practically annihilated by the Ahousaht in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The Clayoquot exterminated or subordinated at least eight groups from about contact to mid-19th century. The Sheshaht exterminated a group in Effingham Inlet” (Arima & Dewhirst, 1990).

Drucker (1951: 341) concludes his description of Nootkan warfare as follows: “If we evaluate Nootkan warfare on the basis of its effectiveness, we must grant it considerable efficiency. The Hisau’ishth and the Otsosat were exterminated within recent times; the groups inhabiting Muchalat Arm were reduced from several hundred to less than forty persons, and other groups are said to have been wiped out completely in ancient days, all by the type of warfare described”.

Also the Yanomamö treacherous feasts amount to planned massacres (Sponsel, 1998). Similar treacherous and murderous dealings during festivities are described for the Nootka (Drucker, 1951: 338).

[V]erschiedene Kriege im Chaco sind sicher auch Ausrottungskriege, die nicht eher aufhören, als bis der eine Stamm unterjocht wird oder auswandert, wie nach dem Kriege zwischen den Tapiete und Tsirikuaindianern. Infolge der Kriege verändern sich die Verbreitungsgebiete der Stämme. Kämpfe um den Fluß und den Fischfang haben hier wohl zu allen Zeiten geherrscht. Die stärkeren Stämme haben sich der Nahrungsquelle Rio Pilcomayo bemächtigt und die schwächeren nach dem nördlichen Chaco gedrängt [Nordenskiöld, 1912]. Die Lengua und Kisapang sind als Krieger nicht zu unterschätzen, beim wohl vorbereiteten Überfall werden alle Erwachsenen getötet [Grubb, 1911]... Von verschiedenen Indianerstämmen im Gebiete der Tapajoz- und Madeiraflüsse erwähnt Domville Fife [1926] die sehr blutigen Kriege, welche manchmal ganze Stämme ausrotten (Steinmetz, 1929: 74).

A chilling example of genocidal massacre cited by Diamond (1997) involved the total destruction of the Moriori hunter-gatherer society on the Chatham Islands (in the Pacific) in 1835 at the hands of 900 well-armed Maori agriculturalists from nearby New Zealand. The Maori first learned of the peaceful Moriori from a transient Australian seal hunter. Excited by the report that the Moriori had no weapons, the Maori immediately organized a seaborne invasion. When the unsuspecting Moriori did not resist, the Maori raiding party slaughtered them with impunity.

One of the most horrible descriptions of raiding and subsequent massacring, an expedition of a South American tribe, the Taulipang, against their enemies, the Pishauko, has been provided by Koch-Grünberg (1922: 102-5), and retold by Canetti (1984: 99-102). The account was taken down word for word from a Taulipang man, who was full of enthusiasm for the enterprise. The Taulipang had surrounded the village of the enemy, set fire to the big house, and the Pishauko had no way out by which to flee.

Then a Taulipang warrior named Ewama forced his way in. Behind him came one of the sub-chiefs; behind him his brother; behind him Manikuza, the war-chief; behind him the Arekuna. The others remained outside to kill any Pishauko who wanted to escape. The other five burst in among their enemies and struck them down with their clubs. The Pishauko shot at them, but they hit no one. Manikuza killed the chief of the Pishauko. The sub-chief killed the sub-chief of the Pishauko. His brother and the Arekuna killed very fast, and many. Only two maidens fled, they still live on the upper reaches of the river, married to Taulipang. All the other were killed. Then they fired the house. The children wept. All the children were thrown into the fire. Among the dead was a Pishauko who was still alive. He had smeared himself all over with blood and lay down among the dead, to make the enemies believe that he was dead. The Taulipang seized the fallen Pishauko one after the other and cut them right in two with a forest knife. They found the man who was still alive, and seized and killed him. Then they took the fallen chief of the Pishauko, bound him with outstretched arms to a tree and shot him with the rest of the ammunition until he fell to pieces. Then they seized a dead woman. Manikuza pulled her genitals apart with his fingers and said to Ewama: 'Look, here, here is something good for you to enter' (Canetti, 1984: 101-2).

The rape of a dead woman is the ghastly climax. Everything perishes completely in the fire. They set out to annihilate the enemy, and they succeeded very well.

"The sixteen men who set out brought no booty home; their victory in no way enriched them. They did not leave a single woman or child alive. Their goal was the annihilation of the hostile pack so that nothing, literally nothing, of it should remain. They describe their own actions with relish; it was others who were, and remained, murderers" (Canetti, 1984: 103).

In 1895 Coudreau (1897) obtained meager information about a tribe which lived on the Peixe River and which spoke the same language as the Apiacá. They were said to lure travelers to their settlements and then to riddle them with arrows. In 1892, the Tapanyuna (or perhaps Parintintin?) looted and fired the Apiacá village in the vicinity of the Sao Florencio Falls. In 1893 or 1894, a small group of Tapanyuna (or of the Parintintin?) was massacred by the Mundurucu; on the Furna Islands where they were gathering Brazil nuts (Nimuendaju, 1948).

Somerville (1897) reported that war in New Georgia (Solomon Islands) was "pretty well confined to head-hunting expeditions in canoes, undertaken with the sole object of acquiring

skulls, and always takes the form of a surprise; the dense bush and want of knowledge of tracks precludes fighting on land to any large extent.

The western natives, those of Rubiana and of Rendova Island, are the most warlike and ruthless, and, between them, have completely wiped out the inhabitants of the large adjacent islands of Wana wana, Kiso, Tetipari, and, with the exception of a small and wretched remnant, those of Kulambangara also. They fell upon the once populous island of Márovo within quite recent years (since 1885, I believe), and reduced the number of inhabitants from about five hundred to considerably less than one hundred... The eastern natives (now a very small remnant) in their turn have, as their head-hunting field, the large mountainous district known as Vángunu, the natives of which are more savage and uncivilised than their neighbours, and are, on account of these attacks, obliged to live back in the heart of the ancient crater of their land. When Commander Davis, in H.M.S. 'Royalist' burnt and sacked Rubiana in 1891, the beach was absolutely littered with skulls, the stored and cherished treasure of years; and ever since that date Ingova, the king, has striven to replenish the stock" (Somerville, 1897).

Layard (1942) reported of the aborigines of the New Hebrides that the acquisition of muskets resulted in massacres: "In this way, during the latter part of the nineteenth century the Small Islanders practically wiped out the whole population of what was once a flourishing district, containing innumerable villages immediately inland from the adjacent Malekulan coast. The sites of these villages, including the mainland village of Tolamp, are now pointed out in what is thick jungle. Not only were the mainland villages thus decimated however. The same tragedy occurred even in warfare between two of each individual Small Island. The first villages to acquire muskets were in all cases those situated on the 'superior' side of each island, which, being in possession of best beaches, were first to come in contact with white men. These muskets they then used against the members of the other side of their own Island, with the result that the villages on the 'inferior' side were severely handled. This was the case of the two villages of Emil Marur and Emil Lepon Atchin, both of which were nearly wiped out. The more far-seeing of the Small Islanders now bitterly regret these suicidal ravages which have so seriously reduced the numbers in face of the growing menace of the whites. But the measure of their regret still depends, however, on the degree of kinship ties between themselves and their victims. For, while muskets are now with common consent banned in warfare against their fellow Small Islanders, they are still used against the few remaining inhabitants of the adjacent mainland" (Layard, 1942).

A similar history among the Maoris is presented by Vayda (1970).

The most important of the tribes of New Zealand, Wood (1870) says, seems to be the Waikato, which is divided into eighteen clans, and which occupies a very large proportion of the country. This tribe alone can bring into the field six thousand fighting men; so that the entire number of the tribe may be calculated at twenty-four thousand or so. The tribe that is strongest in mere numbers is the Nga-te-kahuhuna, which inhabits the east coast, and may be reckoned at thirty-six thousand strong. In fact, these two tribes alone outnumber the whole of the others taken collectively. One tribe, the Rangitani, is interesting from the fact that it was described by Captain Cook. In his days it was evidently a large and flourishing tribe, but some few years ago it could scarcely muster three hundred warriors, representing a total number of twelve hundred. The decadence of this tribe is probably owing to the destructive wars in which the New Zealanders engage, and which are often so fierce as to erase a tribe entirely.

Among the Fijians, according to Wood (1870), a man can gain a great name among his people by acts of peculiar atrocity. Indeed, the Fijians are so inordinantly vain, that they will do anything, no matter how horrible, in order to gain a name among their people.

“Should a fort be taken, the slaughter is dreadful, and is nothing but a massacre, the greater number being killed, and the rest reserved to be put to death by torture. One favourite mode of torture is to stun the unhappy captive with a club, and to throw him into a heated oven by way of bringing him back to his senses. The struggles of the unfortunate man as the fierce heat restores him to consciousness are greeted with laughter and jeers by the delighted spectators. Others are bound hand and foot and given to the sons of chiefs as subjects on which they can try their skill at torturing”.

### ***Routing***

When one of the contending parties in prestate warfare was routed, the subsequent rampage by the victors through the losers' territory often claimed the lives of many women and children as well as men (Carneiro, 1990; Oliver, 1974; Vayda, 1976); One Maring clan of 600 people in New Guinea lost 2 percent of its population in the rout that followed its loss of 3 percent of its people in the preceding battle.

Victorious Tahitian warriors killed so many people in a loser's territory that an “intolerable stench” of decaying corpses “pervaded defeated districts for long periods after battle”. Similarly severe slaughters attended battlefield defeats among the chiefdoms of Fiji and Cauca Valley of Colombia (Carneiro, 1990).

In several ethnographic cases, formal battles with controlled casualties were restricted to fighting within a tribe or linguistic group. When the adversary was truly ‘foreign’, warfare was more relentless, ruthless, and uncontrolled (e.g., Herdt, 1987; Morren, 1984). Thus the rules of war applied to only certain ‘related’ adversaries, but unrestricted warfare, without rules and aimed at annihilation, was practiced against outsiders (Keeley, 1996).

Even complete annihilation of enemy social units has not been unknown in primitive wars. Instances of tribes or subtribes being driven to extinction by persistent tribal warfare have been recorded from several areas of the world (Chagnon, 1968; Bean, 1972; Vayda, 1976; Meggitt, 1977; Ferguson, 1984b; Gillespie, 1981 (on the Mountain Indians); Duff, 1981 (on the Tsetsaut); Strong, 1979 (on San Felipe Pueblo); Kelly & Fowler, 1986 (on the Paiute); See Kelly (1985) for a possible African case).

Steinmetz (1929: 65) states of the Tasmanians: “Die Tasmanier scheinen, nach den vielen Mitteilungen die Ling Roth [1890] zusammenstellte, nicht wenig untereinander gekämpft zu haben, doch, wie ihre Historiker West und Melville meinten, erst recht, nachdem die Engländer sie gezwungen hatten, die gegenseitigen Jagdgründe zu beschreiten. Calder [1874] sagt, daß ‘ihre Fehden nie endeten ohne die Ausmerzung ihrer Feinde’, und G. Robertson spricht ebenfalls von einer Horde, welche durch einen feindlichen Stamm vernichtet wurde”.

And on the Australian tribes in general, Steinmetz (1929: 66) states: Bei den Rachezügen gegen entfernte Stämme wird ein ganzes feindliches Lager samt Weibern und Kindern schonungslos hingemordet (Wheeler [1910]), die Nordqueenslandstämme treiben es ebenso



wie die der anderen Teile Australiens; das nich selten kannibalische Ziel schließt Schonung aus”

Such genocides were sometimes accomplished by a single surprise massacre, on other occasions by longer-term attrition from repeated raids, or by a combination of both. The case of the Woriau Maring of New Guinea illustrates one method by which such annihilations were accomplished, and it also indicated why such occurrences tend to be rare. A favorite raid tactic in highland New Guinea consisted of stealthily surrounding the men’s houses of an enemy, setting them afire, and killing all those who emerged. Usually, one Maring clan had insufficient manpower to attack all of an enemy’s men’s houses simultaneously and had to retreat in the face of counterattacks from the unattacked houses after killing a few men. In the Woriau case, two enemy clans allied themselves for the attack and were able to cover every house, annihilating the Woriau’s manpower in a single day. The defenseless survivors then dispersed and ceased to exist as a collective group (Vayda, 1976). Indeed, social extinction in tribal societies seems not to have entailed the killing of every person in the victimized group; rather, after a significant portion of the group (including most of its adult men) was killed, the surviving remnants were incorporated into the societies of the victors or into friendly groups with whom they sought refuge. This a social or linguistic entity was destroyed, if not necessarily the whole of the biological population that composed it. These may be social versions of “the death of a thousand cuts”, but they are extinctions just the same.

More often than not, however, it is the incessant nature of the hostilities which produces low but cumulative casualty figures (see also Davie, 1929; Steinmetz, 1929; Krzywicki, 1934; Q. Wright, 1942; Livingstone, 1968; Van der Dennen, 1995; Keeley, 1996). Keeley concludes his review as follows: “The high war death rates among most nonstate societies are obviously the result of several features of primitive warfare: the prevalence of wars, the high proportion of tribesmen who face combat, the cumulative effects of frequent but low-casualty battles, the unmitigated deadliness and very high frequency of raids, the catastrophic mortalities inflicted in general massacres, the customary killing of all adult males, and the often atrocious treatment of women and children. For these reasons, a member of typical tribal society, especially a male, had a higher probability of dying ‘by the sword’ than a citizen of an average modern state”.

### **Evidence of Mass Killing or Genocide in Prehistory**

Van der Dennen (1995) and Keeley (1996) also collected evidence of genocidal conflicts in human prehistory. The archaeological evidence from the Upper Paleolithic cemeteries of Czechoslovakia, dating between 35,000 and 24,000 years ago, implies – either by direct evidence of weapons traumas, especially cranial fractures on adult males, or by the improbability of alternative explanations for mass burials of men, women, and children – that violent conflicts and deaths were common.

The human skeletons found in a Late Paleolithic cemetery at Gebel Sahaba in Egyptian Nubia, dating about 12,000 to 14,000 years ago, show that warfare (if it was warfare) there was particularly brutal (Wendorf, 1968; This find is described in detail in Ferrill, 1985; and Van der Dennen, 1995). Over 40 percent of the fifty-nine men, women, and children buried in this cemetery had stone projectile points intimately associated with or embedded in their skeletons. Several adults had multiple wounds (as many as twenty), and the wounds found on children were all in the head or neck – that is, execution shots. The Gebel Sahaba burials offer

graphic testimony that prehistoric hunter-gatherers could be as ruthlessly violent as any of their more recent counterparts.

In western Europe (and more poorly known North Africa), ample evidence of violent death has been found among the remains of the final hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic period (ca. 10,000 to 5,000 years ago) (Price, 1985; Vencl, 1991; Frayer, 1993, n.d.). One of the most gruesome instances is provided by Ofnet Cave in Germany, where two caches of 'trophy skulls' were found, arranged 'like eggs in a basket', comprising the disembodied heads of thirty-four men, women, and children, most with multiple holes knocked through their skulls by stone axes.

Indications of conflict, as reflected by violent death and the earliest fortifications, become especially pervasive in western Europe during the ensuing Neolithic period (the era of the first farmers, ca. 7,000 to 4,000 years ago, depending on the region (e.g., Courtin, 1984; Keeley & Cahen, 1989).

Some archaeologists have argued that real warfare begins only when hunters become farmers. This mistaken point of view does have some especially grim support in the remains of Neolithic mass killings at Talheim in Germany (ca. 5000 B.C.) and Roaix in southeastern France (ca. 2000 B.C.). At Talheim, the bodies of eighteen adults and sixteen children had been thrown into a large pit; the intact skulls show that the victims had been killed by blows from at least six different axes (Wahl & König, 1987). More than 100 persons of all ages and both sexes, often with arrowpoints embedded in their bones, received a hasty and simultaneous burial at Roaix.

At a cemetery site in central Illinois dating to about A.D. 1300, 16 percent of the 264 individuals buried there met violent deaths and also fit the patterns expected for raid victims (Milner et al., 1991). Similar attritional violence is documented in prehistoric cemeteries in central British Columbia and in California (Keeley, 1996).

At Crow Creek in South Dakota, archaeologists found a mass grave containing the remains of more than 500 men, women, and children who had been slaughtered, scalped, and mutilated during an attack on their village a century and a half before Columbus's arrival (ca. A.D. 1325). A similar massacre occurred in the historic period (ca. 1785) at the fortified Larson site, where the dead had been similarly scalped, mutilated, and finally buried under the collapsed roofs and walls of their burned houses.

Evidence of a similar slaughter and burning of a whole village, dating to the late thirteenth century, has been uncovered in southwestern Colorado at Sand Canyon Pueblo, where (as at the Larson site) the bodies of the victims were buried under the collapsed roofs of their burned houses.

Turner (n.d.), Turner & Morris (1970), and Turner & Turner (1990) present evidence of massacres at Hopi, Wupatki (Arizona), and Marshview Hamlet (Colorado).

After surveying a large number of prehistoric burial populations in the eastern United States, archaeologist George Milner concluded that the pre-Columbian warfare of this whole region featured "repeated ambushes punctuated by devastating attacks at particularly opportune moments" (Milner et al., 1991).

From North America at least, archaeological evidence reveals precisely the same pattern recorded ethnographically for tribal peoples the world over of frequent deadly raids and occasional horrific massacres. This was an indigenous and 'native' pattern long before contact with Europeans complicated the situation (Keeley, 1996).

### **Do Only Humans Commit Genocide?**

Is it true that Man is unique among animals in killing members of his own species, as for example, the founder of the German ethological school Konrad Lorenz claimed? At least two scholars, Diamond (1992) and Lund (1995), have claimed that chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), phylogenetically our next-of-kin, are capable of genocide (though not on the scale of humans).

Field observations in recent decades have documented killing in many animal species. The massacre of a neighboring troop may be beneficial to another troop if it can thereby take over the neighbor's territory, food, or females. But attack also involves considerable risk to the attacker. Many animal species lack the means to kill their fellows, and of those species with the means, some refrain from using them (Diamond, 1992).

In nonsocial species, killings are necessarily just of one individual by another. However, in many ant species, social carnivores like lions, wolves, and hyenas and a number of primate species, killing may take the form of coordinated attacks by members of one troop on members of a neighboring troop – i.e., mass killings, 'war', or 'genocide' (Diamond, 1992; Van der Dennen, 1995).

Of particular interest in understanding our genocidal origins is the behavior of two of our three closest relatives, gorillas and common chimpanzees. Two decades ago, any biologist would have assumed that our ability to wield tools and to lay concerted group plans made us far more murderous than apes – if indeed apes were murderous at all. Recent discoveries about apes suggest, however, that a gorilla or common chimp stands at least as good a chance of being murdered as does the average human. Among gorillas, for instance, males fight each other for ownership of harems of females, and the victor may kill the loser's infants as well as the loser himself. Such fighting is a major cause of death for infant and adult male gorillas. The typical gorilla mother loses at least one infant to infanticidal males in the course of her life. Conversely, 38 percent of infant gorilla deaths are due to infanticide.

Especially instructive, because it could be documented in detail, was the extermination of one of the common chimpanzee bands [Kahama] that Jane Goodall studied, carried out between 1974 and 1977 by another band [Kasakela]...

Chimps' inefficiency as killers reflects their lack of weapons (though they use 'weapons' against predators [as documented by Kortlandt], they apparently do not use weapons in intraspecific fighting), but it remains surprising that they have not learned to kill by strangling, although that would be within their capabilities.

Not only is each individual killing inefficient by our standards, but so is the whole course of chimp genocide... Australian settlers often succeeded in eliminating a band of Aborigines in a

single dawn attack. Partly, this inefficiency again reflects chimps' lack of weapons... Partly, too, genocidal chimps are much inferior to humans in brainpower and hence in strategic planning. Chimps apparently cannot plan a night attack or a coordinated ambush by a split assault team.

However, genocidal chimps do seem to evince intent and unsophisticated planning. The Kahama killings resulted from Kasakela groups' proceeding directly, quickly, silently, and nervously toward or into Kahama territory, sitting in trees and listening for nearly an hour, and finally running to Kahama chimps that they detected. Chimps also share xenophobia with us: they clearly recognize members of other bands as different from members of their own band, and treat them very differently (Diamond, 1992).

They are also, evidently, capable of 'dechimpizing', the chimp equivalent of dehumanization.

Watson (1995) relates the Arnhem Zoo castration story (also extensively to be found in De Waal's publications, especially *Chimpanzee Politics*), and hunting and cannibalism in wild chimpanzees. He is particularly disturbed and intrigued by one very strange aspect of an attack reported by Goodall. It involved several adult male chimps who came across a female from another group with her infant on the edge of their territory. She did what any female chimpanzee will do in such circumstances, made submissive sounds and reached out gently to touch one of the males in reassurance. His response was extraordinary. He not only rebuffed her overture and moved quickly away out of reach, but performed a sort of exorcism, an act of real and ritual purification reminiscent of Pontius Pilate. He picked a handful of leaves and vigorously scrubbed his fur precisely where she had touched him.

This behaviour is a crucial clue to what happened next. All the males, acting in concert, surrounded the female, attacked her brutally, seized her infant and killed it. This incident shocked the human field workers at Gombe, because the attackers and their victim had once been close as members of a single community. "By separating themselves", said Jane Goodall, "they forfeited the right to be treated as group members – instead they were treated as strangers." (Goodall actually recognized the homology with human 'dehumanization' by calling this treatment 'dechimpization').

De Waal, fresh from the traumas in Arnhem, went further, suggesting that the behaviour was extreme, not simply because the participants were now strangers, but because they *had once been friends*.

That adds another dimension to the encounter, one that will resonate with anyone who has been through an acrimonious divorce or remains part of a family split by feud. Aggression against an outsider is part of business as usual, something genetic, not just condoned but expected, a sort of 'weak evil'. But the introduction of previous relationship, which is not something humans or chimpanzees easily forget, adds a sense of betrayal to the mix, making it possible, often inevitable, that things will become very ugly indeed – part of the awesome pattern of 'strong evil'. The tendency for civil wars to be more vicious, more sadistic, than wars fought between strangers is well known. And Yugoslavia and Rwanda ought to be potent reminders to those who had forgotten.

In an article on 'prehuman genocide', Lund (1995) argued that intelligence was the necessary prerequisite for the genocidal capability of chimpanzees:

The striatum which constitutes most of the forebrain of the early lower vertebrates, controls displays, of which aggression is an integral component in ranking, territory, and courtship. The displays persist in all vertebrates, as does the enlarged and modified striatum. Submissive displays controlled killing in conspecific conflicts. Beginning with the growth of the neocortex in mammals during the Cenozoic period, aggression became more complex, culminating in warfare and genocide. Agonistic/submissive display controls may have become inoperative in the chimpanzee, which has the critical amount of intelligence [1.7% brain/body weight] required for genocide, as confirmed by the field observations of Goodall and others (Lund, 1995: 231).

Like chimpanzees, gorillas, and social carnivores, hominids and humans lived in band territories. The known world was much smaller and simpler than it is today: there were only a few known types of 'them', one's immediate neighbors.

For example, in New Guinea until recently, each tribe maintained a shifting pattern of warfare and alliance with each of its neighbors. A person might enter the next valley on a friendly visit (never quite without danger) or on a war raid, but the chances of being able to traverse a sequence of several valleys in friendship were negligible. The powerful rules about the treatment of one's fellow 'us' did not apply to 'them', those dimly understood, neighboring enemies.

'Warum Krieg' so fragten wir. Kriege – so schrecklich das auch klingen mag – sind in der Vergangenheit sehr wahrscheinlich adaptiv gewesen. Der blutige Kampf ums Dasein erfolgte vor allem zwischen den sich mehr und mehr ausbreitenden und miteinander um nahrungsreiche Gebiete konkurrierenden Sozialverbänden. Um die durchschnittliche Fitneß in einer Gruppe zu erhöhen, mußten neue Territorien erobert und weitere Frauen herangeschafft werden. Und ein gewonnener Krieg belohnte die Sieger mit diesen nur begrenzt verfügbaren und reproduktiv wertvollen Ressourcen. Überdies fielen dem Sieger auch die Viehbestände, die Nahrungsmittelvorräte, die Werkzeuge und Waffen der Verlierer in die Hände. Daß Kriege, ganz gleich aus welchen Gründen sie auch angezettelt wurden, im Effekt die Fitneß der siegreichen Krieger erhöhten, veranschaulicht der Sieg der Israeliten über die Midianiter (Dahl, 1991).

During millions of years of hominid evolution and human codified history, humans practiced a dual standard of behavior: strong inhibitions against killing one of 'us', but a green light to kill 'them' when it was safe to do so.

The writings of classical Greece reveal an extension of this tribal territorialism. The known world was larger and more diverse, but 'us' Greeks were still distinguished from 'them' barbarians ('barbaroi'; literally meaning 'babblers', i.e., non-Greek speakers).

In the next section of this chapter, I shall discuss some principles of an evolutionary-psychological theory which may (somewhat) clarify the human condition.

### **Evolutionary Background: Inclusive fitness theory (adapted from Sanderson, 1998)**

The basic argument of inclusive fitness theory is that many features of human social organization and behavior result from efforts made by individuals to maximize their inclusive fitness. The most fundamental implication of this argument is that males and females will

have different ways of promoting their inclusive fitness, and thus different reproductive strategies (The term 'inclusive fitness' is gradually being abandoned in favor of the more correct 'reproductive success' or RS).

Two important qualifications to the above are essential. Lopreato (1989) has formulated what he calls the *modified maximization principle*. As Crippen (1994: 315) formulated it, this principle "suggests that human behavior maximizes fitness unless its reproductive consequences are subverted by the desire to accumulate resources that engender pleasure, by self-denying or ascetic tendencies often stimulated by sacred beliefs and practices, and/or by motivations that once produced fitness maximizing behaviors (e.g., motivations underlying sexual activity), but that now are harnessed in the service of non-maximizing behaviors (e.g., sexual activity between individuals using some method of contraception)".

A closely related point has to do with sociobiologists' stress on the *adaptive* character of many features of human behavior – that behavior evolves because it is useful in promoting the needs and interests of each individual (or each individual's genes), especially his or her reproductive interests.

'Adaptive', in the selfish-gene perspective is every characteristic or trait, and every behavior that enhances an individual's 'inclusive fitness' or reproductive success. Adaptations are tentative solutions to recurrent problems in the evolutionary past. The 'good-for-the-species' or survival of the species does not play a role at all (Vogel, 1989; see especially Cronin, 1991; Van der Dennen, 1995).

Adaptation is a process pertaining to individuals and never to units larger than the individual. Social groups and societies cannot be adaptational units because they cannot and do not exist apart from concrete flesh-and-blood individuals. Although social groups may be said to have needs and wants, they cannot do so apart from the needs and wants of their constituent members. Any social form that is said to be adaptive for any group or society as a whole is only so because it is adaptive for all (or nearly all) of that group or society's constituent members. Any so-called adaptation at the level of a group or society is but a statistical aggregate of individual adaptedness.

Adaptation is not necessarily an optimizing process. Individuals often satisfice rather than optimize, i.e., they remain content with a satisfactory rather than an optimal way of meeting their needs and wants.

It must be emphasized that *adaptation has been to the ancestral environment*, not the contemporary environment (Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). The ancestral environment is the one in which humans originally evolved, and this environment was one of very small hunter-gatherer societies or family groups.

Many of the features of human social life exist because they perform 'functions', but these functions pertain to individuals and their needs and goals rather than to some reified abstraction known as 'society'.

Needless to say, contemporary evolutionary theory runs directly counter to Durkheim's dictum, embraced by the social sciences for the greater part of the twentieth century, that 'social facts require social explanation' – i.e., that human behavior can be explained *only* in terms of social learning and social conditioning. The neo-Darwinian literature tends to

support the idea that *Homo* – and, as it now appears, some of our closest primate relatives – may be genetically inclined to violence (infanticide, rape), and, broadly defined, warfare (or ‘lethal male raiding’) (Van der Dennen, 1995; Wrangham & Peterson, 1997; Somit & Peterson, 1998a,b).

Somit & Peterson (1998a,b) attempt to account for the rarity of democratic policies both historically and even now, in the so-called ‘Age of Democracy’. The explanation, these authors suggest, is to be found in our species’ evolutionary history. Working over literally millions of years, natural selection has endowed *Homo sapiens*, as it did the other social primates, with an innate predisposition or ‘bias’ toward hierarchical social and political structures. As a consequence, the overwhelming majority of political societies have been and continue to be authoritarian in nature.

### ***I. Principles concerning the deep wellsprings of human action***

Nature itself is absolutely morally indifferent or amoral (not to be confused with ‘immoral’); the process of biogenetic or Darwinian evolution (by means of natural selection) does not have moral dimensions. The ‘real good’ and the ‘real evil’ made their entry only with the appearance of the human being (Mohr, 1987; Vogel, 1989; Wuketits, 1993; Dahl, 1995).

For millions of years of evolution the practical and everyday concerns of animal organisms were: eat, avoid being eaten (by either fleeing or fighting), and, if possible, mate (in about this order of importance). So it would have helped a lot if these organisms would have been able to detect, immediately and without delay, friend or foe, prey or predator, and potential sex partner or acute danger. This is the cognitive basis of what evolutionary epistemologists (e.g., Wuketits, 1993) have called ‘Logik des Lebens’ (perception and processing of ‘überlebensrelevante Information’), and which is represented in the CNS by very old and ‘primitive’ structures such as the reptilian and paleomammalian brains.

Vogel (1989) holds that especially the primates do not possess ‘ritualized’ agonistic behaviors. Consequently, the fights among males over estrous females, or resources which attract females, are horribly vehement and not seldom involve severe injuries and even death: “Dabei gibt es keinerlei ‘angeborene Tötungshemmungen’”! Compassion vis-à-vis diseased, injured, paralyzed, weakened, or otherwise incapacitated conspecifics is nonexistent (e.g., Vogel on human langurs; Fossey on gorillas; Goodall on chimpanzees). More often than not, these victims are treated with ‘murderous’ cruelty, as are, generally, members of other groups. Therefore, Vogel concludes: “Angesichts aller dieser Tatsachen erscheint es mir sehr unwahrscheinlich, daß der frühe Mensch eine angeborene, die eigene Art egalitär umspannende ‘Tötungshemmung’ besessen habe...”.

Like all other species, humans are organisms that have been built by millions of years of biological evolution, both in their anatomy/physiology and their behavioral predispositions.

The illusion that by ‘inventing’ culture, mankind has completely severed the ties with evolutionary principles is a popular one among social scientists. But cultural animals do not stop being animals by virtue of their being cultural. Nor does the (relatively brief) cultural history of *Homo sapiens* erase the impact of many millions of years of reptilian, mammalian, ape and hominid evolution.

Of course, human evolution has differentiated us from other species. But how different are we? In particular, how plausible is the idea that our nature, unlike that of other creatures, has become essentially indeterminate? The 'human' phase of our ancestral development, that in which our 'true' nature of plasticity would have had to develop, has been relatively brief. Our ancestors, it should be remembered, do not begin at some dramatic branching of the tree of life: they include one-celled animals, aquatic vertebrates, and then the animals evolving on land leading through reptiles eventually to mammals, primates, and finally the line of *Homo*. And evolution has a memory: though modified by gradual change, the structure of an animal is like a living record of the aeons of living history during which it has developed. Thus, our blood to this day reflects the salt concentrations of the sea our ancestors left many millions of years ago. And our glands are the result of the ages of transformation of a fish into a mammal. In evolution, what has been does not quickly disappear. The old is not neatly extirpated and replaced by the new... This persistence of ancient nature pertains as much to the dynamic aspects of a creature, the way it acts and feels, as to the static structures that survive in fossils... In a world demanding that energies be well directed, survival as mammals required a deep and complex emotional and cognitive nature, not a blank sheet (Schmookler, 1995: 142).

It is possible – there is no 'hard' or incontrovertible evidence, only the distinct possibility – that *Homo erectus* already had developed anthropophagy (cannibalism) and headhunting, which might have implied cooperative raiding. He was a selfish, short-sighted primate who did not in the least care for the 'good or survival of the species'. Nor did any other organism. It is even possible that the chimpanzee-hominid common ancestor had 'lethal male raiding' in its repertoire, which, if true, would mean that warfare, and the concomitant capacity for massacres, is already 6 to 8 million years old (Wrangham & Peterson, 1997).

The resources that humans struggle for, which allow them to survive and prosper, are in short supply. This means that humans are caught up in a struggle for survival and well-being with their fellow humans. This competition is inevitable and unceasing.

In the struggle for survival and well-being, humans give overwhelming priority to their own selfish interests and to those of their kin, especially their close kin. All organisms are – necessarily and almost by definition – selfish, and, as the principle of kin selection suggests, nepotistically altruistic. In evolution, 'selfishness' of organisms is neither good nor bad, but is amoral (or morally indifferent) (Wuketits, 1993). Kinship ('bands of blood'; 'who is related to whom') and sexual relations ('who does it with whom') have been and are the main concerns of humans everywhere and since time immemorial.

Human social life is the complex product of this ceaseless competition for survival, well-being, and reproductive success.

Humans have evolved strong behavioral predispositions that facilitate their success in this competition. The most important of these predispositions are as follows:

- Humans generally have a high sex-drive (or libido) and are oriented mostly toward heterosexual sex. This predisposition has evolved because it is necessary for the promotion of humans' reproductive interests, i.e., their inclusive fitness. Males compete for females and for sex, and females compete for males as resource providers. Humans do these things, ultimately, in order to promote their reproductive success, but, proximately, in the pursuit of pleasure and sexual satisfaction.



- Humans are strongly oriented to perform good parental behavior, with the mother-child bond being stronger than the father-child bond. Good parental behavior has evolved because it promotes reproductive success in a species like humans. The family as a social institution, thus, rests on a natural foundation.
- Humans are naturally competitive and highly predisposed toward status competition. Status competition is ultimately oriented toward the securing of resources, which promotes reproductive success.
- Because of the natural competition for resources, humans are strongly economic and political animals. They are highly oriented toward achieving economic satisfaction and well-being, an achievement that promotes reproductive success. Political life is primarily a struggle to acquire and defend economic resources.
- Many, probably most, of the features of human life are the adaptive consequences of people competing to satisfy their interests.
- People are unequally endowed to compete in the social struggle, and as a result social domination and subordination often appear as basic features of social life.

## ***II. Principles concerning group relations***

Individuals pursuing their interests are the core of social life. The pursuit of individuals' selfish interests leads, on the societal level, to both highly cooperative and highly conflictive social arrangements.

Many cooperative forms of behavior exist at the level of social groups or entire societies. Cooperative social relations exist because they are the relations that will best promote each individual's selfish interests, not because they promote the well-being of the group or society as a whole.

Cooperative forms of interaction are found most extensively among individuals who share reproductive interests in common, i.e., among kin and especially close kin. This is the basis for the family as a fundamental social institution. And as humans have lived in small, slightly inbred, family groups for most of their evolutionary trajectory, this is also the basis for ethnocentrism ('groupism') as a fundamental social phenomenon.

Outside of kinship and family life, cooperative relations are most likely to be found among individuals who depend heavily on each other for the satisfaction of their basic interests.

When conflictive behavior will more satisfactorily promote individual interests, cooperative relations will decline in favor of conflictive relations. Given the almost universality of mutual hostility and recurrent warfare between and among archeological, preindustrial, and state-level societies, the conflictive mode of interaction seems to have been the preferred mode between human societies, ethnies, states, and other figurations.

Dominant groups benefit disproportionately from their social position, and frequently they are able to make use of subordinate groups to advance their interests. Their use of these groups frequently takes the form of economic exploitation, repression and subordination, enslavement, or social exclusion.

Because they benefit from their situation, dominant groups are highly motivated to structure society so that their superior social position can be preserved or enhanced. Social life is therefore disproportionately influenced by the interests and actions of dominant groups.

### **Evolutionary background: Ethnocentrism (adapted from Vanhanen, 1998)**

“It is perfectly possible for people to combine the finest moral sensitivity in relation to their fellows with extreme inhumanity towards... human beings whom they see in some way alien to themselves and their associates” (Mackie, 1982; cf. Singer, 1981; Vogel, 1989). In fact, Vogel considers the male/female and the ingroup/outgroup (or kin vs. alien) distinctions (that is, the double standard in the relations between the sexes and between human groups) to be our ‘natural’ morality or the ‘morality of our genes’.

Singer (1981) described the ingroup/outgroup double moral standard as follows: “Killing a member of the tribe is wrong and will be punished, but killing a member of another tribe whose path you happen to cross is laudable”. Darwin had already observed the same thing when describing the ‘savage’ inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego he had encountered during his voyage with the *Beagle*.

For most of humanity, the tribe is the unit within which killing is considered murder, and outside which killing may be a proof of manhood and bravery, a pleasure and a duty (Gorer, 1968).

“The Nationstate is really the last successful human invention for extending the size of the pack, within which killing is murder. In the last 4,000 years, a number of religions have been founded which would include all believers inside the pack; but no religion has commanded world-wide allegiance; and regularly the outcasts, infidels, untouchables, heathens, or heretics could all be humiliated and killed with added pleasure and self-righteousness because they were members of the devil’s pack” (Gorer, 1968).

In his analysis *The Origins of Virtue*, Matt Ridley (1996) observes that an unexpected by-product of the evolution of cooperative society is group prejudice. There is pervasive evidence that the human species exhibits xenophobia and, like chimpanzees, practices murderous competition and out-group exclusion. “Aggressive xenophobia [is] displayed by male chimpanzees, which itself may be a consequence of the tendency of male chimpanzees to form coalitions. A lone male chimp, wandering into the territory of a neighboring troop, faces almost certain death” (Ridley, 1996, p. 163).

Coalitions by males in ape and dolphin societies expedite male access to sexually receptive females. The coalitionist or ‘tribal’ predisposition is at the core of human nature. We, like all other creatures, cooperate to compete. But the dark side of this sociability is group prejudice and an intolerance for out-groups (Reynolds, Falger & Vine, 1987). In fact, the maintenance of group boundaries is premised on antagonism toward the Other.

According to Herbert Simon (1990), the most adaptive strategy in group-mediated survival is ‘conformism’. Ridley agrees: “Does conformism sound familiar?... Human beings are terribly easily talked into following the most absurd and dangerous path for no better reason than that everybody else is doing it” (p. 181).

Human beings are very probably genetically predisposed toward ethnocentrism (Wilson, 1975; Irwin, 1986; Wuketits, 1993; A.Flohr, 1995; Van der Dennen, 1997; Rushton, 1997). It is quite possible that we have inherited this disposition to discriminate between 'us' and 'them' from our ape ancestors (Wrangham & Peterson, 1997).

Wilson (1975 et seq.) argued that every human group has a natural tendency to close its ranks against outsiders and display hostility to them, thereby cementing the loyalties of the group and deflecting aggression away from it; and that this ethnocentric, xenophobic tendency has a genetic base, which has evolved through kin selection (Dawson, 1996). It looks like ingroup solidarity is predicated upon outgroup antagonism, and vice versa (as already hypothesized by Spencer, Sumner, Davie, and other early theorists).

The tendency to classify, to divide the world into 'us' and 'them', into members versus non-members, friend or foe, is probably one of the few true human universals: something common to all people everywhere. This is not confined to contemporary Western peoples. The Yanomamö consider themselves a breed of humans far superior to their neighbors. The Mundurucu headhunters of the Amazon turn outsiders into animals. Their warriors speak of *pariwat* or 'fair game', putting enemies into the same functional category as peccary or tapir, beings it is permitted to hunt simply because they are *animals* (Murphy, 1960).

The theory of kin-selection, first formulated in 1964 by Hamilton, simply states that organisms can contribute to their inclusive fitness or reproductive success not only by reproducing themselves directly, but also by favoring, or otherwise assisting in, reproduction of all those organisms who share genes with them, i.e., relatives. For example, full siblings will have about 50% of their genes in common. Now, by helping my sister or brother to reproduce, I assure that a part of (replicas of) 'my' genes are transmitted to the next generation. Organisms that practice this ('parallel') strategy of nepotism, or kin-altruism, will simply outreproduce those that do not practice this strategy. Nepotistic altruism thus has been selected for during the evolution of organisms. That is the inexorable logic of natural selection. Note also that kin 'altruism' is no 'altruism' (in the everyday meaning of the word) at all, but plain vanilla genetic selfishness.

Genes seem to draw the line of their concern, according to Watson (1995), somewhere around third cousins, with whom we share only 1/128th of our heredity. Anyone beyond that is beyond the genetic pale, and not available for kin selection. This exclusion is real and vital to the discussion of evil. Genes are essentially selfish except as far as close relatives are concerned. There are several genetic instructions which seem to be common to, and appropriate to, all life. And Rule Number One amongst these is: 'Be nasty to outsiders'. In addition to being generally nasty to outsiders, genes have supplementary tendency which could be described as Rule Number Two: 'Be nice to insiders'. Genes care nothing for 'the good of the species'. All they are concerned with is becoming better represented in the gene pool, and in this endeavour they are ruthless. In addition to being nasty to strangers, and nice to relatives and friends, genes are congenital crooks. They hedge their bets by a loophole law which may be described as Rule Number Three: 'Cheat whenever possible' (Watson, 1995).

The process of group formation produces ingroup-outgroup bias. It "is often ethnocentric, which means that the ingroup and the outgroup are perceived as different races or ethnicities, but it can appear with equal ease around other categories, such as religion, sex, age, or sports team" (Wrangham & Peterson, 1997: 194-6; this literature has been reviewed by Van der

Dennen, 1987, 1995; see also Van den Berghe, 1981 et seq.; Tiger, 1969; Shaw & Wong, 1989; Vanhanen, 1991 et seq.; Flohr, 1995).

The language of ethnicity is the language of kinship. Horowitz (1985) comes to the conclusion that ethnicity is “functionally continuous with kinship” (Horowitz, 1985: 17-22, 41-57, 78).

Ethnicity can ultimately be traced to common descent. *Each ethnic group is composed of members who are usually genetically more related to each other than to members of outside groups.* (see also Irwin, 1987). The ‘myth of common descent’ is often no myth at all.

Van den Berghe (1987) says that ethnicity is defined in last analysis by *common descent*. The core of an ethnic group is made up of people “who know themselves to be related to each other by a double network of ties of descent and marriage”. There are ethnic boundaries that are created socially by preferential endogamy and physically by territoriality. It means that ethnic boundaries are not immutable. Ethnicity can be manipulated, as cultural interpretations emphasize, but it cannot be manufactured. The fiction of kinship, van den Berghe says, “has to be sufficiently credible for ethnicity to be effective” (Van den Berghe, 1987: 15-27).

He argues that ethnic sentiments have evolved as an extension of nepotism, that is, the propensity to favor kin over nonkin and close kin over distant kin. He also refers to historical and contemporary examples of conflicts which have become canalized along ethnic lines.

Seemingly oblivious of van den Berghe’s theorizing, Stern (1995) presents what may be called a neo-primordialist theory of nationalist mobilization. He proposes that for nationalist appeals to overcome self-interest, they must draw on a strong force as least as deeply rooted as that of self-interest. Nationhood itself is not a primordial condition, so national identity per se does not qualify. Following others (e.g., Hinde, 1989, 1993; Ross, 1991), Stern proposes that nationalism gets its force by drawing on a primordial sociality – a tendency to identify with, learn from, and favor groups to which one has strong emotional ties. The connection of social bonds to national identity is accomplished by a process of social construction. Stern bases his argument on several claims: that group (not national) identification is a primordial condition; that group membership and identification can exert strong forces on behavior, even in modern societies; and that when influence agents for nationalism succeed, they do so by eliciting identification with the nation and linking it to emotions and norms associated with membership in primary groups. These claims are based on two considerations. The first is that human groups are primordial. Small bands were the main units of social organization during some three or four million years of hominid evolution until the most recent 10-12,000 years, when they were supplemented or supplanted by larger units such as city, ethnic group, and state. The second is that individuals have probably always identified strongly with primary social groups. People tend to imitate and learn selectively from fellow group members and to form strong emotional attachments to members, the group, and its symbols. The genius of nationalism as a social invention is to equate the nation symbolically with family and community and to use that equation to generate emotions and elicit behavior that is against self-interest and the interests of other groups with which people identify.

Reynolds, Falger & Vine (1987) examined the question whether the ingroup/outgroup phenomenon “so universally encountered in humans can be linked back in terms of evolutionary continuity to the preference for relatives over strangers that we find in animals, and for which we have a solid genetic explanation at the sociobiological level”. They come to

the conclusion that cultural, historical, economic and political factors should be combined with evolutionary ones in order to achieve a comprehensive explanation of ethnocentrism and ingroup/outgroup differentiation. Ethnocentrism and group conflict may have their origins in our evolutionary past, and genes may predispose us to make ingroup/outgroup distinctions and behave accordingly, but socialization during childhood and many other cultural factors play important roles, too (Reynolds, Falger and Vine, 1987; xv-xx, 268-73).

Van der Dennen (1987, 1995, 1997) presents the abundant empirical evidence, and Anne Flohr (1995) presents strong theoretical arguments for the thesis that ethnocentrism has biosocial foundations. She notes that situational cultural factors cannot explain the universality of ethnocentrism. She regards it as being based on an evolved behavioral disposition that is related to ethnic nepotism.

Evolutionary argumentation leads to the proposition that we can expect the canalization of interest conflicts along ethnic lines in all ethnically divided societies. It is also plausible to expect that, in conflict situations, ethnic group identities will prove to be stronger than other types of group loyalties. As Tishkov (1994) says: "People use ethnic affiliation as one of the most accessible and understandable forms of group solidarity" (Tishkov, 1994: 52). This is so because ethnic loyalties are powered by ethnic nepotism, by our evolved disposition to favor kin over non-kin. This theory is strongly supported by the empirical evidence (covering 183 contemporary countries) (Vanhanen, 1998, 1999).

The 'layered' (and fluid) nature of human group-identification or ingroup solidarity and outgroup aggression can be gathered from the following Somali proverb: "I against my brother; I and my brother against the family; I and my family against the clan; I and my clan against Somalia; I and Somalia against the world".

Social life is further structured according to the logic of "The enemies of my enemies are my friends; and the friends of my enemies are my enemies".

Humankind, Ridley (1996) suggests, has always been fragmented into hostile and competitive tribes, and those that found a way of drumming cultural conformity into the skulls of their members tended to do better than those that did not.

As for religion, the universalism of the modern Christian message has tended to obscure an obvious fact about religious teaching – that it has almost always emphasized the difference between the in-group and the out-group: us versus them. Religion teaches its adherents that they are a chosen race and their nearest rivals are benighted fools or even subhumans.

"A parochial perspective characterizes most religions", says Hartung (1995), "because most religions were developed by groups whose survival depended upon competition with other groups. Such religions, and the in-group morality they foster, tend to outlive the competition that spawned them". It is probably small wonder that monotheism was a product of the world's most belligerent cultures. Genocide (between groups), as one may read in the Old Testament, was as central a part of God's instructions as morality (within the group).

It is a rule of evolution to which we are far from immune that the more cooperative societies are, the more violent the battles between them. We may be among the most collaborative social creatures on the planet, but we are also the most belligerent (Ridley, 1996: 193).

Violence in and between human societies, with the exception of some forms of domestic, criminal and pathological violence, is virtually always a collective activity or committed in the name of a collectivity. “Adults kill and torture each other only when organized into political parties, or economic classes, or religious denominations, or nation states. A moral distinction is always made between individuals killing for themselves and the same individual killing for some real or supposed group interest” (Durbin & Bowlby, 1938).

This moral double standard leads to the masquerading of the violence committed in the name of one’s own in-group as justified self-defense, or as a well-deserved punishment for transgressions of mores, laws, or ideological orthodoxy. The violence may range from sanctions against a dissenter or potential renegade within the group, to punitive expeditions, and even genocide, between groups.

Total identification with the group makes the individual perform altruistic acts to the point of self-sacrifice, and at the same time behave with ruthless cruelty towards the enemy or victim of the group. As Koestler (1967) observed: the self-assertive behavior of the group is based on the self-transcending behavior of its members. The egotism of the group feeds on the altruism of its members.

The ulterior justification and legitimation of collective violence invokes complex ideological, symbolic constructions, superordinate goals, spiritual values, high moral principles, and the most noble, virtuous, righteous, self-transcendent and altruistic motives. “The most pernicious phenomena of aggression, transcending self-preservation and self-destruction, are based upon a characteristic feature of man above the biological level, namely his capability of creating symbolic universes in thought, language and behavior” (von Bertalanffy, 1958).

It is the ‘good’ intentions of mankind, man’s ‘high’ moral principles, his ‘noble’ strivings that lead to Armageddon. Or, as Koestler (1967) eloquently stated: “The crimes of violence committed for selfish, personal motives are historically insignificant compared to those committed *ad majorem gloriam Dei*, out of a self-sacrificing devotion to flag, a leader, a religious faith, or a political conviction. Man has always been prepared not only to kill but also to die for good, bad, or completely futile causes”.

Collective violence is covered with a thick patina of self-justification, ratiomorphic nonsense and pathos. “Men will die like flies for theories and exterminate each other with every instrument of destruction for abstractions” (Durbin & Bowlby, 1938). The most extensive, quixotic and disgusting violence is justified with the invocation of a utopian ideology, a paradise myth, a superiority doctrine, an eschatological or millenarian ideal state, or other highly abstract political/ethical categories, metaphysical values, and quasi-metaphysical mental monstrosities: National Security, Raison d’Etat, Freedom, Democracy, God, Volk und Heimat, Blut und Boden, Peace, Progress, Empire, Historical Imperative, Sacred Order, Natural Necessity, Divine Will, and so on and so forth. The human being as the “most ferocious of beast” as William James called him, is only a beast in the name of some superhuman ideal, which serves as a “sanction for evil” (Sanford & Comstock, 1971); divine or diffuse permission for large-scale destructiveness. The purity and sacredness of our cause, and the divine sanction of our actions (“with God on our side”) is guaranteed by the wickedness of the enemy, who is envisaged as the incorporation of evil, the devil incarnate.

Ubiquitously evident in all forms of collective intolerance, Willhoite (1977) observes, is an expressed desire by leaders and/or members to protect and promote the uniformity,

conformity, 'purity' of the group by denouncing or acting intolerantly toward individuals or groups perceived – simply because they are different – as threats to the well-being and integrity of the intolerant collectivity. As Berger & Luckman (1966) explained: “All social reality is precarious. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos. The constant possibility of anomic terror is actualized whenever the legitimations that obscure the precariousness are threatened or collapse”.

Serious threats to a well-established, taken-for-granted symbolic universe may arise from deviants within the society ('heretics') or from external contact with another society possessing a radically different – but also taken-for-granted internally – symbolic universe. One possible – and historically common – response to such threats is 'nihilation', the conceptual liquidation of everything inconsistent with the official doctrine. That is, deviants or foreigners may be labeled as less than human, as 'devils' or 'barbarians' who dwell in impenetrable darkness. “Whether one then proceeds from nihilation to therapy, or rather goes on to liquidate physically what one has liquidated conceptually, is a practical question of policy”.

Berger & Luckmann's description of this device for protecting a symbolic universe is acutely perceptive, but, as Willhoite (1977) points out, it does not explain why such differences should be perceived as threats that demand a nihilating response. This question is, at least in part, answered by Erikson's (1964) concept of cultural pseudospeciation.

Man is the cultural animal *par excellence*. All members of the (sub)species *Homo sapiens sapiens* share the characteristic of being capable to create, and be created by, culture. At the same time, however, culture is the great unbalancer, the great catalyst of diversity and reinforcer of differences, underlying universal human cultural *pseudospeciation*. Owing to this process, human groups (be they ethnies, tribes or nations) tend to differ from one another to such a degree that the groups come to perceive each other as though they were totally different species.

Erikson's concept of pseudospeciation denotes the fact that while Man is obviously one species, he appears on the scene split into groups (from tribes to nations, from castes to classes, from religions to ideologies) which provide their members with a firm sense of distinct and superior identity and the illusion of immortality. This demands, however, that each group must invent for itself a place and moment in the very center of the universe where and when an especially provident deity caused it to be created superior to all others, the mere mortals. Thus Man is “indoctrinated with the conviction that his 'species' alone was planned by an all-wise deity, created in a special cosmic event, and appointed by history to guard the only version of humanity... Man once possessed by this combination of lethal weaponry, moral hypocrisy, and identity panic is not only apt to lose all sense of species but also to turn on another subgroup with a ferocity generally alien to the 'social' animal world” (Willhoite, 1977).

Especially Tinbergen (1968, 1981) has pointed out how violence changes in character from intraspecific to interspecific/predatory the more the enemy is dehumanized and 'pseudospeciated'. No holds are barred in hunting down a foreign species.

MacCurdy (1918) foreshadowed this valuable concept of pseudospeciation in his *Psychology of War*. According to him, early tribal warfare had fixed the idea that strangers were another species, and thus was overcome the natural taboo (i.e., inhibition) against killing conspecifics.

Humans by their herd nature were doomed to split into groups, and these groups behaved biologically like separate species struggling for existence. During times of war, he suggested, humans still felt vestigial emotions of hostility to their enemies as species other than themselves (Crook, 1994).

Some of the dynamics of intergroup conflict and violence have been explained by Hardin (1995): The possibility of coordination of an ethnic group entails the possibility of intergroup conflict. Suppose we face limited, relatively fixed resources. If some of us can form a group that gains hegemony over our society, we can extract a disproportionate share of total resources for members of our group. The remainder of the society has incentive to counter-organize against us to protect its welfare. If it does so, we are now two groups in manifest conflict. Having a conflict of interest is not, however, sufficient for producing violence. On a Hobbesian view of political life, without institutions to help us stay orderly we take a pre-emptive view of all conflicts. If conflict can lead to violence, I can improve my prospects of surviving the conflict if I pre-emptively suppress those with whom I am in conflict. I sneak up on you before you sneak up on me. Self-defense against possible (not even actual) attack suffices to motivate murderous conflict. Risk aversion is enough.

The bloody collapse of Yugoslavia has been a product of a series of opportunistic grabs and pre-emptive violence. The Hobbesian view seems to fit ethnic conflicts that have turned violent in Lebanon, Azerbaijan and Armenia, Rwanda and Burundi, Iraq, and many other societies, as it fits Yugoslavia. Destablized governments, brought to weakness by war, economic failure, or fights over succession, cannot maintain adequate barriers to violence. Conflicts that are already well defined then escalate to violence. Once the violence is underway, as in Yugoslavia, pre-emption becomes an unavoidable urge. One need not hate members of another group, but one might still fear their potential hatred or even merely their threat (Hardin – being a Rational Choice theorist of group identification – does not believe in the ‘primordial hatred’ explanation of such conflicts). Hobbes’s vision of the need of all to pre-empt lest they be the victims of the few who are murderous still fits even in the relatively organized state of ethnic conflict, *except that it applies at the group level*. Ethnic groups in almost all quarters of the globe seem deliberately to engage in violence in order to pre-empt violence against themselves. Incidentally, this modified Hobbesian view also fits the apparent results of the various rebellions: almost all are worse off in the short run.

Rummel (1997), in a quantitative investigation, found that pluralism is an important correlate of collective violence, but, surprisingly, much less so than other aspects of society; and the importance largely resides in the number of ethnic and religious groups a state has. The more ethnic groups in a state, the more likely it will have a high rate of guerrilla and revolutionary warfare. And the more religious groups in a society, the more intense the general violence. This is largely moderated by the size of a state. Thus, the larger and older (counting from 1932) a state in addition to the more religious groups, the more the general violence. Thus, Rummel’s research ends up with two rather simple and ordinary measures: numbers of ethnic and religious groups.

Conflict seems to be the rule. National, ethnic, racial and religious divisions everywhere seem to lead inevitably to conflict. “Most social and political mixes are volatile, the genes are obliged to be unkind to outsiders, and aggression is so easily aroused and so contagious once it is released that inter-group problems are epidemic” (Watson, 1995).



The reason why this is so has been clearly and eloquently explained by Schmookler (1995) in his *Parable of the Tribes*. Imagine a group of tribes living within reach of one another. If all choose the way of peace, then all may live in peace. But what if all but one choose peace, and that one is ambitious for expansion and conquest? No one is free to choose peace, but anyone can impose upon all the necessity for power. This is the lesson of the parable of the tribes.

Power can be stopped only by power. The irony is that successful defense against a power-maximizing aggressor requires a society to become more like the society that threatens it. There are four possible outcomes for the threatened tribes: destruction, absorption and transformation, withdrawal, and imitation. In every one of these outcomes the ways of power are spread throughout the system. The parable of the tribes is a theory of social evolution which shows that power is like a contaminant, a disease, which once introduced will gradually yet inexorably become universal in the system of competing societies. More important than the inevitability of the struggle for power is the profound social evolutionary consequence of that struggle once it begins. A selection for power among civilized societies is inevitable. Just like natural selection selects for reproductive success, cultural selection selects for power.

The consistent selection for power can shape the whole cultural life of civilized peoples in its many dimensions. Among all the cultural possibilities, only some will be viable. The selection for power can discard those who revere nature in favor of those willing and able to exploit it. The warlike may eliminate the pacifistic; the ambitious, the content. Civilized societies will displace the remaining primitives, modern industrial powers will sweep away archaic cultures. The iron makers will be favored over those with copper or no metallurgy at all, and the horsemen will have sway over the unmounted. Societies that are coherently organized and have strong leadership will make unviable others with more casual power structures and more local autonomy. As the parable of the tribes spreads the ways of power, what looked like open-ended cultural possibilities are channeled in a particular, unchosen direction. What is viable in a world beset by the struggle for power is what can prevail. What prevails may not be what best meets the needs of mankind. The continuous selection for power has thus continually closed off many humane cultural options that people might otherwise have preferred. Power therefore rules human destiny. The evolution of civilization is therefore marked by a perpetual (though sometimes interrupted) escalation in the level of power a society must possess to survive intersocietal competition. The reign of power thus has no limit.

Though we must see history as a drama in which the main actors are the powerful and aggressive, we should not slip into seeing them as the villains, for it is not the actors who set the stage or who govern the thrust of the plot. It is not that the selection for power systematically selects what is injurious to people. The process is not hostile to human welfare, but simply indifferent. We have no need of Ardreyesque images of bloodthirsty primate hunters to explain the bloodiness of civilized history. The parable of the tribes does not hold the view of the monstrosity of human nature. The theory offers no indictment of human nature. The irresistible social evolutionary forces that have swept us along since the breakthrough to civilization have depended very little on human nature for their origin and their direction. Civilization as we see it in history is neither the fruit of human choice nor a reflection of human nature. It is simply that individuals who are neither murderous nor suicidal may be forced to choose between murderous and suicidal courses of action.

The only way to escape the compelling pressure of the intersocietal system is to escape from that system (some isolated peoples can afford to be peaceful), but this option is not open for more settled and dense (e.g., horticultural) societies; they must stand and face the threat when it arrives.

When the encounter comes, the weak are often at the mercy of the strong. And sometimes the strong show no mercy. Cultures have been obliterated, peoples exterminated. If the alien invaders want what their victims have, but have no use for the victims themselves, the temptation for annihilation is there. Extermination is especially possible when the discrepancy in power between the two societies is wide. The advance of modern imperialism left the more densely populated areas peopled by the natives, the conquerors lacking either the ruthlessness, the motive, or the means to carry out systematic genocide on such large groups. Ancient conquerors, however, were often fully prepared to slaughter whole peoples to make room for their own. When the Hebrews went into Canaan, to claim the land God had promised them, they slew those whom they found there and counted it not among their sins. The Athenians' speech to the Melians, in Thucydides' account, is frighteningly forthright in its portrayal of the rule of power: "You know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" (*The Peloponnesian War*, Book V). The Athenians put to death all the grown men of the Melians whom they took, and sold the women and children for slaves.

But what of 'rights' and 'justice'? People are moral creatures. Unfortunately, although moral scruples can act as an obstacle to the unbridled pursuit of interest, they prove too often an easily surmountable barrier. For one thing people often use rationalization and hypocrisy to make moral principle a tool of rather than a check upon self-interest. Beyond that, the jurisdiction of moral injunctions is often confined to relations within one's own group. The out-group is typically entitled to no such consideration. 'Thou shalt not kill' was hardly intended as God's commandment to the Hebrews to be pacifists. The chronically dangerous 'state of nature' among societies inevitably feeds intersocietal amorality. Also, the selection for power may select against moral sensitivity: nice guys are finished first.

Even if people and their culture survive conquest by a more powerful society, the option of continuing life as before may be stolen from them. They may be compelled to adopt the ways of their masters. The extent to which conquest results in cultural transformation can vary across a wide spectrum. Destruction might be seen as one extreme on this continuum, where the powerful replace the original people and their ways with their own. At the other extreme, the conqueror may simply seek to exact regular tribute or revenue from a society which otherwise is unmolested. The essence of power is domination, not destruction. The Romans, for example, refrained from wanton intrusion against the cultural integrity of subordinate peoples. They instituted whatever was necessary for maintaining their dominance. Beyond that point, they discovered, tolerance paid off. The Western imperialists of the 19th century, on the other hand, often systematically changed the political, demographic, and economic structure of their colonial possessions in order best to serve the interests of the mother country.

Finally, the last outcome of the parable of the tribes: imitation. If one society in the system develops an important competitive advantage, its neighbors lose the option of continuing their way of living as before. The course of resistance also requires transformation in the ways of power. It requires the imitation of one's more potent foes. Power can be resisted only with power. Potent breakthroughs thus require emulation. The tyranny of power is such that even

self-defense becomes a kind of surrender. Not to resist is to be transformed at the hands of the mighty. To resist requires that one transform oneself into their likeness. Either way, free human choice is prevented. All ways but the ways of power are blocked.

## **Contagion**

As the Dutch social scientist Henk Houweling points out, the mathematical study of outbreaks of war and of national decisions to participate in wars shows “strong indications of epidemicity... Our analysis does not reveal the *cause* of war. But it does suggest that one of the causes of war is war itself” (Houweling, 1985).

If war is analogous to a disease, then, it is analogous to a contagious disease. It spreads through space, as groups take up warfare in response to warlike neighbors. This may seem obvious, but statistical studies show that warfare is indeed more intense and frequent in the vicinity of warlike groups (Keeley, 1996: 128). War has another way of spreading, too, and that is through time. Ineluctably, the insults inflicted in one war call forth new wars of retaliation, which may be waged within months of the original conflict or generations later. Even the conditions of peace may serve as a springboard to new wars, as the modern world learned from the Treaty of Versailles; among the Central Enga of New Guinea, unpaid indemnities from one war are a common excuse for the next one (Keeley, 1996: 148). So, to continue the epidemiological metaphor, if war is regarded as an infectious ‘disease’, it is caused by a particularly hardy sort of microbe – one capable of encysting itself for generations, if necessary, within the human soul.

Stated in more conventional terms, war spreads from band to band and culture to culture because it is a form of contact that no human group can afford to ignore or disdain. If outsiders show up to woo mates or trade goods or induct you into their religious practices, you can always tell them to go away. But as Andrew Bard Schmookler argues in his brilliant exploration of human power relationships, *The Parable of the Tribes*, you can no more brush off a war party than you can tell a mugger who demands your money or your life that, frankly, you’d rather keep both and continue peaceably along your way (Schmookler, 1984: 37). If the other tribe harbors a corps of thuggish aggressors, so must yours – or fall prey to those who thought up thuggery first. No warlike instinct, greedy impulses, or material needs are required to explain why war, once adopted by some, must of necessity be adopted by all. Peaceable societies will survive only in isolated or marginal locales – the deep forests of the Mbuti, the snowfields of the Inuit.

Everyone else is swept up into the dynamic of war. As Schmookler writes:

Among all the cultural possibilities, only some will be viable... The warlike may eliminate the pacifistic; the ambitious, the content... Civilized societies will displace the remaining primitives, modern industrial powers will sweep away archaic cultures. The ironmakers will be favored over those with copper or no metallurgy at all, and the horsemen will have sway over the unmounted. Societies that are coherently organized and have strong leadership will make unviable others with more casual power structure and more local autonomy... What looked like open-ended cultural possibilities are channeled in a particular, unchosen direction (Schmookler, 1984: 23).

In other words, as it spreads from place to place, war tends to stamp a certain sameness on human cultures. At the most obvious level, it requires that each human society be as war-ready as the other societies it is likely to encounter (Ehrenreich, 1997).

In general, as Israeli military historian van Creveld explains: “Given time, the fighting itself will cause the two sides to become more like each other, even to the point where opposites converge, merge, and change places... The principal reason behind this phenomenon is that war represents perhaps the most imitative activity known to man” (Van Creveld, 1991: 174).

There is a mechanism – almost a human reflex – that guarantees that belligerents will in fact be ‘given time’ for this convergence to occur, and that mechanism is revenge: A raid or attack or insult must be matched with an attack of equal or greater destructive force. One atrocity will be followed by another; and no matter how amicable the two sides may once have been, they will soon be locked together in a process from which no escape seems possible. To the warrior, the necessity of revenge may be self-evident and beyond appeal: “The Jibaro [Jivaro] Indian is wholly penetrated by the idea of retaliation; his desire for revenge is an expression of his sense of justice... If one reprehends a Jibaro because he has killed an enemy, his answer is generally: ‘He has killed himself’” (quoted in Ehrenreich, 1997: 137-8).

Archaeological evidence suggests that during the Neolithic period, when some societies first crossed the great social-evolutionary divide, the Agricultural Revolution, conflict escalated. Warfare rises with the rise of civilization. In his *Theory of Culture Change*, Steward (1955) outlines five stages of development, and he notes striking parallels of development among the pristine civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Meso-America, and Peru. “In the Formative Era, state warfare was probably of minor importance. There is little archaeological evidence of militarism, and it is likely the warfare was limited to raids” (1955: 202). The fifth, and last, period of development of all these civilizations seems to have been a Conquest Period. “The diagnostic features of [the Cyclical Conquest Period] are the emergence of large-scale militarism, the extension of political and economic domination over large areas or empires, a strong tendency toward urbanization, and the construction of fortifications” (1955: 196). Intersocietal competition molded evolving civilizations into power-maximizing systems and, conversely, these systems geared for conquest kept the kettle of strife boiling among human groups. If Mars rose with the dawn of civilization it is because, as civilization developed, the reasons for conflict changed: the major incentive for war now were the need to acquire land and establish political dominance. Shaped by power, civilized societies have grown ever larger, ever more complex, and ever more effectively controlled by a central ruling part. Human societies, inescapably imperiled by one another, were rapidly transformed by innovation and selection to meet the requirement of power. This reinforces the image of man as a creature more tormented by forces outside himself than rent by his own inherent viciousness (Schmookler, 1995).

Violence is, universally, an integral part of the masculine mystique. Gilbert (1994; cf. Archer, 1994; Daly & Wilson, 1988; Wilson & Daly, 1985) aptly remarks in the concluding chapter: “Male violence may outrank disease and famine as the major source of human suffering”. Male violence is not a typical product of our (Western patriarchal) civilization, nor our (capitalist) mode of production, nor is it a male conspiracy in order to suppress, terrorize and exploit women. McCarthy (1994) notes that also in ‘traditional’ cultures there is an almost universal, intimate bond between warrior values and conventional notions of masculinity.

Because, as evolutionary biology predicts, in sexually reproducing species one sex (mostly the males) competes for the ultimately limiting reproductive resource (mostly the females), armaments, vigor, strength, and fighting capabilities are in many species confined to, or more conspicuous in, the males. Agonistic behavior and its morphological paraphernalia are almost universally sexually dimorphic, and can be understood as reflecting the different optimal reproductive strategies of the sexes. This is, ultimately, the evolutionary rationale of all sexual dimorphism; not only in human societies are violence and aggression 'gendered' phenomena.

These, and similar, observations have led the Archer (1994) to take as the starting point of his book not the generality of aggression in the human species, but the predominantly male nature of most acts of violence.

Daly & Wilson (1994) – who also introduced the term 'young male syndrome' (Wilson & Daly, 1985) to refer to the fact that it is universally young males who are the chief perpetrators of all acts of violence, be it as hooligans, thugs, gangsters, or warriors – present a Darwinian perspective on male violence. The ultimate, evolutionary view provides an understanding of why males and females have come to have different reproductive strategies, involving greater competition and risk-taking between males than females, and conflicts of interests between males and females. Most male violence – to other men, to women, and to children – can be understood in terms of these two principles. Daly & Wilson go on to consider the evidence for male violence having its origins in evolved adaptations, and they highlight its association with reproductive competition.

This contribution is necessary reading for mainstream social scientists who want to understand the how and why of the 'young male syndrome', the masculine mystique and the culture of honor.

Tiger & Fox (1971) already examined male violence from an evolutionary point of view. They noted that "in every society the dedicated killer crops up, and it takes no great imagination to see how useful he would be in times of trouble. A man who will give himself wholly over to the killing of life with dedication and even pleasure is just the man to send against the enemy on raids – which are essentially murder expeditions. In our own time he is the perfect commando, marine, green beret, or whatever. Among the Crow Indians, there was a society called the Crazy Dogs, or Those-born-to-die. These were young men dedicated to fight to the death and never move away from the enemy. To this end they would stake themselves into the ground with thongs tied through their back muscles and face the enemy" (cited in Malagón-Fajar, 1999).

But the Crow tribe knew what it was unleashing. "They [Crazy Dogs] were reckless and lawless and were allowed all kinds of privilege and indulgence. On the night before a battle or raid, the Crazy Dogs would wreck the camp and rape the women – with impunity, because the next day some of them would die".

Norse berserkers are akin to Crazy Dogs. Tiger & Fox observe that "these killers are always with us, but whether they become our greatest heroes or our criminal lunatics depends on which end of the curve we decide to reward".

Duerr (1993) is one of the very few who has tried to refute the well-known theory of the process of civilization elaborated by Norbert Elias:

Selbstverständlich bestreite ich nicht, daß es einen Zivilisationsprozeß im Sinne eines Wandels der gesellschaftlichen ‘Makrostruktur’ gegeben hat, eine Entwicklung der Zivilisation in technischer und materieller Hinsicht... Was ich bestreite, ist zum einen, daß diese Entwicklung eine Intensivierung der sozialen Kontrolle mit sich brachte, und zum anderen, daß sie dem Menschen eine ganz andersartigen ‘Triebhaushalt’ angezchtet hat, einen neuen ‘psychischen Habitus’, der sich durch höhere Schamschranken und Peinlichkeitsbarrieren, durch eine Reduktion von Unmittelbarkeit, Spontaneität, Aggressivität und Grausamkeit sowie eine Intensivierung und Stabilisierung von Höflichkeit, ‘Etikette’ und gegenseitiger Rücksichtnahme vom früheren ‘Habitus’ unterscheidet” (Duerr, 1993: 26).

As one, rather convincing, example Duerr examines rape, especially the massive rape of women and girls of all ages by soldiers during wars and other episodes of collective violence from the earliest reports to the present, and concludes:

“Implizieren die Behauptungen Elias’, daß im Mittelalter wesentlich mehr Frauen vergewaltigt wurden als heute, da die Männer noch nicht über jene ‘Selbstzwangapparatur’ verfügten, die ihnen für das moderne zivilisierte Leben notwendige Zurückhaltung auferlegte, so deutet alles darauf hin, daß das genaue Gegenteil der Fall ist und daß im Verlaufe des ‘Zivilisationsprozesses’ immer häufiger Frauen das sexuelle Opfer von Männern wurden und werden” (Duerr, 1993: 409).

## **Genocide and genosorption**

“Human social groups”, write Alexander & Borgia (cf. Alexander, 1974 et seq.),

represent an almost ideal model for potent selection at the group level. First, the human species is composed of competing and essentially hostile groups that have not only behaved toward one another in the manner of different species but have been able quickly to develop enormous differences in reproductive and competitive ability because of cultural innovation and its cumulative effects. Second, human groups are uniquely able to plan and act as units, to look ahead, and to carry out purposely actions designed to sustain the group and improve its competitive position, whether through restricting disruptive behavior from within the group or through direct collective actions against competing groups (Alexander & Borgia, 1978: 470).

Alexander & Borgia do not describe precisely the mechanism omitted from the traditional models of group selection whose inclusion would give it the potent force found in human evolution, but in the celebrated last chapter of Wilson’s *Sociobiology*, we do find a lucid, even haunting, verbal description of this special mechanism, namely, genosorption and genocide:

If any social predatory mammal attains a certain level of intelligence, as the early hominids, being large primates, were especially predisposed to do, one band would have the capacity to consciously ponder the significance of adjacent social groups and to deal with them in an intelligent, organized fashion. A band might then dispose of a neighboring band, appropriate its territory, and increase its own genetic representation in the metapopulation, retaining the tribal memory of this successful episode, repeating it, increasing the geographic range of its

occurrence, and quickly spreading its influence still further in the metapopulation. Such primitive cultural capacity would be permitted by the possession of certain genes. Reciprocally, the cultural capacity might propel the spread of the genes through the genetic constitution of the metapopulation. Once begun, such a mutual reinforcement could be irreversible. The only combination of genes able to confer superior fitness in contention with genocidal aggressors would be those that produce either a more effective technique of aggression or else the capacity to preempt genocide by some form of pacific maneuvering. Either probably entails mental and cultural advance. In addition to being autocatalytic, such evolution has the interesting property of requiring a selection episode only very occasionally in order to proceed as swiftly as individual-level selection. By current theory, genocide or genosorption strongly favoring the aggressor need take place only once every few generations to direct evolution. This alone could push truly altruistic genes to a high frequency within the bands (Wilson, 1975: 573-74; see also Wilson, 1973; Bigelow, 1969; Fremlin, 1972, 1978; Hardin, 1977).

Vining (1981) simulated this process in a mathematical model. The results of this simulation may be summarized as follows: As long as genocidal episodes occur at a rate not too much below one per generation (in a demographically stable metapopulation of ten demes), then even the maximum plausible values for the control parameters allow the attainment of high frequencies of the altruistic allele, A. For significantly lower rates of genocidal episodes than one per generation, however, the parameter window necessary to maintain high frequencies of the altruistic allele shrinks significantly (Vining, 1981: 38).

Genosorption may well have been the more common practice than genocide, however. “50 percent total warfare” (Hardin, 1977: 144), or what Wilson (1975) calls genosorption, whereby the men of the defeated deme are killed and the women fertilized, reduces the size of the ‘parameter window’ necessary for group selection to fix individually deleterious genes quite significantly (Vining, 1981: 39).

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