

Culture and collective violence:
How good people, usually men, do bad things

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“Little by little, we were taught all these things.

We grew into them.”

Adolf Eichmann

We are taught to love; we are taught to hate. We build; we destroy. We give life; we kill. These human activities are the consequences of culture, our birth culture and the individual translation of that cultural heritage we all absorb and carry into our future, further socializing those who associate with us. Culture is profoundly implicated in all we do, and is responsible for legitimating the violence we perpetrate against one another. It answers Mao Tse Tung’s opening question in his *Selected works*, “Who are our friends; who are our enemies?” By providing the answer to this basic social probe and legitimizing our responses, culture becomes the culprit, responsible for the collective violence we perpetrate together against others. Or, for the peace we wage...

In this essay, I will develop the theme of culture as educator, as motivator, as roadmap, as coordinator and as legitimizer of the evil we do in the name of good. Culture

provides the plausibility structures (Berger & Luckman, 1967) for these essential supports to the collective violence we wreak upon one another, but culture is not the agent of the carnage; it is we as social agents acting in concert who provide the daily, proximal supports for the orchestration of collective violence. We reward and we punish those who act with us or against us or who by-stand, thereby motivating ourselves and others to act in accordance with those plausibility structures. Culture proposes; man (usually) disposes.

Many contemporary cultures encompass, however, a rich cornucopia of possibilities, providing ample opportunities for cooperative initiatives, non-violent responses to provocation, and joint consultation for peaceful alternatives. These alternative responses are taught within any cultural group for dealing with in-group members, with the teaching especially designed to promote the female role. These responses are also taught in some cultural sub-groups in terms of social philosophy and guidance, and occasionally become cultural and even national policy, implemented through agencies of socialization.

However, these non-violent alternatives are especially difficult to enact whenever a cultural group considers itself under threat of destruction. So, it is in times of peace that we must act to build institutions for the non-violent resolution of the inevitable problems arising from inter-dependency and our habitation of this single, imperiled planet. Ironically, this integrative process will be prompted when members of a culture are educated to appreciate the enormity of collective violence.



The Enormity of Collective Violence



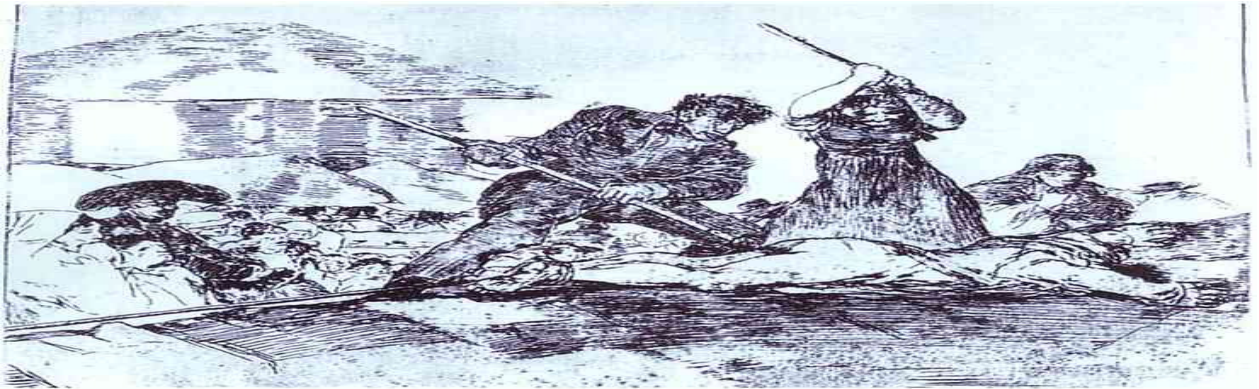
“The horror! The horror!”

Joseph Conrad, *The heart of darkness*

Most of us recoil from the brutality and the carnage and the suffering occasioned by collective violence, although sanitized and fictionalized versions of violence in the media fascinate many viewers. Our revulsion often takes this or other forms of turning away from the sobering facts concerning the real havoc that we wreak upon one another. We are well conditioned to find the pain and distress of violence, along with their accompanying

embodiments in coagulated blood, amputated limbs, emaciated frames, severed limbs, and death masks, abhorrent. This is an understandable, but dangerous reaction. If we cannot confront the specter of collective savagery, even at a remove, how can we be strongly enough motivated to “wage peace”? A reminder of our human downside is a salutary incentive to avoid the downward spiral that leads to the organized destruction of other people.

A Definition of Collective Violence



“Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.”

Shakespeare, *Henry the Fifth*

In chapter 8 of its 2002 *Report on violence and health*, the World Health Organization supplied a definition of collective violence that will suffice for present purposes. It is:

the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group – whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity – against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives. (p. 215)

We are considering *collective* violence, so the group nature of the violence must be underscored. We are in the realm of social movement theory (Garner, 1997). Not only are people identifying themselves as individual members of a group acting against members of another group; they are *acting together*, at varying levels of organized coordination

depending upon the roles they assume in the savagery. These actions may be understood as instrumental to some biological, economic, or political goals, and indeed the actors generally consider that they are acting purposefully.

There are varieties of collective violence, to be sure. The type of violence involved, its scope, its duration, and the complexity of the operational processes leading to the application of destructive, coercive control to the targeted group member vary. So, for example, numerous methods for eliminating the approximately 6 million victims of the Holocaust were explored in the interests of improving efficiency across the many years of its operation, with the German High Command eventually settling upon the use of the gas chambers. Additionally, “the high division of labor so characteristic of Adolph Eichmann’s assembly line of death” (Newman & Erber, 2002, p. 341) meant that, “Even though the Nazi death machine required the active participation of thousands of executioners (as well as the passive cooperation of an even larger number of bystanders), relatively few of them were involved in the actual killing.” (ibid.)

This feature of the collective violence “may have allowed many to convince themselves that they were doing something other than death work.” (ibid.), conferring a social psychological advantage for the perpetrators that may make this collective violence different in terms of its dynamics than, say the Massacre at El Mazote. There, on one day in December, 1991, in a tiny, remote town in El Salvador, around 800 civilians were shot, beheaded by machete, or bayoneted to death by the Atlacatl Battalion of the Salvadorian Army under the command of Colonel Domingo Monterossa Barrios (Danner, 1994). In this case, there were fewer victims and their appalling fate was concealed to all but the perpetrators who completed the atrocities without any “division of labor” in its accomplishment. The social dynamics involved in such a small, short, sharp episode of collective violence are bound to differ in some respects from those like the Holocaust or the

Holodomor, Russia's systematic starvation of seven million Ukrainians in 1932-1933, extensive, long-lasting, diffuse, and mostly bloodless. Nonetheless, the violence in all cases is collective, and engages common cultural considerations (Dutton, Boyanowsky, & Bond, 2005).

In the course of inflicting the savagery, personal motivations other than normative compliance may be met, at least for some perpetrators, and these idiosyncratic needs help sustain and augment the brutality targeted against the enemy by the group as a whole. Individuals with cruel, sadistic and sociopathic dispositions flourish in parlous times, because they are regarded as acting for their group and are therefore tolerated, encouraged, even idolized. But, they need their collective backing them to legitimize, to support and sustain their violence. The group in times of war provides an incubator for these persons, whose acts in times of peace and directed towards in-group members would result in ostracism, imprisonment, or execution. "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war!" as Shakespeare phrased this sanctioned release of dark forces in *Julius Caesar*. Once released, these "dogs" become part of a collective dynamic involving many persons, each of whom has a range of motivations engaged.

The scope of collective violence. Rummel has performed a monumental service to our educational agenda for the 21st century by cataloguing the extent of collective savagery in the 20th century. He refers to mass killing as democide, defined as, "The murder of any person or people by a government, including genocide, politicide, and mass murder." (<http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/DBG.CHAP2.HTM>) Democide is thus the umbrella term, incorporating other forms of organized destruction of human life by political groups, i.e., governments.

By "government killed" is meant any direct or indirect killing by government officials, or government acquiescence in the killing by others, of more than

1,000 people, except execution for what are conventionally considered criminal acts (murder, rape, spying, treason, and the like). This killing is apart from the pursuit of any ongoing military action or campaign, or as part of any conflict event. (<http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/WSJ.ART.HTM>)

War, of course is part of this definition. As Rummel notes:

Our century is noted for its absolute and bloody wars. World War I saw nine-million people killed in battle, an incredible record that was far surpassed within a few decades by the 15 million battle deaths of World War II. Even the number killed in twentieth century revolutions and civil wars have set historical records. In total, this century's battle killed in all its international and domestic wars, revolutions, and violent conflicts is so far about 35,654,000. (ibid)

Staggering as this body count may seem, it is beggared by figures summarizing internal political annihilation by governments against their own citizens. (see Table 1 below)

TABLE 1
TWENTIETH CENTURY KILLED OR DEAD BY CAUSE[a]

Cause	Totals (000)	Averages per 10,000 Population
Government	119,394	349
Non-Free	115,423	494
Communist	95,154	477
Other Non-Free	20,270	495
Partially Free	3,140	48
Free	831	22
War	35,654	22
International	29,683	17
Civil	5,970	26

a. All figures in the table are rounded; therefore the totals of subcategories may be slightly off.

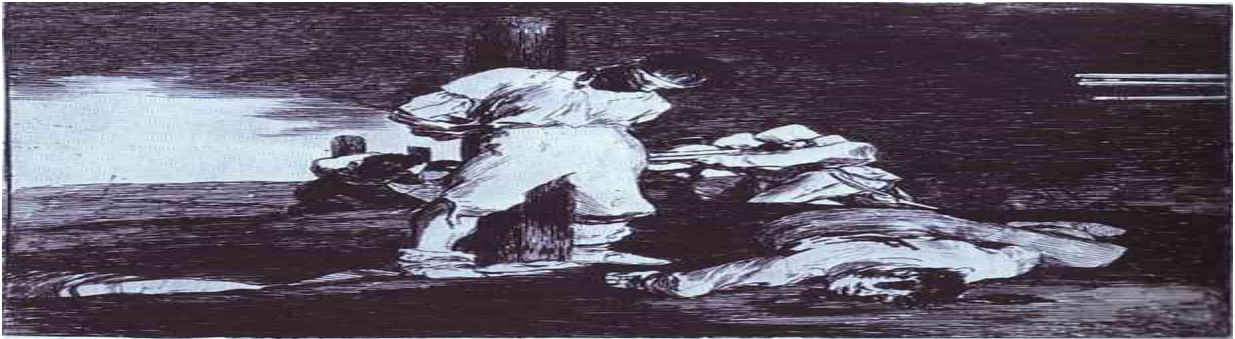
In explaining these numbers and their “fearful symmetry”, Rummel points out that,

The totals in the Table are based on a nation-by-nation assessment and are absolute minimal figures that may under estimate the true total by ten percent

or more. Moreover, these figures do not even include the 1921-1922 and 1958-1961 famines in the Soviet Union and China causing about 4 million and 27 million dead, respectively... However, Table 1 does include the Soviet government's planned and administered starvation of the Ukraine begun in 1932 as a way of breaking peasant opposition to collectivization and destroying Ukrainian nationalism. As many as ten million may have been starved to death or succumbed to famine related diseases; I estimate eight million died. Had these people all been shot, the Soviet government's moral responsibility could be no greater. (ibid.)

Of course, one could dispute the approximate numbers involved, but their magnitude is daunting, however imprecise the details may be. We must remember, too, that Rummel has confined his assessment to 20th century democide, where records are more reliable and methods more lethal. What would the figures reveal for the 19th century, a fragment of which provided the Spanish painter, Goya, with the painful inspiration to depict the arresting images that so powerfully embody the ugliness of war? Descending further back into the bloody history of our species, one could recount the savagery of subjugation, warfare and conquest perpetrated by the forces of Tamerlane, Genghis Khan, Julius Caesar, Vlad the Impaler, Alexander the Great, Montezuma, Muhammad Shah, the Sultan of Kulbarga and other storied characters from history. A sobering web page recounts this body count: (<http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat0.htm0>), pointing out that the absolute numbers must be interpreted proportionally in light of a diminishing world population, as we recede further into time. Such accounts of humanity's staggering legacy led Becker to conclude that, "Creation is a nightmare spectacular, taking place on a planet that has been soaked for hundreds of million years in the blood of all its creatures." (1973, p. 283)

The absolute numbers in this litany of death are appalling enough; the proportions of the populations destroyed are sobering in their social implications. Such high proportions indicate just how widespread the complicity of the fellow citizens, active or passive, must have been to sustain these large-scale acts of sustained savagery against their fellow humans. Of course, these acts of brutality were rationalized by the agencies of state, city-state, duchy, tribe, clan, or village policy, but we must marvel at our human capacity to accept these legitimations, to endorse their animus towards the targeted group, and be mobilized to cooperate in the execution of their fearsome design.



The costs of collective violence. A large part of what we as a species have come to tolerate is the loss of human life chronicled above. Such “war” is, indeed, hell. It brings in its wake “dislocation of populations; the destruction of social networks and ecosystems; insecurity affecting civilians and others not engaged in the fighting; [and] abuses of human rights” (WHO, 2002, p. 215). Furthermore, there are additional deaths due to disease flourishing as a result of the destruction to medical and other infrastructural supports for life, such the water supply and sewage disposal systems. The WHO *Report on Health and violence* lists the range of additional costs in terms of mortality, morbidity and disability:

Examples of the direct impact of conflict on health

<i>Health impact</i>	<i>Causes</i>
Increased mortality	Deaths due to external causes, mainly related to weapons Deaths due to infectious diseases (such as measles, poliomyelitis, tetanus and malaria)

Increased morbidity	Deaths due to non-communicable diseases, as well as deaths otherwise avoidable through medical care (including asthma, diabetes and emergency surgery)
	Injuries from external causes, such as those from weapons, mutilation, anti-personnel landmines, burns, and poisoning
	Morbidity associated with other external causes, including sexual violence
	Infectious diseases: — water-related (such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery due to <i>Shigella</i> spp.) — vector-borne (such as malaria and onchocerciasis) — other communicable diseases (such as tuberculosis, acute respiratory infections, HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases)
	Reproductive health: — a greater number of stillbirths and premature births, more cases of low birth weight and more delivery complications — longer-term genetic impact of exposure to chemicals and radiation
Increased disability	Nutrition: — acute and chronic malnutrition and a variety of deficiency disorders
	Mental health: — anxiety — depression — post-traumatic stress disorder — suicidal behavior
	Physical
	Psychological
	Social

(WHO, 2002, Table 8:2)

This table catalogues an arresting sweep of suffering. Despite its range, it does not include the lost opportunities - psychological, interpersonal, economic, social, and political - that trail in the wake of collective violence. These foregone opportunities, carefully imagined, make our considerations of collective violence doubly excruciating.

The psychological costs of collective violence will be considered in various contexts and from different perspectives throughout the other chapters in this edited volume. My remit is to assess the role of culture in fomenting collective violence, and possibly in transmuting

the potential for collective violence into harmonious solutions to our group interdependencies.



Becoming Encultured



The emphasis on culture as difference overlooks the fact that the capacity to inhabit a culturally organized environment is the universal species-specific of homo sapiens.

Michael Cole, *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*

Without culture, there is no collective violence. Collective violence is a group orchestration, relying for its expression and unfolding on how each cultural group has socialized its members to meet the basic concerns addressed by all cultures everywhere, anytime. As argued by Schwartz (1994), there are "...three universal requirements of human existence to which all individuals and societies must be responsive: needs of individuals as biological organisms, requirements of coordinated social action, and survival and welfare needs of groups" (p. 88). Each cultural system is a particular solution to these requirements, arising out of the interplay between its historical legacy, including traditions, and its current ecological-historical niche.

A culture's members are socialized to be functioning members of this solution. Within the limits imposed by each their genetic endowments, each cultural group member assumes some of the available roles on offer within his or her culture, observing the norms by which the cultural group ensures its integrity, and over time develops the psychological software necessary to function within that cultural system. Psychologists study these outputs of this life-long socialization in the form of personality dispositions and identities, along with values, beliefs, and attitudes, including political attitudes and ideologies specific to their cultural group (see Bond, 2004, for an elaboration of this argument). It is individuals, socialized into their group and orchestrated by its cultural system, who become galvanized by events to wreak collective violence upon legitimized targets. Or, who practice collective negotiation using non-coercive means...

Culture's Functions

“What kind of a bird are you,
if you can’t sing?”, chirped the bird.
What kind of a bird are you,
If you can’t swim?”, retorted the duck.”

Serge Prokofiev, *Peter and the wolf*

“Our way of life” is our culture, and every group has a culture. It is simultaneously a *modus vivendi*, a *modus operandi*, and a *modus sustandi*, a solution to the pan-cultural human challenges of surviving biologically as organisms, of coordinating projects with one another, and of maintaining the very group upon which we are dependent for our continuing capacity to live, work, and play, and be persons. Our culture has material embodiments, in the form of tools and built environments, and also subjective realizations in the psychological repertoire of its members, moving through their individual life cycles and coordinating their enactments with those of other group members at various stages in their life cycles.

For the purpose of this essay, a cultural situation for a given group may be examined “as a lattice-work of constraints and affordances which shape the behavioral development of its members into similar patterns.” (Bond, 2004, p. 62) This particular ecological-historical niche includes the social institutions that have been developed across time and across the lives of its contributing members to cope with the group’s current situation. A group’s institutions play a key role in this process, “...as the formulative agency of individual consciousness.” (Berger (1967, p. 15) The resultant socialization process for a group’s members produces the subjective realization of each cultural solution as,

A shared system of beliefs (what is true), values (what is important), expectations, especially about scripted behavioral sequences, and behavior meanings (what is implied by engaging in a given action) developed by a group over time to provide the requirements of living (food and water, protection against the elements, security, social belonging, appreciation and respect from others, and the exercise of one’s skills in realizing one’s life purpose) in a particular geographical niche. This shared system enhances communication of meaning and coordination of actions among a culture's members by reducing uncertainty and anxiety through making its member's behavior predictable, understandable, and valued. (Bond, 2004, p. 62)

Internalization of the culture is achieved, a process described by Berger (1967) as, “...the reabsorption into consciousness of the objectivated world in such a way that the structures of this world come to determine the subjective structures of consciousness itself.” (p. 17) In consequence, “The institutional programs set up by society (become) subjectively real as attitudes, motives and life projects.” (p. 17, brackets added) Thereby, “Every social action implies that that individual meaning is directed towards others, and ongoing social interaction implies that the several meanings of the actors are integrated into an order of common

meaning.” (p. 19) Given the sharedness in such socialized output, the “subjective” realization of culture becomes objective, in the sense that most of the group’s members are in public accord on many aspects of this common system.

A functioning cultural system does not require psychologically identical members, similar in every respect. Such templated outputs would be impossible, of course, given each person’s distinctive genetic profile (Pinker, 2002). What is necessary is that group members play by the same set of rules for coordinating the activities necessary in meeting the pan-cultural challenges of living. These rules include a division of labor across the genders and the life span, a logic of resource distribution, and procedural norms for integrating members’ inputs in meeting the various tasks of life. Thereby, “Every social action implies that that individual meaning is directed towards others and ongoing social interaction implies that the several meanings of the actors are integrated into an order of common meaning.” (Berger, 1967, p. 19)

Cultural systems evolve over time to meet these challenges and the vicissitudes of change more effectively. This evolution focuses upon “functionally specific” components of the system necessary to ensure a viable adaptation to changing external conditions, including inter-group relations (Yang, 1988); other features of the cultural system are retained, since they still work well enough. To the extent that the evolving system meets the challenges of living, a culture survives and socializes its members to appreciate and laud their heritage, its “way of life”.

Some Universal Processes potentiating Collective Violence



GOYA - Disparates Plate 3 - eeweems.com/goya

“Only the dead have seen the end of war.”

George Santayana, *Soliloquies in England*

Each person is born into a family located in a setting that includes other families governed by a set of rules for ensuring their survival as families and for coordinating daily activities with other families and their members. This set of rules is followed as an alternative to struggling for survival separately in a Hobbesian jungle. Through socialization, members of this grouping come to share the tools, knowledge, language and organizational-enforcement structure necessary for the survival of the group and the extension of its members' interests.

A huge investment of human and material resources is contributed by members over their lifetimes to their system and to one another as group members. This investment is sustained by conferring status upon group heroes who contribute to the group's survival and welfare, and by ostracizing in various ways those who undermine the system. This investment is rationalized through identification with the group by its members, the development of group loyalty, and a commitment to conserve the group's “way of life”.

“Groupism” underpins all viable systems.

In-groupism.



Just as “No man is an island, entire unto itself” (Donne), no group, however defined, is alone, occupying its territory without interacting with other groups and its members. Throughout human history, groups have been brought into contact as they foraged, hunted for prey, relocated because of natural disasters and epidemics, or attempted to extend their animal, vegetable and mineral holdings by acquiring those controlled by other groups.

Our evolutionary history has thus alerted every person to the resource implications of group membership, the survival needs served by continuing group membership, and the potential threat posed by members of other groups (Suedfield & Schaller, 2002). “For most of the history of our species, they argue, it would have been quite reasonable and adaptive to (identify outsiders accurately), to mistrust outsiders and seek to minimize encounters with them (Newman & Erber, 2002, p. 329-330, brackets added). A trans-temporal and trans-cultural inculcation into the us-them, same-other, insider-outsider, distinction seems to be basic to all social groups, and to become part of the socialization processes required for continuing membership and avoidance of being ostracised by “us-same-insiders”. After an extensive review of the historical evidence, Jahoda concludes,

An historical perspective serves to highlight...the enormous power and remarkable persistence of sentiments of attachment to one’s own group and of potential hostility directed against ‘the *Other*’. They can be suppressed, but this does not necessarily eradicate them...Antagonisms between human groups have been the rule throughout history and have taken similar forms...The sentiments mobilized are often not only strong, but also long-enduring, and usually hard to eliminate. (2002, pp. 5-7).

In-group identification thus appears readily available to us as a social species, and mobilizable as a rallying call in times of threat.

Predation.

Cruelty has a human heart

And jealousy a human face,

Terror the human form divine,

And secrecy the human dress.

The human dress is forged iron,

The human form a fiery forge,

The human face a furnace seal'd,

The human heart its hungry gorge.

William Blake, *Songs of experience*

Nell (in press) has argued that another vestige of our evolutionary past is our human capacity for savagery against one another in the form of cruelty. “Cruelty is the deliberate infliction of physical or psychological pain on other living creatures, sometimes indifferently, but often with delight.” (abstract) He explores the puzzle that, “Though cruelty is an overwhelming presence in the world, there is no neurobiological or psychological explanation for its ubiquity and reward value.” (abstract) Nell describes three stages in the development of cruelty:

Stage 1 is the development of the predatory adaptation from the Palaeozoic to the ethology of predation in canids, felids, and primates. *Stage 2*, through

palaeontological and anthropological evidence, traces the emergence of the hunting adaptation in the Pliocene, its development in early hominids and its emotional loading in surviving forager societies. This adaptation provides an explanation for the powerful emotions—high arousal and strong affect—evoked by the pain-blood-death complex. *Stage 3* is the emergence of cruelty about 1.5 million years ago as a hominid behavioural repertoire that promoted fitness through the maintenance of personal and social power. The resulting cultural elaborations of cruelty in war, in sacrificial rites, and as entertainment are examined to show the historical and cross-cultural stability of the uses of cruelty for punishment, amusement, and social control. (abstract)

Nell uses his analysis of “cruelty’s rewards” to “provide a heuristic for understanding ...why, despite the human capacity for compassion, atrocities continue.” (p. 2)

The reward value of inflicting cruelty derives from “competitive aggression, which confers fitness by solving an animal’s problems in relation to self-preservation, protection of the young, and resource competition.” (p. 4) Components of cruelty – the sights, sounds, smells, frantic movements and taste of living creatures being killed and consumed in a successful hunt - become secondary reinforcers as part of the “pain-blood-death complex”. Predatory behaviour may thus have been stamped into our species.

Nell (in press) then describes the social use of cruelty as a tool for binding an individual to his or her social group by inflicting exemplary pain on a disloyal member or on one who refuses to serve as an instrument of state control, e.g., as a military conscript. Onlookers attending these disciplinary dramas, as in the feeding of the Christians to the lions in the Rome of the Emperor Commodus, were riveted to these cruel spectacles, and simultaneously socialized into a fearful compliance with state policies. Of additional importance for an understanding of collective violence, however, is Nell’s contention that,

War may be the most significant social product of the predatory adaptation.

The ...emotional state of the warrior in combat mimics that of predators and hunters, with high arousal, positive affect, and heightened libido, which in turn raises the possibility that in the transition from predation to intraspecific, non-nutritional killing, the reinforcers of the pain-blood-death complex complex have become attached to combat and warfare. (p. 20)

Part of what sustains warfare in its manifold forms of violence against the enemy then is “cruelty’s rewards”. As Nell speculates, “It is possible that in combat and in cruel acts, the intensity of wounding and killing activity is escalated by pain, just as the dopaminergic biochemistry of predation, in itself powerfully rewarding, may be augmented by endorphin release in response to exertion and pain.” (p. 20)

Of course, no society can survive if cruelty is allowed to run rampant. Its displays must be regulated and focused. Paraphrasing Elias, Nell (in press) argues that, “...centralised state power created pacified social spaces, the restraint of aggressive instincts was internalised, and “an automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control [was] established ... [protected] by a wall of deep-rooted fears” (p. 368). So, human nature, “red in tooth and claw”, was brought to heel, in the interests of in-group stability. But, “...these barriers are permeable and crumble as opportunity and situation allow.” (p. 22) We consider those opportunities and situations below, under the heading, “Culture as culprit”.

The male role.



“Lady Macbeth: Are you a man?

Macbeth: Ay, and a bold one,

That dare to look on that which might appal the devil.”

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

Killing is disproportionately the work of men. Until recently, only men served as combatants in armies, paramilitaries and other state or political agencies of lethal control. Their primary role in enactments of mob violence, torture, rape, razing and pillage is obvious. Consistent with this generality, males engage in more individual acts of homicide in all countries where perpetrator gender is recorded, and are found cross-culturally to show greater levels of any externalizing disorder, such as truancy, delinquency, and vandalism, than women (Verhulst et al., 2003).

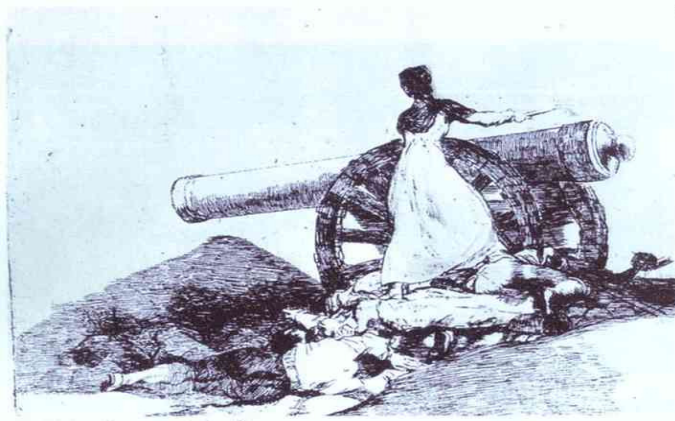
In explaining gender differences in human behaviour, Wood & Eagly (2002) conclude that the cross-cultural data supports a biosocial analysis, such that:

...sex differences derive from the interaction between the physical specialization of the sexes, especially female reproductive capacity, and the economic and social structural aspects of societies. This biosocial approach treats the psychological attributes of women and men as emergent given the evolved characteristics of the sexes, their developmental experiences, and their situated activity in society. (p. 699)

In part, then, male predominance in destructive activity may be explained by biological gender roles, universally predicated on women's unique capacity for childbirth and male's physical advantage in hunting and foraging. Stereotypes have developed, crystallized around role specialization derived from roles associated with nurturance of children and provision of food, such that men are pan-culturally regarded as more active and as more potent (Williams & Best, 1990), using Osgood's basic three factors of affective meaning (Osgood, Suci, and

Tannenbaum, 1957). These three components of meaning may be used to show that pan-culturally, the profile of men as stronger and more vigorous is closer to the associations given pan-culturally to concepts allied with violence, such as aggression, anger, argument, army, battle, competition, conflict, crime, danger, murder and pain (Osgood, May, & Miron, 1975).

Males are then socialized to adopt roles requiring greater activity and potency, and are rewarded for instantiating them ably. Endorsement of these “gender definitions” has been shown by Heimer and De Coster (1999) to explain the differential rates of delinquency between men and women. Consistent with this observation is Ember and Ember’s (1994) conclusion, “that the rated level of homicide/assault across 186 societies was predicted most strongly by the socialization for aggression of males in late childhood in those societies.” (quoted in Bond, 1994, p. 67) That men are raised and socialized to engage in more destructive social activities than women is clear; the size of this difference may be culturally moderated, as Archer (2005) has shown by comparing the national ratios of domestic violence by male and female partners. How this difference moderates across different social structures, and the associated socialization practices required to effect this moderation of difference and overall level of destructiveness need to be examined (Bond, 2004), since both effects are relevant to our consideration of collective violence.



Culture as Culprit



“When our own nation is at war with any other,
we detest them under the character of cruel, perfidious, unjust and violent:
But always esteem ourselves and allies equitable, moderate, and merciful.”

David Hume, *A treatise of human nature*

The evolutionary legacies considered above seem to predispose us as a species towards violence as a probable response to resource interdependencies. There is a ready supply of group members, usually male, socialized to act aggressively towards others who threaten their group’s welfare. At least for some, there will be a delight in the predation that may be involved, and their delight may release other co-actors to join in the sustained savagery frequently evidenced during massacres (Dutton et al., 2005). These evolutionary predispositions must, however, be mobilized and orchestrated. This is the role of culture, *par excellence*.

Circumstances favoring Collective Violence

“Construe the times to their necessities,
And you will say indeed, it is the time,
And not the king, that doth you injuries.”

Shakespeare, *Henry the Fourth, Part two*

It is impossible to disentangle culture from the circumstances in which that culture functions because a cultural system is a negotiated response to those very circumstances. However, a cultural system develops slowly and cumulatively in response to routine challenges posed by its ambient conditions of life. Its previous adequacy in meeting these challenges results in a cultural conservatism that gives cultural systems an inertia, aided by the socialization for the endorsement of “our way of life” that all such systems inculcate.

The socialized logic of this cultural system will shape its response to circumstances that predispose towards collective violence. These circumstances have been identified by historically analyzing episodes of collective violence to extract common features informing these episodes. So, the WHO report on collective violence concludes that,

The risk factors for violent conflicts include:

Political factors:

- a lack of democratic processes;
- unequal access to power.

Economic factors:

- grossly unequal distribution of resources;
- unequal access to resources;
- control over key natural resources;
- control over drug production or trading.

Societal and community factors:

- inequality between groups;
- the fuelling of group fanaticism along ethnic, national or religious lines;
- the ready availability of small arms and other weapons.

Demographic factors:

- rapid demographic change. (WHO, 2002, p. 220)

As a social psychologist, Staub (2002) translates these risk factors psychologically by claiming that they constitute,

...the primary activators of basic needs, which demand fulfillment...These include needs for security, for a positive identity, for effectiveness and control over important events in one's life, for positive connection to other people, and for a meaningful understanding of the world or comprehension of reality. (pp. 12-13)

Berger (1967) eloquently describes the human need for order made salient in chaotic times:

...the marginal situations of human existence reveal the innate precariousness of all social worlds...Every socially constructed *nomos* must face the constant possibility of its collapse into anomy...every *nomos* is an area of meaning carved out of a vast mass of meaninglessness, a small clearing of lucidity in a formless, dark, always ominous jungle. (p. 23)

This and other human needs are frustrated and seemingly impossible to achieve in these threatening and anomic circumstances. Unmet, they generate, "psychological processes in

individuals and social process in (their) groups...that turn the group against others as they offer destructive fulfillment of these needs.” (Staub, 2002, p. 13, brackets added) This edited collection considers the price for both perpetrators and their victims of meeting our human needs through these acts of destruction.

What is missing from this analysis, however, is the multitude of cases throughout history when cultural systems faced the same circumstances, but did not engage in collective violence. When they consider a fuller range of cultural responses to similar sets of circumstances, social scientists conclude that, “...there is no universal set of necessary or sufficient conditions that will trigger a crisis.” (Newman & Erber, 2002, p. 329) Difficult circumstances potentiate but do not generate collective violence (see also Suedfield, 2001). So, what must exist in a cultural system to generate collective violence? Newman and Erber conclude that, “local values, attitudes and expectations will determine the degree of subjective distress associated with specific objective conditions.” (p. 329) This is a position of cultural relativism, according culture a moderating role in exacerbating its members’ degree of perceived distress.

Culture and the Perceived Distress arising from Difficult Circumstances



“We do not see things as they are,
we see them as we are.”

Anais Nin

Engaging in collective violence demands high levels of sustained contributions by large numbers of individuals cooperating in the messy, resource-sapping and often dangerous work of harming and destroying other human beings. High levels of distress among the population constituting a cultural group can provide fuel for such savagery. If cultural systems amplify the distress generated by difficult life circumstances, then a powerful psychological force can be recruited to mobilize collective violence. Conversely, if cultural systems moderate the distress generated by difficult life circumstances, then less psychological force can be recruited to mobilize collective violence.

Certainly individual members of a given culture vary in the degree to which they are distressed by the circumstances of life that they face as members of that culture. There is a whole literature on life dissatisfaction, negative affect, and social cynicism as psychological outcomes showing that such measures of distress are moderated or amplified by culturally related, psychological dispositions (Diener & Tov, 2005; Smith, Bond, & Kagitcibasi, ch. 4, 2006). So, if the average level of these key psychological dispositions were greater or lesser in some cultural systems compared to others, then they might act as buffers or as amplifiers of external circumstances and their effect on levels of distress. For example, if members of a given culture were higher in their belief about the role of fate in human affairs (see e.g., Leung & Bond, 2004), then perhaps they would react with less distress to difficult circumstances because they have been socialized to believe that life is full of inevitable, unchangeable difficulties anyway. So, a sensible reaction under this cultural logic is detachment. On the other hand, if members of a given culture were higher in the value they attach to human rights and equality (e.g., Schwartz's, 1994, egalitarian commitment), then

perhaps they would react with greater distress to difficult circumstances because they have been socialized to value just and humane outcomes for all.

Higher general distress of individuals is not, however, action; it certainly does not constitute organized social violence against members of another social group. Beyond a certain threshold level, it may provide a facilitating background condition, but is certainly not a sufficient condition for collective violence to occur.

Culture and Mobilizing Collective Violence



“ ‘...the Germans should have known better.

They were traitors to Western culture.’

The Japanese, on the other hand, were following holocaustic precedents

That went back to Genghis Khan.”

William Manchester, quoting General Douglas MacArthur, in *American Caesar*, p. 568

Having a large number of distressed group members is not enough to foment collective violence. A group’s members must be marshaled, organized and focused.

All persons are socialized not to physically harm their in-group members. This fundamental injunction will generalize to other conspecifics, but can be overcome with the

perception of in-group support for violence against the out-group and its members. This support will include direct socialization *for* aggression (Ember & Ember, 1994), and will involve providing specialized organizations and venues for its training. Historical evidence shows that most “ordinary” persons can be brought to kill and maim others (Browning, 1988), though the role is usually assigned to men, and both social pressure and specific training is required (Grossman, 1995) to overcome their initial squeamishness socialized from childhood to protect the in-group from internal disruption and harm.

Socialization that facilitates collective violence must include training other group members to support those who perpetrate the actual violence. This support comes in the form of voiced approval of their heinous acts, usually rationalized as loyal service to the in-group, a protection of the in-group against malicious others who would destroy it and its way of life. This support can even extend to accepting as “inevitable” the loss of life and suffering from “collateral damage” to non-combatants and to children of the other group (“war is hell”). The destruction of non-combatants is often rationalized during atrocities by reminding perpetrators that these others may well one day become warriors with revenge in their hearts (Dutton et al., 2005).

A group’s members must also be willing to accept the costs that engaging in collective violence will always entail - the rationing, the limitations on personal freedom, the re-deployment of services to support the military, the decline in civilian health, and the destruction of the environment. They must be willing to endure these privations, and to support other group members in doing so. At the very least, group members must be socialized not to object, to interfere or to intervene in the carnage or destruction of the identified enemy. This passivity is usually easy to ensure, as strong norms of ostracism and even execution of dissenters (quislings) will be salient during times of heightened threat to one’s personal and group existence (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Any such resistance is

dangerous, as it undercuts the perception of unanimity that is essential for maintaining group members' resolve to fight and to support the fighting (see Fein, 1979; and Staub, 2002 on the importance of bystander intervention), and so must be vigorously suppressed. As the Russian proverb puts it, "When you run with the pack, you don't have to bark, but at least you must wag your tail."

These considerations relate to the marshaling and the orchestration of collective violence. The issue here is ensuring a broad-based participation in the collective group effort required to enact extensive, sustained destruction of other human beings. There are different social roles to be meshed in achieving this "final solution", but they all require that individuals in the group embrace the group agenda of destroying out-group members, with each playing his or her role.

Some cultural systems are more effective at socializing their members to comply in perpetrating violence against other groups. "All societies teach some respect for and obedience to authority, but there is great variation in degree." (Staub, 1999, p. 204) Considerable support for Staub's contention has emerged from cross-cultural studies of conformity – variations in agreement in the Asch line-judgment paradigm (Bond & Smith, 1996) and variations in acquiescent response bias (Smith, 2004), both showing effects across cultures corresponding to greater degrees of hierarchy, power distance or societal cynicism of that cultural grouping. Compliance-proneness is a crucial feature of more collectivist cultural groups that makes them more mobilizable for perpetrating collective violence (Oyserman & Lauffer, 2002). For, as Staub (1999) argues,

In strongly authority-orientated societies, people will be more affected by difficult life conditions, when the capacity of their leaders, the authorities, to provide security and effective leadership breaks down. They will have more difficulty dealing with conditions of uncertainty (Soeters, 1996). They will

yearn for new leaders who offer hopeful visions of the future. They will be more likely to blame other groups for life problems, they will also be less likely to speak out against their leaders as their leaders begin to move them along a continuum of destruction. Finally, they may be more easily directed by leaders to engage in immoral and violent acts. (p. 204)

In-groupism is a related feature of collectivist cultural systems that predisposes them to move faster and with more deadly force along “the continuum of destruction” characterizing collective violence. The boundary between in-group and out-group members is more sharply drawn in such cultures (Gudykunst & Bond, 1997; Oyserman & Lauffer, 2002), making it easier to de-humanize out-group members, thereby legitimating their extermination (Dutton et al., 2005). This process of boundary-drawing is usually reinforced by historical animosities towards the other group and motives of revenge perpetuated by inadequate attempts at reconciliation and provision of reparations to the aggrieved group that can now regard itself as embarking on a mission of retributive justice.

Group Ideologies



“We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable...”,
later changed by Jefferson to read,
“We hold these truths to be self-evident...”

American Declaration of Independence

Ideologies are organized explanations about reality, especially about how the social world functions and what must be done to create a just social system. Within that social

system and whether promulgated as sacred or self-evident or usually both, these group-defining ideologies become undeniable. All groups develop ideologies to rationalize, legitimate and ennoble its history and to shape its future; they are necessary human adaptations to meet the basic human needs for order, interpersonal coordination and meaning.

A group's ideologies are inculcated by the group's institutions - familial, educational, occupational and religious - becoming shared and helping to define what an acceptable member of that group believes and should endorse. These institutions legitimize the social order and produce a group consensus around both what is true and what is good. As Berger (1967) puts it, "Legitimations...can be both cognitive and normative in character. They do not only tell people what *ought to be*. Often they merely propose what *is*. (pp. 29-30)

These legitimations are reinforced with varying degrees of unanimity by the totality of socialization processes that constitute what Berger (1967) calls the "plausibility structure" for the ideology. "When we add up all these factors –social definitions of reality, social relations that take these [definitions of reality] for granted, as well as the supporting therapies and legitimations – we have the total plausibility structure of the conception in question." (p. 52) The plausibility structures supporting these ideologies result in "Internalization ...into consciousness of the objectivated world in such a way that the structures of this world come to determine the subjective structures of consciousness itself." (Berger, 1967, p. 14-15). This internalization of ideologies is content-general and arises from a powerful human motivation to embrace social order. As posited by Jost and Hunyady (2005),

...people are motivated to justify and rationalize the way things are, so that existing social, economic, and political arrangements tend to be perceived as fair and legitimate. We postulate that there is, as with virtually all other psychological motives (e.g., self-enhancement, cognitive consistency), both (a) a general motivational tendency to rationalize the status quo and (b)

substantial variation in the expression of that tendency due to situational and dispositional factors. (p. 260)

The combined force of a group's plausibility structures plus the motivation posited above to endorse the status quo, results in the adoption of a group's ideologies by its members. So, "The institutional programs set up by society [become] subjectively real as attitudes, motives and life projects." (Berger, 1967, p. 17, brackets added). However, "...the social world (with its appropriate institutions, roles, and identities) is not passively absorbed by the individual, but actively *appropriated* by him." (p.18) The degree of this appropriation will vary along Kelman's (1961) continuum ranging from compliance to internalization, but regardless of its level of endorsement by an individual member, that ideology will be regarded as consensually embraced by members of the group and will help to define that group's identity by its members and by members of other groups interacting with that group and its members.

Ideologies of antagonism and violence.



“You have occupied our land, defiled our honor, violated our dignity,
shed our blood, ransacked our money, demolished our houses,
rendered us homeless and tampered with our security.
We will treat you in the same way.”

Osama Bin-Laden, tape of January 19, 2006, translated by the British
Broadcasting Corporation, January 21, 2006

Staub (1988) has identified “ideologies of antagonism” as a crucial social component in focusing collective animosity and targeting an out-group for violent acts. An ideology of antagonism is “an especially intense form of devaluation...a perception of the other as an enemy and a group identity in which enmity to the other is an integral component...it often remains part of the deep structure of the culture and can reemerge when instigating conditions for violence are present.” (Staub, 1999, p. 183) These ideologies provide an explanation for the difficult life circumstances being faced by a group and identify other groups and its members as causes of those adversities. They facilitate “moral disengagement” from the sanctioned act of killing others (Bandura, 1999).

As part of this ideology, an out-group is perceived as malevolent and unchangeable, indifferent to the plight of one’s group, thereby justifying defensive and retaliatory violence against that group (Gudykunst & Bond, 1997; Stephan, 1985). Descendants of these out-group members are expected to engage in retaliatory acts themselves against one’s group for its violence, thereby inciting and justifying one’s group to exterminate men, women and children, civilians as well as combatants lest they fulfill these prophecies of doom (Dutton et al., 2005). Through the reinterpetive agency of these ideologies, in-group members come to regard themselves as doing good as they perform bad deeds in order to protect the in-group and its way of life.

In their work on system justification theory, Jost and Hunyady (2005) provide evidence that the tendency to defend and justify the status quo is strengthened by experimentally manipulated threats to the system. However, these laboratory-based threats are trivial compared to Staub's "difficult life circumstances" that confront cultural groups provoked to collective violence. Mortality salience in the form of potential death from untoward events or attack by another hostile group further enhances the endorsement of one's group and its ideology. This unification around the ideology that helps define one's system is crucially important in mobilizing members of the system to begin acting against the scapegoated out-group. Perception of this in-group consensus combines with one's own sharpened resolve to believe that one's hostile acts towards out-group members will be accepted, even lauded, by one's group members.

The role of religion.



“In religion,
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text?”

Shakespeare, *The merchant of Venice*

Religion is fundamentally implicated in some episodes of collective violence, such as the Crusades, but in others it plays an auxiliary role by supporting political agendas, as in current Sri Lankan violence, or none at all, as in Ghengis Khan's wars of conquest in the 13th century or Vlad the Impaler's savagery against the populace of Transylvania in the 15th. Religion is ideology that includes explicit commentary on the origin and nature of the manifest world of daily affairs, a person's relationship to this mundane reality and to any immanent or transcendent forces that underpin the observable flux of mundane reality. Liht and Conway (2005) assess the psychological purposes of religion by claiming that it serves a "meta-narrative function in which personal situations are incorporated into an over-arching sense of order and coherence that conveys a sense of meaning, control, and optimism." (p. 3) These are powerful human motives that can find realization and expression in religious commitment by members of a cultural system. Many cultural systems are centrally defined by their "cultures of religion", and these religious ideologies command considerable following. Their credibility in the minds of individual believers is sustained by all the "plausibility structures" (Berger, 1967) that surround religious practices in that cultural system.

For present purposes, religious ideology addresses three crucial issues, also addressed by secular political ideologies, with varying degrees of scriptural explicitness: "Who is my brother and sister (Mao's question), and how should he or she and non-brothers or non-sisters be treated?"; "Is there an afterlife, and how does one's behavior in this life affect one's state in that afterlife?"; and "Who is the source of authority in interpreting the religious ideology?" The answers provided to the first question define the boundary, if any, between in-group and out-group, and identifies the behaviors towards those two types of persons that will be rewarded, ignored, or punished. If non-believers are non-brothers or non-sisters, and if non-brothers or non-sisters may be treated less humanely than believers, then the groundwork for an ideology of antagonism with a basis in religion has been scaffolded and is available for

deployment as the occasion requires. A socially supported sense of rightness then develops around these behavioral prescriptions for dealing with non-believers.

The second issue of an afterlife and prescriptions for its attainment has become salient in light of recent acts of suicidal terrorism. Movements supporting suicidal terrorism enjoy an extended human history, and do not require ideological support from religion to motivate their destructive acts against other groups (Hazani, 1993). Nonetheless, religious ideology can be used to justify a personal disregard for this life, i.e., rejection of the quotidian world (Liht & Conway, 2005) and to promise a fulfilling afterlife whose attainment typically depends upon one's actions in this life. If those actions include the elimination of non-believers, then the logic sustaining religiously inspired collective violence is in place.

That logic can be utilized by religious authorities if the religious ideology has historically been interpreted by individuals specially qualified for this role. This issue of authority is the third question addressed by every religion. Such theocratic traditions can invest religious leaders with interpretive legitimacy and the power to inspire followers, mobilizing them to act against non-believers. This potential for authoritarian targeting of non-believers is enhanced when the support for such animus is not explicitly contradicted by the scriptures of the religion in question and when the founding of the religion involved warfare and subjugation, as in Islam.

The Catalyst of Leadership



“And Caesar’s spirit, ranging for revenge,
 With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
 Shall in these confines with a monarch’s voice
 Cry “Havoc”, and let slip the dogs of war.”

Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

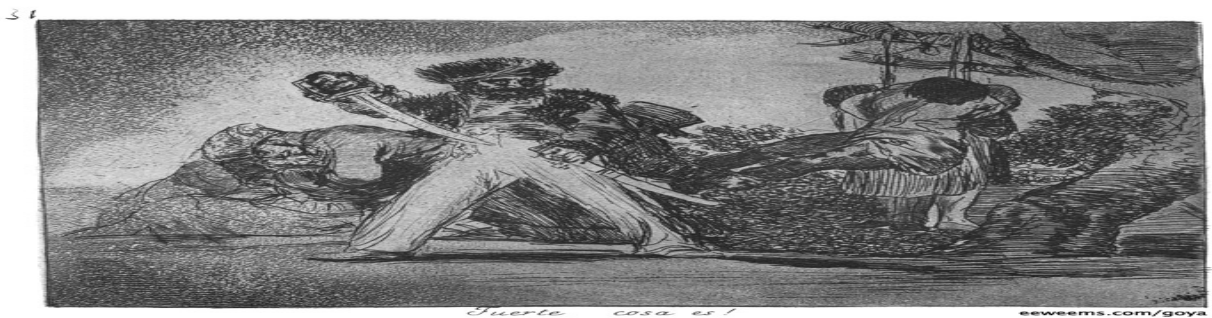
Staub (1999) points out that Hutu leaders in Rwanda used their control of radio broadcasts, the major form of mass communication in a poor agrarian society, to terrify their population with stories of rebel Tutsi armies mobilizing to inflict savagery upon the Hutus. Already primed by difficult life circumstances and a historically based ideology of antagonism against Tutsis, the Hutus began forming paramilitary units to engage in pre-emptive strikes against Tutsis. These acts became “group-fulfilling prophecies” with Tutsis arming and attacking Hutus in an escalating cycle of retaliatory and defensive strikes against one another. Local leaders, already identified through agencies of socialization during peaceful times, arose during these parlous times to orchestrate local acts of savagery. They acted as diligent lieutenants, executing the terrible logic unleashed by the alarmist pronouncements of the central authorities.

As illustrated in the Rwandan genocide, the crucial leadership role in collective violence is that of the politician-ideologue who galvanizes a disaffected population with credible and unchallenged visions of a malevolent other group. He (almost always a “he”) is able to do so because the political-social structure has effectively muted any contrary voices. In consequence, the in-group may be mobilized and focused with no apparent internal resistance. This assessment of how leadership functions within a receptive social and institutional setting to foment and target collective violence is consistent with Andrew Nathan’s assessment of Mao’s role in 20th century Chinese democide:

A caricature Mao is too easy a solution to the puzzle of modern China's history. What we learn from this history is that there are some very bad people: it would have been more useful, as well as closer to the truth, had we been shown that there are some very bad institutions and some very bad situations, both of which can make bad people even worse, and give them the incentive and the opportunity to do terrible things. (Nathan, 2005, p. 1)

The leader in collective violence does not cause the savagery; he midwives the savagery, crystallizing a group's resolve to mobilize itself in defense of its interests, to attack and eliminate those who threaten its survival and advancement.

Individual Differences in the Social Processes sustaining Collective Violence



“I shot a man in Reno,
just to see him die.”

Johnny Cash, *Folsom Prison blues* In analyzing predatory savagery, Nell acknowledges that there exist “large individual differences in cruelty’s eliciting triggers and behavioural expressions on the one hand, and an understanding of the needs and gratifications of perpetrators on the other.” (p. 22) The reward value of cruelty-elicited stimuli varies unequally across a population, such that most group members find inflicting pain on other humans repugnant. However, a crucial few in any large group will be predisposed through as yet-unspecified genetic endowment (Nell, in press), early nutritional deficiencies leading to

inadequate pre-frontal development (Raine, Mellingen, Liu, Venables, & Mednick, 2003), or socialization processes leading to the development of sadistic sociopathy (Murphy & Vess, 2003) to revel in the opportunity to brutalize others in a socially sanctioning environment.

For them, predation is arousing, and now the circumstances are right. The normative structure of group life changes during periods of collective violence, and violence against non-group members becomes both justifiable and justified. Normally suppressed acts of savagery are now ennobled, and those readier and more able to enact them become group heroes, rewarded for their skills (Dutton et al., 2005). They inspire ambivalent others to participate, and there is evidence to suggest that victim-elicited pain responses become gratifying to some of these group members now inspired by the core sociopaths to brutalize the enemy. They become addicted to the rush of the carnage through the same opponent-process model of learning that is hypothesized to render any initially repelling act pleasurable, as in many addictions (Baumeister & Campbell, 1999). Acts of collective violence thereby become self-reinforcing, as many normally persons are transformed into predatory beasts (Browning, 1998). The number of “willing executioners” reaches a critical mass (Ball, 2004), and sustains the fighting group’s destructive momentum. A social tipping point may be reached (Gladwell, 2000), and, given sufficiently frequent encounters with the enemy, the frenzy can continue unabated. This is exactly what happened during the Japanese occupation of China from 1937-1945 – the Nanjing massacre was the apogee of concentrated carnage, but episodic massacres occurred routinely until the Japanese were defeated. (Rummel, 1991).

These frenzies may generate reprisals from the now mobilized out-group, if it has the capacity and the will to resist. The level of retaliatory savagery spawned often involves counter-brutalization of the enemy, further justifying and mobilizing attacks by the original attackers. This cycle of brutality is common in war, but is also characteristic of episodic

terrorism. The latest atrocity experienced legitimizes the next atrocity inflicted, provoking each group to counter-attack in its turn. Having been unleashed, The Furies may only be stopped by the capitulation of one group or the intervention of a superior power to enforce a cessation of hostilities.



Culture as Solution



“The same species that invented war is capable of inventing peace.”

Seville Statement on Violence

In describing the social evolution of cruelty, Nell (in press) argues that we are predisposed towards savagery by our evolutionary heritage as a species. That heritage works through our genetic endowment to render predation and its sublimated forms in entertainment magnetic for large numbers of people, the exercise social discipline and warfare arousing and reinforcing as well as functional. Analyzing the course of our evolutionary history, he claims that in the 18th century

...centralized state power created pacified social spaces, the restraint of aggressive instincts was internalized, and 'an automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control [was] established...protected by a wall of deep-rooted fears' (quoting Elias, 1939/2000). Regrettably, these barriers are permeable and crumble as opportunity and situation allow. (p. 22)

The preceding part of this essay has analyzed how difficult life circumstances confronting groups can combine with the ideologies of antagonism socialized by threatened groups to mobilize their members for group protection and to target members of other groups for destruction. Basically, if the group on which each of us depends for our survival and flourishing socializes us for violence against another group and circumstances motivate our group mobilization, enough of us will act destructively and be supported by most of the other group members to sustain collective violence.

We humans have a deep-seated capacity for intra-species violence and an extensive historical record of its collective perpetration and fearsome *sequelae*. Despite this depressing evolutionary legacy, Wilson (1975), the founding father of sociobiology wrote,

Human societies have effloresced to levels of extreme complexity because their members have the intelligence and flexibility to play roles of virtually any degree of specification, and to switch them as the occasion demands.

Modern man is an actor of many parts who may well be stretched to his limit by the constantly shifting demands of the environment. (p. 554)

Has our 21st century environment shifted to the point that non-violent solutions to inter-group conflict become more demanding than their primitive alternatives? Recently it has been pointed out that war is on the decline in the last part of the 20th century. As reported in the *South China Morning Post*,

The number of conflicts rose steadily from the early 1950s until about 1992, then dropped sharply, today, 20 to 30 armed conflicts are under way worldwide, depending on the definition. That's down from 50 to 60 in 1992, none pits developed countries against one another, although several are "asymmetric" conflicts between industrialized countries and relatively primitive enemies (e.g., America in Iraq)...Instances of genocide and mass killings of ideological foes are also down from 10 a year in the early 1990s to one in 2004 (i.e. Arab militias killing Black Africans in Darfur, Sudan) p. A12, brackets added.

Wilson himself seemed optimistic in this regard when he wrote, "Aggressiveness was constrained and the old forms of primate dominance replaced by complex social skills." (p. 569) What has been happening worldwide to promote this reduction in savagery? What "complex social skills" are being socialized and institutionalized to support this new *modus operandi*? What insights can our examination of culture as culprit suggest for proposing culture as a solution?

The Growth of Democracies



“We hold these truths to be self-evident,
 that all men are created equal,
 that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,
 that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. –
 That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men,
 deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

American Declaration of Independence, 1776

In his assessment of 20th century democide, Rummel (1988) concluded that, democratic political systems are less likely to engage in war. By democracy, Rummel means,

“...liberal democracy, where those who hold power are elected in competitive elections with a secret ballot and wide franchise (loosely understood as including at least 2/3rds of adult males); where there is freedom of speech, religion, and organization; and a constitutional framework of law to which the government is subordinate and that guarantees equal rights.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R._J._Rummel)

From his historical analysis, Rummel concludes that,

“There is a consistent and significant, but low, negative correlation between democracies and collective violence”, and further, “...that when two nations are stable democracies, no wars occur between them.” (p. 9) Even more important in light of the numbers of human beings killed, “There is no case of democracies killing *en masse* their own citizens.” (p. 2) (quoted in Bond, 1994, p. 68)

Rummel believes that democracies suppress the collective will to mobilize violence against another group:

“[a democracy] promotes a social field, cross-pressures, and political responsibility; it promotes pluralism, diversity, and groups that have a stake in peace.”(p. 6) These institutional, social and psychological components of democratic political systems make it more difficult for leaders to mobilize the necessary public support required to undertake large-scale forms of coercive social control (see also Olmo, 1975; Sullivan and Transue, 1999). “...the normal working of a democratically free society in all its diversity is to restrain the growth across the community of that consuming singleness of view and purpose that leads, if frustrated, to wide-scale social and political violence.” (Rummel, 1988, p. 4) (quoted from Bond, 1994, p. 68)

Are democracies on the rise? In the article from the *South China Morning Post* quoted above it was also reported that, “In 1946, 20 nations in the world were democracies, according to the Maryland Institute's Peace and Conflict 2005 report. Today, 88 countries are.” Is the *spiritus mundi* embracing democracy, and is that quest one core feature of globalization, with its giving voice to the voiceless and reducing of economic and social inequalities (Smith et al., 2006, ch. 12)?

If so, increasing democratization may depress levels of collective violence further. Democratic polities are characterized by numerous institutional provisions that counter collective mobilization against fellow citizens:

A nation's degree of democracy is strongly associated with its provision of freedom and its observance of human rights, as Rummel (1988) maintained and as Lim et al. (2003) have shown empirically. The percentage of its national wealth spent on military expenditure is also lower, as would be expected given its lesser pre-occupation with war (Lim et al., 2003). Its legal culture will also be different, with guarantees of due process in place,

availability of legal aid, political independence of the judiciary, and so forth (see e.g., Feest and Blankenburg, 1997) (quoted from Bond, 1994, p. 68).

This last consideration concerning legal culture is crucial. Democracies can create oppressive regimes in multi-ethnic polities where one ethnic group enjoys a numerical majority. If citizens of such political units vote along ethnic lines, then a tyranny of the majority can be legitimized unless there are restraining institutions in place. These include a constitution guaranteeing equality before the law, but also a judicial system independent of political interference and intimidation. Enforcement of judicial decisions must also be carried out by authorities serving the law, not the party in power.

Many former colonies have thrown off their shackles in post-WW2 wars of liberation that accounted for much of the collective violence before 1992. In many of these post-colonial regimes, however democratic they may claim to be, the judiciary and its enforcement agencies are subservient to the majority ethnic group in political power, as in contemporary Zimbabwe. The incendiary potential for internal repression and violence is obvious, as Muller and Weede (1990) have argued.

In this regard, cultural collectivism may well provide a dampening influence on the widespread provision of political freedoms. Conway, Sexton, and Tweed (2006) provide evidence to show that, "...cultural collectivism predicted future political restriction across nations, but not vice versa...an explicitly cultural dimension does causally predict which cultures will become, and remain, politically free" (p. 38). How a lifting of such political restrictiveness will emerge in the cultural systems that most need them in considering the potential for collective violence, viz., collectivist cultures, is an open question. As Clague, Gleason, and Knack (2001) warn,

Attempts to introduce foreign institutions such as elections, legislatures, and judicially enforced rule of law may succeed in one society and fail in another

because of deep-seated cultural attitudes and expectations about how political authority should and will be used. (p. 19)

Other group characteristics may be required to promote the development of the institutional checks and balances that make democracies protective of all their citizens. After all, collectivist Japan showed a dramatic about-face following the imposition of democracy and an independent judiciary in 1945. These change processes may be cultural, albeit different from the collectivism of Conway et al. (2006), and relate to prior national experience, such as being founded as a nation by immigrants, as was Australia; losing a conflict to a democracy, as did Panama in 1989; or installing a post-revolutionary egalitarian to head its government, as the South Africans did with Nelson Mandela in 1994.

Psychological concomitants.



That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

American Declaration of Independence, 1776

Citizens in democracies are socialized differently, as Sullivan and Transue (1999) have shown. In particular, public education is more widely available, especially across genders, and a greater proportion of national wealth is invested into education. The

educational curriculum is broader, with liberal arts and social sciences given greater attention. History is taught less ethnocentrically, and multi-cultural perspectives are presented. Educational practices encourage greater initiative and participation by students, providing opportunities for skill training in non-violent modes of dispute resolution (Hofstede, 1984). All these educational features of many democracies are believed to conduce towards greater unity intra-state (Bond, 1999) by legitimizing and encouraging public dialogue. As Staub (1999) points out, "The public dialogue makes scapegoating, the widespread adoption of destructive ideologies, and progression along a continuum of violence less likely." (p. 204)

The next generation is given voice by these institutional provisions, taught that there are many legitimate voices, each of which is protected, and taught the discipline to tolerate differences of beliefs and the skills to harmonize these voices as much as possible without reverting to repression or violence. Such socialization combined with parenting practices that promote caring for others (Staub, 1988) has crucial psychological consequences for the members of such social systems:

Persons in more democratic nations place a greater value on social integration relative to cultural inwardness (Lim et al., 2003), a finding consistent with Rummel's (1988) assertion that those socialized into democratic systems are motivated to engage themselves positively with diverse others. Higher levels of trust (Wilkinson et al., 1998) and collective efficacy (Bandura, 2001; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997) probably also characterize the citizens of such social units. Levels of intolerance against out-groups (Berry & Kalin, 1995), authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981), ideologies of antagonism (Staub, 1988), and other divisive attitude constellations should likewise be weaker in citizens of democracies. (Bond, 2004, p. 68-69)

Given Nell's analysis of the predatory potential derived from our evolutionary heritage, one might add revulsion at another's pain to this list of socialized outputs from democratic polities. The value attached to human life is sustained by the legal institutions arising from the cultural endorsement of human rights (Humana, 1992), and is a feature of democracies and wealthier social systems. There is no direct measure of this personality variable, but it seems an integral component to any consideration of mobilizing a group to engage in collective violence. Part of educating this revulsion probably involves exposing members of the system to the dark side of human history in a moralistic setting that affirms the group's aspiration to avoid hurting others. This unsettling input will generate resistance from some quarters, but those who object might well be reminded of Santayana's warning,

Progress, far from consisting in change, depends on retentiveness...when experience is not retained, as among savages, infancy is perpetual. Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

Given the costs of collective violence documented earlier, socializing for this and the other psychological resources counteracting inter-group aggression creates valuable, perhaps even necessary, social capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Counter-ideologies.



“Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust?
 That no one should exalt himself over the other.
 Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created.
 Since We have created you all from one same substance,
 it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet,
 eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land...”

Baha'u'llah, *The Hidden Words*

Crucial in this educational process is the inculcation of ideologies, systems of beliefs, norms, values and injunctions that oppose strong and rigid hierarchy, vilification of identifiable groups, and the legitimacy of using destructive means for social control. We know much more about their ideological opposites, such as social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) or hierarchic self-interest (Hagen, Ripple, Boehnke, & Merkens, 1999) and ethnocentrism (Altermeyer, 1988) along with specific scales designed to measure animus towards a specific target group, and the tendency to justify aggression more generally (Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Zimbardo, 1996). Nonetheless, there are worldviews that counteract ideologies of antagonism, like worldmindedness, defined by Sampson & Smith (1957) as “a frame of reference, or a value orientation favoring a world-view of the problem of humanity, with mankind, rather than the nationals of a particular country, as the primary reference group.” (p. 105), but rarely studied since (cf. Der-Karabetian, 1992). Likewise, a number of personality orientations, like tolerance (Berry & Kalin, 1995) or Schwartz’s (1992) value domain of universalism, are also relevant and probably fall under the Big Five dimension of openness to Experience (Trapnell, 1994). These counter-ideologies are discussed at length in Bond (1999), but should probably be expanded to include training that runs counter to a belief in fate (Leung & Bond, 2004) as a controlling factor in human affairs.

Third-party Intervention



Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world

Like a Colossus; and we petty men

Walk under his huge legs, and peep about...

Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*

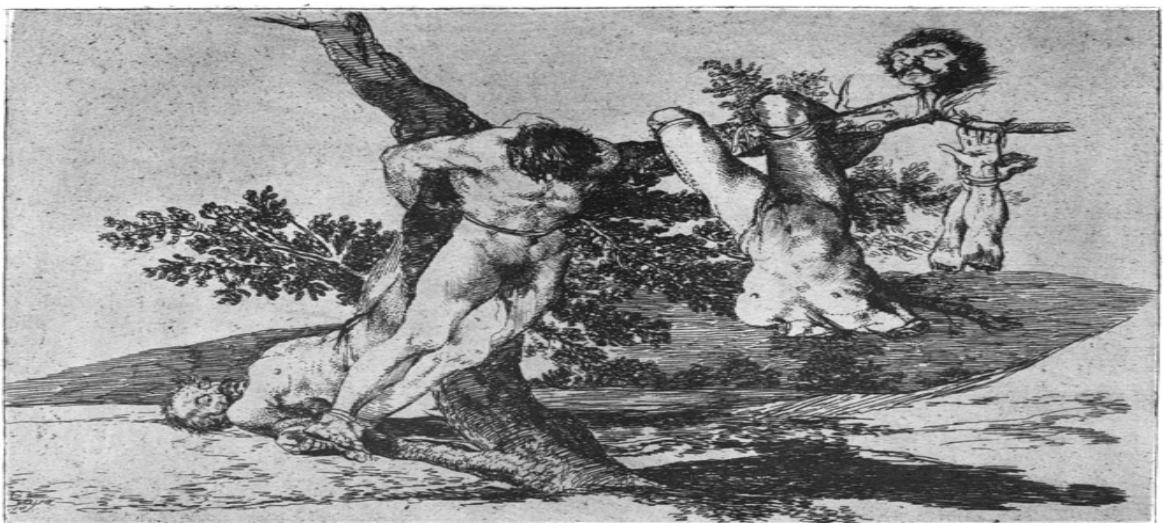
Responsible parents intervene when their children fight, so as to protect them from physical damage. They impose a truce, and begin training their children about justice and developing the procedural routines for ensuring peace and re-enabling productive exchanges among their charges. Numerous commentators have argued that a parallel process should be instituted when collective violence breaks out within or between nations (Robertson, 2002). A number of institutional provisions would be required to effect these interventions successfully. As argued by Genocide Watch (see e.g., Stanton, 2004), they would include: a standing, volunteer, professional response force under the UN; early-warning systems independent of the United Nations Security Council; and an internationally supported International Criminal Court. As Power (2002) has repeatedly pointed out, no single nation

can intervene unilaterally because its citizens will not tolerate the costs, especially in lives of their own people. Also, their independent intervention will be regarded as motivated by national interest pursued at the expense of other nations, and invite retaliatory actions or resistance to the initiative by these other nations.

Some supra-national authorities, not subject to diplomatic maneuvering for national advantage (Robertson, 2002), must be installed to suppress on-going violence, ensuring that its perpetrators will be brought to account, and that alternative means can be deployed to resolve the conflict and impose its provisions if need be. A supra-national authority, operating to protect the basic human right to a natural span of life, would have a better chance to be perceived as just and its actions as legitimate and therefore supported. Every group's culture would then be modified with respect to this qualification of its right to independent assertion.

What forces are available to goad nations into renouncing some of their sovereignty so that these safeguards may be emplaced? Perhaps it is only an emerging sense of our shared humanity, of our common fate as members of this imperiled globe and of revulsion at our evolutionary legacy of viciousness, domination and annihilation. The alternative is continuing savagery.

39



Grande hazaña! Con muertos!

eweems.com/goya

Conclusion

Each person is born into a family that nurtures the child, socializing that individual into the norms, beliefs, values and way of life that family and the group of which it is a unit has fashioned in its ecological-temporal niche to survive and flourish. Within the individual's genetic constraints, he or she is encultured and becomes an adequately functioning member of that group. That process results in a sense of loyalty and investment in the group and its way of living.

Groups intersect with other groups, and use their group's logic for managing interdependencies to resolve the competition for resources and dominance that emerge. Collective violence of one group against another is the occasional result of these intergroup struggles, often with horrific consequences. A group's members are mobilized to support and participate in this struggle for collective dominance by the group's legitimization processes that deem the targeted out-group and its members as dangerous, immoral, or sub-human, and hence killable. These legitimization processes and the ideologies that underpin them are quintessentially cultural, responsive to the group's history and current life circumstances.

A different culture for inter-group relations may be emerging in the 21st century, one informed by an understanding of the human propensity to group savagery, the enormous costs arising from collective violence, and a commitment to human equality. This diffusing culture will render individual members of specific groups less mobilizable for violence by their groups, more resistant to chauvinistic appeals for self-sacrifice. With sufficient supra-group institutional supports in place, the expected value of engaging in collective violence will be reduced; non-violent solutions to the issues of resource distribution and group identity can be developed.

“...how much more suffering and ruin must be experienced by our race before we wholeheartedly accept the spiritual nature that makes us a single people,

and garner the courage to plan our future
in the light of what has been so painfully learned.”

(Baha’i International Community, *Who is writing the future?* 1999, p. 15)



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