



University of  
Stavanger

Torgeir M. Hillestad

THE METAPSYCHOLOGY OF EVIL

*Main Theoretical Perspectives*

*Causes, Consequences and Critique*

Reports from the University of Stavanger No. 47







## **The Metapsychology of Evil**

### **Main Theoretical Perspectives Causes, Consequences and Critiques**

Torgeir M. Hillestad  
Associate Professor  
Dr. Philos/Ph.d

Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Stavanger

University of Stavanger  
Report  
2014

University of Stavanger

N-4036 Stavanger

Norge

[www.uis.no](http://www.uis.no)

ISSN 0806-7031

ISBN 978-82-7644-588-6

**Report no. 47 University of Stavanger**

## *CONTENTS*

Introduction	6
<i>I</i> Subjectivity	8
<i>II</i> Relations	29
<i>III</i> Biology	47
<i>IV</i> Synthesis	64
References	87

## INTRODUCTION

This purpose of this text or dissertation is to throw some basic light on a fundamental problem concerning manhood, namely the question of *evil*, its main sources, dynamics and importance for human attitudes and behaviour. The perspective behind the analysis itself is that of *psychology*. Somebody, or many, may feel at bit nervous by the word “*evil*” itself. It may very well be seen as too connected to religion, myth and even superstition. Yet those who are motivated to lose oneself in the subject retain a deep interest in human destructiveness, malevolence and hate, significant themes pointing at threatening prospects for mankind.

The text is organized or divided into four main ordinary chapters, the three first of them organized or divided into continuous and numbered sections.

A crucial point or question is of cause how to define *evil* itself. It can of cause be done both *intentional*, *instrumental* and *by consequence*. Other theorists however have stated that the concept of evil exclusively rests on a *myth* originated in the Judean-Christian conception of Satan and ultimate evil. This last argument presupposes evil itself as non-existent in the real rational world. It seems however a fact that most people attach certain basic meaning to the concept, mainly that it represents ultimately bad and terrible actions and behaviour directed toward common people for the purpose of bringing upon them ultimate pain and suffer. However, there is no room for *essentialism* here, meaning that we simply can look “inside” some original matter to get to know what it “really” is. Rather, a phenomenon gets its identity from the constituted meaning operating within a certain human communities and contexts loaded with intentionality and inter-subjective meaning.<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned above, the concept of evil can be interpreted both instrumental and intentional, the first being the broadest of them. Here evil stands for behaviour and human deeds having terrifying or fatal *consequences* for subjects and people or in general, regardless of the intentions behind. The intentional interpretation however, links the concept to certain predispositions, characteristics and even strong motives in subjects, groups and sometimes political systems and nations. I will keep in mind and clear the way for both these perspectives for the discussion in prospect.

This essay represents a *psychological* perspective on evil, but makes it clear that a more or less complete account of such a psychological view also should include a thorough understanding or integration of some basic *social* and even *biological* assumptions. However, I consider a *social psychological* position of significant importance, especially because in my opinion it represents some sort of *coordination* of knowledge and theoretical perspectives inherent in the subject or problem itself, the main task here being to integrate perspectives of a psychological as well as social and biological kind. Since humans are essential *social* creatures, the way itself to present knowledge concerning the human condition, must be social of some sort and kind, however not referring to some kind of *reductionism* where social models of explanation possess or holds monopoly. Social and social psychological perspectives itself represents *parts* of the whole matter regarding understanding and explanation of human evil. The fact that humans present, or has to represent themselves as humans among other humans, means that basically a social language is required both to explain and describe human manners and ways of being. This then truly represents its own

---

<sup>1</sup> This is drawing heavily on the later Wittgenstein, but it is not the intension to take the argument further at present.

way or, more correctly, level or standard of explanation, which makes social psychology some sort of significant, though *not* sufficient.

More substantial, the vision itself of integrating different ontological and theoretical levels and objects of science for the purpose of manifesting or make real a full-fledged psychological perspective on evil, should be considered or characterized a *meta-psychological* perspective.

The text is partially constructed as a review of existing theories and theorists concerning the matter of evil and logically associated themes such as *violence, mass murder, genocide, antisocial behaviour in general, aggression, hate* and *cruelty*. However, the demands of making a theoretical distinction between these themes, although connected, is stressed. Above all, an integral perspective combining different scientific disciplines is aimed at.

*PART I*  
*Subjectivity*

1

The psychoanalytic tradition stands as one of the most comprehensive approaches to the understanding of mankind and its conflicts within society. Its consequently search for hidden motives and psychic forces, concealed meanings and unconscious dynamics beneath the surface of human behaviour is outstanding, but also controversial. The Freudian theory has since Freud developed into different traditions and concepts, from “pure” instinct- or drive psychology<sup>2</sup> to ego-psychology, object relations psychology, self-psychology and the latest tradition, inter-subjective theory or psychology. Rather than viewing these perspectives as competing, as however many theorists indeed have done, it seems to me that more benefit and success could be gained by understanding them as supplements rather as competitors. The impression is however that most theorists seem to recognize the overlapping and complimentary character of these different views. I will however point that the very fact that different positions within the psychoanalytic tradition itself have their basis in respectively instincts, drives, ego, object-relations or inter-subjectivity, leads to distinctive perspectives regarding evil, its origins, content and consequences.

The first position is of course Freud’s own. In Freud’s theory there is a gradual interest in and turn to the so called “*death instinct*” as a fundamental (and biological) rival of the previously formulated “*life- and ego-instincts*”. Freud’s general pessimism concerning the human condition grew over the years. His more mature reflections reveal a portrait of humanity most disturbing to his own times and anyone who wants to cling to an optimistic view of human nature. A basic assumption for Freud is, as already noted, that human beings are in possession of two primary drives, *sex* and *aggression*, a conclusion he however arrived at late in his career. In his “*Civilization and Its Discontent*”<sup>3</sup> he enumerates the fundamental tensions between civilization and the individual, where the primary friction stems from the individual’s quest for instinctual freedom and the civilization’s contrary demand for conformity and instinctual repression. Freud’s theory is based on the notion that humans have certain characteristic instincts or drives that are immutable, most notably sex and the predisposition to violent aggression, originally towards authoritative figures and sexual competitors, both of which obstruct the gratification of the person’s instincts. The obstruction of these desires, imply the danger of them to be transformed to a general lust for aggression and destruction towards society and other people in general. Freud himself stated that it was no longer possible to overlook the ubiquity of non-erotic, or autonomous, aggressiveness and destructiveness in man and how deep it was rooted in the human psyche itself. Slowly he recognized aggression as an autonomous drive, disconnected to other drives in man, for example sexuality. After 1920 Freud’s view of the human condition became explicitly more pessimistic. In his earlier works, Freud had argued that sexual impulses, fantasies and wishes are blocked and forbidden by social norms or the social *reality* itself, thus creating a strict repression within the very psyche or mind. Therapeutic analysis then becomes necessary in helping people uncover the repression and release the blocked energy that, when exactly being blocked, produced neurosis. Eventually, however, Freud’s view of repression became

---

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it comes out incorrect identifying the Freudian concept “drive” with “instinct”.

<sup>3</sup> S. Freud (1930). “*Civilization and Its Discontent*”. German original: “*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*”.



less negative. Repression, he now believed, was in fact necessary for civilization to go forward and even survive. Repression represented a kind of social restraint that kept individuals from providing an outlet for their destructive instincts and impulses. This could only imply that “ideal” mental life does *not* entail an absence of repression itself, but instead the maintenance of a *modulated* repression that allows gratification at a certain level, while at same time preventing primitive sexual and aggressive impulses from taking over. Freud’s turning towards a darker vision of instincts and drives brought a more appreciative attitude toward repression as *social control* necessary to protect and save the society, as well as individuals themselves. This perspective of the psychic dynamics was thus converging with his increasing emphasis on *the ego* as an *autonomous* structure in regulating the human psyche. It is obvious that Freud here in many aspects come close to the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes who exactly emphasized the necessity of social order hypothetical manifested in the Sovereign, to subdue and control the highly egocentric and aggressive qualities of individual pursuits.

Freud thus moved toward the position assuming that two competing drives dominate the human condition, the “life instinct”: “*Eros*”, and its counterpart, the “death instinct”: “*Thanatos*”, originally working towards annihilation. The Thanatos rarely expresses itself directly. Instead, it emerges in the form of outward directed aggressiveness and hate. Eros, on the other hand, engages in a battle against the urge toward self-destruction, blocking the Thanatos from its internal or inwards expression and helps push it outward. This externalizing of the aggression is thus necessary for individual survival. By displacing this basic self-destructive tendency outward, the individual’s mental “safety” is thus secured. Other people, the environment and social surroundings itself become the necessary targets to avoid the aggression and hatred being directed toward oneself. Aggression becomes necessary *outlet* for self-preservation, making the process itself a sort of primary psychic force or mechanism in man. The experience of depression serves as an example of people incapable of externalizing their aggression and instead becomes victims of it attacking the self.

While the Thanatos has an autonomous source of energy, most of the time, or in real life, the Eros and Thanatos are mixed together. We never experience either of them in pure forms. Freud himself stated the two kinds of instincts or drives seldom or never appear in isolation, but are mixed up with each other in varying and different proportions and so become unrecognizable to our outward judgment. The statement and analysis of the Thanatos thus becomes a sort of acknowledgement only detectable on the epistemological abstract or analytical level; however still representing reality. The causes of Freud’s change of mind concerning the existence and role of the death instinct regarding the human condition may be multifaceted. One factor was the experiences from World War 1 were ordinary people, young men, once given a uniform and a gun, being told by their government to go to war and shoot the enemy, went out killing each others in hundred of thousands and millions. According to Freud, this was only possible when one assumed that man himself by nature was in possession of primary instincts or drives for aggression. Early as 1915 Freud himself stated that *evil* could not be excluded in the consideration of the human condition. In 1920, when writing “*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*”<sup>4</sup> he clearly moved toward a revision of his original instinct theory. Yet at this point of time he was not absolutely convinced, but indeed became a few years later. He then stated that it seems as though it is necessary for us to destroy some other thing or person in order not to destroy ourselves – for the sake of guarding against the impulsion to self-destruction. Some, however, had pointed out that Freud even before 1914 had considered the power of aggression in man, even though it at that time hadn’t found its way into his formal or systematic theorizing, among other things because it was mixed up

---

<sup>4</sup> S. Freud (1920) “*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*”. German original: “*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*”.

with personal feelings and experiences within himself. Another factor of more general character, besides the recognition of anti-Semitism as a powerful force operating within society, which made Freud state that the war only had *confirmed* the psychoanalytic understanding of aggression, not *created* it, was that Freud through his clinical work had recognized or observed a human tendency to re-enact painful experiences from the past, among others in World War I veterans. If the pleasure principle was the only and ultimate motivation of life, why would individuals keep returning to these painful experiences instead of totally repressing them? There seemed to be a compulsion here to repeat painful experiences, which contradicted the basic principle of seeking ultimate pleasure. Freud thus began to realize that the emphasis on the pleasure principle was unable to explain the experience of what seemed to be absolutely masochism. Freud generally noted that patients who displayed this compulsion did their utmost to dwell on misery and injuries. This led Freud to finally postulate the existence of a drive or strive towards an earlier or original tensionless, inorganic state of affairs. As he stated it: "*The aim of all life is death*". In all human organisms there exist some forms of "death wish". This seems however, concerning the human organism, to contradict the idea of Eros, containing the sexual drives, which exist by virtue of affirming life itself, and hardly seeking extinction. For Freud however, this drive conditions from now on only represented or counted for half the picture, the other half being precisely its antagonism, the death instinct. The death instinct thus have two dimensions to it. On one hand, it has a *passive* tendency that seeks to reduce organic life to inorganic life. The other form is the *active* aggressive which can be directed *inward*, against oneself, or *outward* against others. In sake of preserving civilization, part of humanity's natural aggressiveness must be turned back on itself where it originally began. This inward turn of aggressiveness is directed against one's own *ego*, more particularly then taking the form of a harsh and punishing *superego*. This again, leads to chronic guilt, often manifesting itself as a need for punishment. The superego thus expresses aggressiveness against the ego that keeps this aggressiveness from moving outward. Moreover, Freud states that this masochistic aggressiveness is our *moral*, a sort of punishment, or more precise, an unconscious desire for punishment in the form of strict moral demands. The core of this aggressiveness is usually not directed straight to death, for example in the form of suicide, itself. It is more often a destruction of one's own *self-agency*, expressed as an all-embracing feeling of *guilt*. Our guilt then, is largely a fear of the aggressive superego.

Freud thus ends up stating that the aggressive instincts represent the major threat to civilization by its bare existence, but in the specific form of being directed outward. Freud makes it clear that aggressiveness is an original, *self-subsisting* instinctual disposition in man and which constitute the greatest impediment and even threat to civilization. The aggressive instinct represents a derivative of the more basic death instinct and in viewing the life and death instincts as locked into an eternal or "cosmic" battle, Freud emphasizes an universal dualism, presenting the evolution of civilization as a struggle for life and death of the human species. This life and death instincts apply to all biological life. It is not a question of these forces simply occupying the human mind. Instead they are built into, influence and from the start *are* significant parts of life and the psyche itself and in this way moves from strait psychology to what others would characterize as "*metaphysics*". My opinion is, however, that Freud's position is better understood as *ontology*, meaning making assumptions regarding the abstract or transcendental levels of knowledge, pointing to causal conditions for the case in matter. Never the less, Freud's theoretical assumptions can of course be regarded as a commitment to *naturalism*, or, evaluated as science, as some branch of *natural science*.<sup>5</sup> Freud's theory clearly involves a basic faith in the ultimate nature of things. Thus it seems

---

<sup>5</sup> But *not* as *positivism* or some type of *positivistic thinking*, as many tend to believe.

that Freud moves far behind bare psychological assumptions and hypothesis which was the supposition for observing and making conclusions regarding clinical data. However, taking into account that the human organism slowly develop over a long period, this could not be exclusively explained by psychological processes alone because these processes itself often and even mainly are *products* of, or at least involving interacting primary biological processes. Psychological processes and structures mainly grow out of the biological equipment's meeting and interaction with the social surroundings, for example stimulation, upbringing and other forms of socialisation, all of it making biology relevant for psychological understanding and structuring. On these grounds Freud of course will deny that he by any way is creating some sort of myth or religion without any foothold in scientific reflection.

Nevertheless, Freud viewed humanity's inclinations to evil as rooted in our biology. Because we *as humans* are born with the Eros as well as the Thanatos, we are engaged in a psychological or "inner" civil war. But the consequence of this, in my opinion, is that it seems impossible to equate evil with aggression. We may be born with aggression, but that does not automatically makes us bad or evil, not least because of the mentioned psychological conflict whose outcome at any time is not given. Besides, being aggressive says nothing accurate about *how* this aggressiveness shows up or manifests itself in different subjects behaviour or attitude against others or in different milieu. Even explicit violence does not justify the use of the term evil stuck to it. Evil itself is a complicated concept covering even more complicated phenomena, which I will return to and trying to clear up in later. But, in agreement with Freud, it is my opinion that the existence and manifestation of what we would characterize as *evil*, is conditioned by the inherent dispositions of aggressiveness that Freud talks about. Freud himself postulated that while social and environmental factors contributed to human destructiveness, the *primary* reality is that we basically are *instinctual*, or concerning our primary and inherent drives, dangerous to both ourselves and civilization. A consequence regarding this point of view *could* of course for example be that eliminating negative social situations such as poverty and poor or destructive child care will hardly guarantee non-destructive individuals. The reason for this should be that no amount of social reform or social influence under any circumstance would be able to eliminate our biological circumstances, as long as aggression and violence according to Freud are "natural", and therefore by consequence inevitable. That may be so, but my opinion is that we are not forced or doomed to interpret Freud that pessimistic. Our instinctual or equipment still have the status of being predispositions and these dispositions need to be social *shaped* in one way or another, and it is precisely this shaping or socialization that makes us the individuals we become and *has* to become to grow humans. The interplay between nurture and culture itself thus becomes central or sometimes even the crucial part concerning the possible manifestation of destructiveness, hate and evil.

There is, however, a complicating matter here, concerning the dualism between erotic life instinct and the instinct of death or aggressiveness. Above it was noted that Eros and the Thanatos according to Freud rarely expressed themselves directly or isolated from each other. Prior to proposing the death instinct itself Freud had, however, as early as in 1905, in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*<sup>6</sup> treated a postulated aggressive impulse as a component of the sexual instinct, an erotic mix-up on the order of *sadism* and *masochism*. He stated there being an intimate connection between *cruelty* and the *sexual* instinct – an aggressive factor in the *libido*, the process being binding a part of the innate aggression itself to the sexual function in the form of sadism and sometimes masochism, experienced as asexual pleasure in pain, perhaps also giving way for other forms of sexual perversions.

---

<sup>6</sup> S. Freud. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

Freud's assertion was that the death instinct manifests itself only by gaining some hold on libido, not being able to operate on its own ontological terms.

To further note, however, it is fair to say that Freud rejected any perspective on human destructiveness that moved beyond the *natural* sphere. Because of that he was of course characterised a thoroughgoing *materialist*. However, from my point of view it would be incorrect to see Freud's theory as solely materialistic. The abstract postulate of the drive or "instinct" just make reference to the fundamental presuppositions for psychological processes itself and does not represent psychology as such. Psychology and psychological conflicts is something other, or, qualitatively, exactly something *more* than matter or substance. The psychic representations itself is prime matter for psychology as science study. Psychology is human experiences the one way or another, conditioned by conscious or unconscious forces and circumstances and cannot exist *as* just pure biological instincts. Freud's talking about psychic conflicts as something going on in the subject's psyche thus goes well beyond one-sided biological and instinctual thinking. When refusing to take human rational thought at face value, he challenged the notion that conscious reason is the all-important criteria of our behaviour. He has often been understood or interpreted as primarily an "existentialist" in that he radically exposed the often irrational, self-avoiding and thus anxiety-producing features of the human condition. Yet he has often been accused of confusing our "estranged" condition, with its origin in destructive forces and instincts, with our "essential" nature. For many it would be hard, not to mention impossible admitting or realizing that humanity should be essentially destructive or evil. Many of his opponents regarding this case, also within the psychoanalytical camp itself, had a basic faith in humanity as essentially good, even though living under distorted conditions. In our essence, the deepest level of our reality, we are not estranged, neurotic or destructive. Freud however, viewed the essence of humanity as basically distorted, leading to his fundamental pessimism concerning humanity. This view concerning human nature consequently left him with a corresponding pessimism with regard to culture's chances to free itself from brutality, evil and destructiveness as such. Some significant objections stemming from prominent critics of Freud, was that it was necessary to draw up some line of demarcation between human *existence* and *essence*, the former referring to our estranged situation or condition, the latter to our true nature. Thus, our present condition, showing human cruelty, destructiveness, murder and evil, does not correspond to the essence of humanity, instead only demonstrating historical and repressing conditions influencing and distorting this essence, making it at large part unrecognizable. One point of departure is that our understanding and concept of estrangement or sickness necessary leads to a grasp of health itself, reflecting precisely the opposite of sickness. As such, sickness is exclusively to be understood in reference to health, which is to be understood as a grasp of human essence itself. However, by stressing this point of view, as for example the so-called "*neo-Freudians*", Erich Fromm, Karen Horney and others did, they were accused of neglecting or overlooking some basic assumptions in Freud's own theory, for example concepts of *drive* and *Thanatos*, and thus the whole concept of *repression*, itself and in so doing reducing and cutting him off from what really made him the very founder of depth psychology.

These more optimistic views of the neo-Freudians implied that we are able to correct, on the basis of natural intervention, not only our symptoms, but our fundamental problems of estrangement. In other words, they basically argue for an ultimate form of *self-healing* and "inner freedom". But Freud himself stated that it is impossible for us to break free, and that at least neurosis is the price of civilization and culture itself. The only hope is to get a position being able to live with in some manner, more specific being able "to love and to work". The

problem of estrangement itself does not call for any solution.<sup>7</sup> We cannot “therapize” away our existential problems, problems that exist by virtue of us being humans in the first place. But therapy can help us come at ease with our problems, making it possible for us to live with them in the one way or another.

Psychoanalysis, since Freud, has generally moved away from the concept of innate aggressiveness and the death instinct, in favour of arguments claiming that aggressiveness results from *need deficiency*. The consequences of this should be that evil and destruction not automatically occur as a result of our biological make-up. Destructiveness is not a necessary part of our condition. The work of modern psychoanalysts like Fairbairn, Winnicott and Kohut has highlighted the significance of *relational attachment* rather than *drive release* as the crucial motivational factor for the human being. Rather than viewing for example the infant as innately aggressive, some of these theorists, but not all, believe that the object-seeking infant is much more concerned with human *connection* than Freud himself realized. In this view *aggression* becomes more of a by-product of psychological *need frustration* than is a biological urge driving us from the very beginning of life.

However, all this seems to be a way of mixing up the different level of conceptions inherent in the psychoanalytic theory itself. The drive- and the relation-perspective don't have to be considered contradictions. On the contrary, in my opinion the two perspectives rather complement than contradict each other. This they do precisely because they function or hold their force of explaining on different theoretical levels or “territories”. They simply explain different things significant to human essence, living and development. Being equipped with biological drives striving against immediate fulfilment, being “peaceful” or aggressive doesn't mean that man at the same time should not be in possession of primary needs towards immediate and unconditional contact with other significant humans. In fact, the access to such prime relationships constitutes itself the conditions for fulfilment of some basic biological founded drives. However, it is necessary to point out that there also seems to exist a fundamental conflict between the fulfilment of drives towards aggression and destruction on the one hand and the need for positive or basic contact and caring on the other, meaning that at lack of fulfilment of the relational needs or drives sometimes have the consequence of bringing the impulses of aggression and destructiveness on the stage. In the end however, this demonstrates the necessity of bringing forth a calculation including two autonomous forces conquering on the same battlefield, thus eliminating the theoretical or rather dualistic conception of either or, the one *or* another force dominating human existence as such.

I shall return to this approach concerning the matter later in the text because it seems fundamental in placing human evil and destructiveness in the right proportional manner.

## 2

Erich Fromm, was a profoundly interdisciplinary thinker and psychoanalyst, theoretical located within the so-called “*neo-freudian*” camp. Basically he aimed at integrating psychoanalysis with Marxist social theory and philosophy, as well as other social disciplines. Fromm seems to be both creative and insightful dealing with the topic of evil, his two most outstanding works concerning the matter being “*The Heart of Man. Its Genius for Good and Evil*”<sup>8</sup> and “*The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*”<sup>9</sup> Here Fromm puts forward the fundamental question: Is humanity *essentially* good or evil? It is however from the start

---

<sup>7</sup> In contrast to for example Marx who believed that the problem of estrangement and alienation could be eliminated by revolting social repression itself.

<sup>8</sup> E. Fromm (1964). *The Heart of Man. Its Genius for good and Evil*.

<sup>9</sup> E. Fromm (1973). *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*.

unclear what being “evil” really could mean. Is it having evil intentions or doing evil acts, or the entire combination of the two? But this begs for the more fundamental question: Are man *born* with, not only the capacity, but also the intention of being evil, or is it more of a bad habit developed through social participation? Fromm himself stated that man is left alone with two “strivings”, that for good and for evil. In other words: man are not solely good *or* bad, special acts, circumstances and cultural and political forces can be or call forth evil, but man is not inherited evil from the beginning. Fromm is less pessimistic concerning man’s capacity for the good and correspondingly rejecting evil. In not embezzling the destructive forces in man and the cruel deeds and behaviour that has often followed in the wake of this, it is Fromm’s belief still, that these forces are not *primary*. While they can be or become strong, does not automatically mean that they are dominant. Instead, it is Fromm’s opinion that this human destructiveness may well represent a basic distortion of deeper, *benign* inclination. This argument is crucial and represents a fundamental break with Freud’s basic theory of evil rooted in the Thanatos. Fromm’s theory is more associated with that of *object relations*, stating that pathology is a result of the lack of fulfilment of basic needs. Attachment being a prime motive or need, can be stated as some sort of benign inclinations crucial to man. According to Fromm, there is no reason to believe that human cruelty represents eternal structures of the human condition. As already mentioned, this point of view not only contradicts that of Freud; in many ways it represents it’s totally antagonism. Freud believed our destructive tendencies are innate and biologically given and this is precisely what Fromm denies. And further: Freud more than indicated that we are stuck with the battle between individual happiness (read: satisfaction) and civilization. Fromm, from his point of view, precisely pointed out that we can overcome this antagonism. Freud’s position has often been characterized as *dualistic*, meaning the relentless battle between these two forces, the primary drives vs. civilization. This represents, however, some sort of fundamental mistake. Freud’s theory of the battle and antagonism between human drives and civilization are formulated as *abstract*<sup>10</sup> principles concerning man’s fundamental condition and the different forces basically working in accordance of their own logical point of view. At the level of realization or empirical appearance however, these “independent” or autonomous, and consequently abstract formulated principles and forces, unite in precisely the different forms of good or bad behaviour or conduct we experience at different times. It is important to point out that having one’s eye fixed, or being solely stuck in an empirical position, inevitably leads to theoretical confusion and erroneous interferences, like the fundamental misunderstanding that Freud’s theory should represent some kind of dualism. Interpreted, or formulated at the empirical level, the Thanatos and other fundamental drives *seem* to represent dualism, grouped with contradicting forces representing civilization. But again: In my opinion, these concepts were never meant to represent real matters immediately experienced. They simply don’t “exist” as such at the level of appearance, because under *these* conditions they can only be interpreted *analytically* as part of some experienced and given totality. In reality, it seems like it is Fromm who ends up with dualism, pleading for the ultimate – and empirical given – contradiction between good and evil, where goodness itself being the strongest force on autonomous terms. It is precisely the assumption of Utopia as something real or attainable that gives life to dualism.

Back to Fromm; he basically declared that humans being engaged in destructive behaviour for *social* reasons, not just *biological* ones. For him, declaring that man’s “death wish” leads to war represents a clear case of psychological (and biological) reductionism. Instead he is convinced that wars are fought for political, social and economic reasons, not merely or even first of psychological and biological ones. However, implicit in Freud’s theory

---

<sup>10</sup> Meaning they being real, though not in an *empirical*, but *abstract* or *theoretical* manner.

there exist an assumption denying that there should exist some sort of a *choice* or antagonism between psychological/biological and social causes regarding human evil. Instead, I think we'll have to assume that in psychoanalytic theory is implicated that social forces in different ways shape our biological drives and make them equipped for social and psychological realities and in precisely that way making biology part of the psychological and social reality itself.

Fromm himself identifies several reasons for direct violence, every single of them not necessarily functioning at the service of evil and destructiveness. *Reactive* violence for example is done in the service of life. While based on fear, its aim is preservation, not destruction. It is defensive and necessary for survival. Then there is *revengeful* violence, which is not really defensive because the violence or harassment has already been done and we aim at restoring our self-esteem back to before the insult or injury. Fromm himself makes a point of psychoanalytic material demonstrating that the mature, productive person is less motivated by the desire for revenge than the neurotic person who has difficulties in living independently and fully and is often prone to stake his whole existence on the wish for revenge in some narcissistic way. Another type of violence is characterized as *shattering of faith*, often being something that happens at a very early and vulnerable stage in life. It stands for the collapse of faith in the love, goodness and fairness of the world, represented by parents, relatives, the belief in God, and so on. It doesn't matter much what is the object for our faith. It is faith in aspects of life itself, the very possibility of trusting it and having confidence in it that is broken. The result of this could be self-hate and hating life itself. Fromm also describes *compensatory* violence where destructiveness is used as a compensation for one's own feelings of powerlessness. This kind of violence attempts to make up for one's feeling of impotence by extensive of meaning. According to Fromm compensatory violence results from what he calls "unlived life"; the only way of feeling alive is receiving pleasure seeing others being hurt or killed. Finally there is a deeply regressed form of violence Fromm calls "*archaic bloodthirst*" which involves an attempt to escape reason and return to brute "animal" existence. The person engaged in this kind of violence feels alive only by taking others life. Blood becomes, so to speak, the very essence of life, so killing makes one feel strong and superior.

Fromm seems convinced that there are persons who "love life" and those who in a way "love death". Probably the vast majority of us are a mixture in the one way or another. Fromm identifies those who love life as having a "*biophilous*" orientation and those who loves death as having a "*necrophilous*" inclination. Fromm believes this distinction in many ways is representing the greatest psychological as well as *moral* difference between people. This begs the important question: What is the relationship between Fromm's concept of the necrophilous character and Freud's death instinct? Freud's view of the death instinct was that it aimed at destroying or abolishing all life and re-establish the inorganic state of things. The death instinct attempts to undue everything the life instincts endeavour. The battle between the light or life forces and the dark death forces is a recurring theme in legends, myths and fairytales, thus reflecting the battle going on in the human psyche. As already emphasized, Freud view was that both the life instincts and the death instinct were rooted in biology and therefore inevitable. But for Fromm, a death-like necrophilous orientation is not to be regarded as part of, or placed within the original biological realm. According to him, organic life is at first oriented towards tenaciously struggle for survival. Thus, life-instincts always come out primary to death instincts. He states the contradiction between "Eros and destruction" as the most fundamental contradiction which exists in man. However, they are not to be considered as two *biologically* inherent instincts fighting an eternal battle within the human psyche. Instead, it has to be viewed as a struggle "*between the primary and most fundamental tendency of life – to preserve in life – and its contradiction, which comes into*

being when man fails in his goal. In this view the “death instinct” is a *malignant phenomenon which grows and takes over to the extent to which Eros does not unfold. The death instinct represents psychopathology and not, as in Freud’s view, a part of normal pathology*”<sup>11</sup> This means that life instinct constitute the primary force or potentiality in man, the death instinct thus becoming secondary. Given individual development, socialisation or so being optimal or satisfactory, the primary forces, the life instincts, will develop at the expense of death instinct and malignity, preventing them from becoming reality. In Fromm’s terms the so called death instinct is not a biological equal to the life instinct. Though its *potential* is always present or exists as a possibility, it grows out of a frustration of the life instinct. Thus the death instinct is not, or doesn’t represent a *natural* development in man. Instead it represents a form of pathology, *constructed*, or being a product of forces and processes prior to it. It is not as *primary* as the life instinct. There is no biological drive or principle itself that push the death instinct into existence. Instead it is the very *distortion* of the life instinct that make way for destructive and evil acts, becoming a reality when the proper psychological conditions are not present and Eros itself is frustrated. This indeed represents a major difference from Freud and his perspective of personality theory and development itself. Fromm introduces a sort of *humanism* that contrasts the more pessimistic Freudian paradigm. His humanism rests on the condition that given the right circumstances being present the subject has got the opportunity of positive personal development or growth, making destructiveness and evil a secondary problem. Evil itself thus seems stemming from pure *frustrations* of *self-actualization*. The origin of evil must be *social conditions*, not *biological inclinations*, rooted in some death instinct, toward destructiveness itself. Fromm however, departs from the original humanistic psychologists that more or less presuppose self-actualization being an automatic force or process attached to the very process of human development. For Fromm this process is more of a struggle, bringing forth impulses of regression, resistance to growth, self-obsession, fear and anxiety. Psychological humanism, on the other hand, seems to presume self-actualization and growth being a more or less maturing process.

However, in my opinion, there exist some considerable shortcomings in Fromm’s theory. If the tendencies to cruelty and destruction in man are of a secondary kind, how does it come into consideration in the first place? Why should the reaction to frustration be destructiveness and perhaps cruelty and sadism on the whole? Unless at least some innate dispositions are presupposed, it seems illogical to conclude that destructiveness must become the pure and necessary consequences of social and psychological frustration itself. In my opinion this question becomes crucial for a basic understanding of human evil in the first place. I believe nothing can grow out of nothing, which means it should be able to detect some existing dispositions in man warranting the emergence of specific human traits and behaviours, they being good or bad, under specific circumstances.

For Fromm the ultimate sign of evil means the sadistic desire to drain the life out of others. It could involve the destruction of both physical and psychological life, probably mainly the last mentioned. It thus means the desire to control, dominate, destroy and extinguish liveliness in another human. It forbids anything to grow, expand and live itself. Experience of joy comes from controlling and draining the lives from others. Although we in most cases are talking about excessive psychological dominance, extreme criminal forms can be found among for example so-called serial-killers where killing and physical destroying others serves no other purposes, they being instrumental of the one kind or another. Another syndrome in Fromm’s universe of evil is what he calls *malignant narcissism* which stands for an aggressive, dominating form of narcissism that turns out to be more than the kind of self-interest we all need in order to survive. It also exists as more than a simple desire for

---

<sup>11</sup> E. Fromm (1964). *The Heart of Man*, p. 50.



attention. This is basically contrasted to so-called *benign* narcissism which involves some sort of self-confidence, a pride in our own efforts and achievements. However, it also includes a capability of achieving a certain distance from our work or accomplishments, meaning for example being able to compare our work with that of others realistically and by doing so acknowledging it the same status as our own. However, malignant narcissism appears qualitatively different. Here we perceive everything we do, precisely because it comes from ourselves, as wonderful and unique. All forms of external or objective justification are unnecessary and in fact insulting when it is put forward or demanded. Fromm states that malignant narcissism thus is not self-limiting, but in its consequences “crudely solipsistic” and “xenophobic”.

Fromm then, while dealing with the human inclination toward evil in the Freudian tradition, differs from him in two important ways. First, he denies that this destructive inclination emerges from our biological nature, instead postulating it to be a *secondary* reaction to the frustration of our positive potentials and needs. But in doing so, and still talking of *inclination*, is, in my opinion, questionable. If, by any change, “inclination” is supposed to mean anything in the direction of “potential” or human quality, then it would be wrong, or at least inaccurate to characterize it as “secondary”. The correct term should be “*actualized*”. Second he believes that given that evil represents only secondary forces in man brought forth by frustration of our more primary positive potentials, it should be possible to heal and overcome these destructive inclinations. This goes hand in hand with Fromm’s vision of an “*unalienated*” humanity. A vision and hope which he believes can be realized. This goes definitely in another direction than Freud himself, whose theoretical assumptions implies that man are stuck with the roots and potentials for evil, simply because it represents essential and unavoidable parts of man himself. Freud thus believed that total reconciliation is never possible. What we have to, or *could* do, are making the best of a very or everlasting estranged world. Fromm, on the other hand, believes that our healthy side can and should heal the sick side, taking for granted the first being superior to the last, because an estranged existence cannot produce its own cure. This optimistic utopia has, however, been criticized. The question is how an alienated individual or an alienated mankind heal or overcome alienation himself? Fromm’s answer is, as we have seen, of course that the life instinct is primary or more basic than death instinct that shows more of a secondary reaction to failure in socialisation. But, given that this socialisation *has* failed, whom or where can we address finding the resources for the healing of this situation? There seems to be some sort of a paradox here. As long as the life instincts or potentials at least has been cut off from or been prevented from being a part of our psychological and behavioural equipment, there is nothing present to be mobilized in the service of healing and health. Of course it seems possible to point at psychological-therapeutic processes and opportunities, but keeping in mind that human destruction, cruelty and evil often presents itself as large scale collective phenomena, individual- or even group-therapy would hardly do the job. At the individual level, within the realm of clinical psychology and psychiatry focusing private pathology, solutions could be made, but hardly eliminate evil as one of mankind’s most serious problems and challenges. But Fromm, operating from a position originating in both psychology and social science, influenced by Freud as well as Marx, assuming that human health and human liberation being two sides of the same, pointed out that social liberation by necessity being a presupposition for individual and psychological liberation. Thus, the whole matter turns out to be some sort of political, a political project, whose most essential ingredients being human awareness, reason, creativity and unconditioned love. But again, this project, however political and collective it might be, in the end boils down to human experiences and behaviours of some sort, and the ultimate question or dilemma will always be *where* to get the resources from, being the life instinct that from the beginning has been prevented from establishing itself and

flourishing within human personality itself. In other words: the project being political or human on more or less psychological conditions, at the starting point there seems to be no “unalienated” part or dimension to which we can appeal.

3

In many respects, Melanie Klein herself constitutes a milestone in psychoanalytical theorizing and clinical practice. She may also be considered some sort of a pioneer due to her reflections over the causes and conditions generating human evil. Along with other “neo-Freudians”, like Margaret Mahler, Michael Balint, Donald Winnicott and others, she tried to describe and explain our *first* experience with hate. In order to understand this experience, we must go back to early infancy. As developmental psychologists frequently points out, the infant’s first experience is basically a totally positive and hopeful one, a hope and experience of the warmth, regularity and consistent care from the primary caretaker. The central need or “hoped-for” experience here is that of being fed. For Klein, the primary inclination within the infant is to associate with the caregiver, the mother with the breast. According to Klein’s systematically observed mother-infant interactions, in the beginning the mother *is* the breast for the infant. The infant’s first relationship, then, is necessary to a body *part*, not a whole person. As a consequence, all that blocks the relationship between the baby and the mother’s breast is perceived as alarming and frustrating. On these terms, regardless of how consistent, patient and loving the parent tries to be, the infant’s expectations, or “demands”, will not be satisfied or fulfilled. The inability to locate or “attain” the breast will thus be met with an energetic search followed with distress, screaming and in the end frustration and anger. Even when the mother then reappears, according to Klein, clinical observations has shown that the baby may reject the mother or in some way even attack her out of anger.

For Klein and some of the other theorists just mentioned, this experience in the baby leads to the first *dualism* encountered in the baby’s world, articulated in the famous theoretical “slogan” – connected to Klein – “the good and the bad mother”. The “good” mother being the one who feeds, comfort and thus satisfy the baby, while the “bad” mother in abandoning the baby’s need turn out to be a “no-show”. The baby is out of capability in reconciling these strong split feelings associated with each of these mothers. The baby then, out of survival, necessity must split off its experience of the good and the bad. The baby must separate and make some sort of “compartment wall” between these positive and negative feelings toward the mother in order not to “destroy” her psychologically. The bad mother, who is hatred, must be kept separate from the good mother who provides the ingredients necessary for the child’s physical and emotional survival, in that way keeping feelings of hate disconnected from needy, loving feelings. During this experience, however, the baby separates more than two “external” mothers. Since the baby has not yet developed a separate sense of *self*, the baby itself and the mother are merged together as a single unity. When the baby then divides the mother, it also by consequence divides *itself*. Hating of the “bad” breast threatens to overwhelm the experience of the “good” breast. As these two breast objects are separated, so is the baby’s inner experience also separated. Hating the breast means hating part of one’s own experience. The primary object is thus *internalized* and *split* between good and bad. In order to maintain psychic equilibrium the baby must expel the “bad” elements, along with the frustration and rage that accompany it. The baby then, for sake of its own psychic wellbeing, divides the world into two categories of experience: those that are pleasurable and provide gratification and those that are painful and thus frustrating. In early childhood then, the mother’s breast becomes the first object of both love and hate, eventually turning into general feelings towards other people, but actual hiding a deep rooted feeling

within the person itself, addressing his own self-esteem. As Melanie Klein explains, this gives the source of human hate: “*Hatred and aggressive feelings are aroused and he (the baby) becomes dominated by the impulses to destroy the very person who is the object of all his desires and who in his mind is linked up with everything he experiences – good and bad alike.*”<sup>12</sup> The point is that the split-off parts are expelled. After expelling these threatening feelings, they will later be projected onto others. Then real hate is born. The point of departure is that the mother/breast inevitably frustrates the baby. If, however, there are good reparative experiences to intervene, the frustration is expressed as anger and can be met with comfort. If, on the other hand, the mother appears cold or punitive regarding the angry infant, the frustration is not calmed down, but turns instead to anger – and then to *hate*. This part of the self is then expelled and projected onto others, mixed up with bad fantasies concerning the mother, often as images of her as pure evil. The logic here being that the aggression and hate felt by the baby is experienced as intolerable. Usually, however, the baby’s good experiences with the mother are dominant and eventually outweigh the bad experiences, making it possible to internalize the “good mother”. If or when it becomes impossible for this taking place, the infant gets stuck within the so called *paranoid-schizoid position*. Klein talked about *two* fundamental psychic structures, or positions in the baby, the paranoid-schizoid position mentioned, and the *depressive position*. Later Thomas Ogden, inspired by Klein, added a third position, occurring previous to Klein’s, the so-called *autistic-contiguous position*. Regarding Klein, the baby’s bad experiences during the paranoid-schizoid period originated in the caregiver’s rejection, making it unable to handle its own aggression and thus leading to an intolerable and threatening *anxiety* which has to be expelled and projected onto others. This means that it has to be taken to come from the outside, generating the psychological defence mechanism of *projective identification*, necessarily leading to the distortion of the object, the other person, by placing the evil itself into him or her. The premise here being that the aggression and hatred, due to bad experiences, forces the child to put it onto others and thus making it tolerable and understandable. This leads to an innate acceptance of detecting the evilness in other persons and thus legitimating hating them, which in turn, having the opportunities, having all rights in doing bad things to them, even killing or torturing them the conditions being proper - acts being normally understood or interpreted as manifestations of *sadism*. Hate then is to be understood as some kind of *relief*, a crucial manoeuvre for handling one’s own aggression that has not been working through under normal conditions. The logical consequence of this should also, according to Klein, be *envy*, the need to destroy everything that is perceived as kind and good, because a recognition of something external as good and kind in the external world would ultimately destroy one’s projection of evil as exactly something coming from outside, from the external world and not originated in the subject itself.<sup>13</sup> A crucial point here also seems to be the sadist’s desperately need for *identifying* with his victim, *not* reducing him or making him something different from himself.

Melanie Klein basically talks about and presupposes an original aggression or hate inside the individual, an innate aggression that automatically turns to hate through the early development, but under specific negative or frustrating circumstances easily turns out to be permanent and destructive. The key-word concerning evil, however, still seems to be *aggression*, but, which seems to be crucial, its *transformation* into hatred and evil, due to bad experiences and relationships. As both Klein and Vetlesen stress, however, aggression in its original habits, is natural, something a matter of necessity, and is not to be understood as, or being identical to or reduced to projected hatred.

---

<sup>12</sup> M. Klein (1975). Love, Guilt and Reparation. In: R. E. Money-Kyrle (ed.). *The Writings of Melanie Klein*, p. 306.

<sup>13</sup> Norwegian philosopher Arne Johan Vetlesen making a thorough account and explanation of evil grounded in Klein’s theory and Fred Alford’s supplements to it. See Vetlesen, 2003, 2005.

Melanie Klein is considered the “founder” of the so called “*object relations*” school within psychoanalysis. As pointed out, the focus is upon *relations*, here the first and primary relationship the child experiences. It really represents some kind of a two-dimensional theory where an external relationship manifests itself as and inner structure in the single individual, here the baby. This means that *relationships* and “*inner*” *psychic structures* have to be seen or understood as *one* of an issue and not as separates. The question concerning hate, and in the end evil, however, will be: what must be considered the basic power or underlying motive generating it under specific circumstances. We will have to return to that question later, particularly stressing *relational* and *situational* factors.

4

For Klein and Alford, hatred and evil is understood as grounded in an ultimate *dread*, a fear of *life* itself, but for Ernest Becker this dread, on the contrary, is grounded in a fear of *death*. The key point for Becker is that we humans spend our lives repressing our own mortality and in doing so we play out a deep yearning to be *heroic*. This heroism is aimed at denying our finitude and vulnerability connected to our inevitable encounter with death. Becker argues that human beings are a unique combination of both *nature* and *spirit*. Spiritually we seem able to rise above our status as mere creatures, but at the same time we are profoundly embedded in our inevitable decaying mortality. Our strongest battle is precisely with and against this awareness of our own demise. Heroism thus seems to be a way of transcending these limitations of finitude. This turns out to be some sort of *narcissism*, a desire to expand our own organism, to inflate our selves to cosmic proportions in order to deny the most terrifying and inevitable of all, our necessary limitations and final demise. The problem of real life is of course that we are *not* omnipotent and immortal. Because of that we are forced to spend our time engaged in a constant repression concerning our own demise. According to Becker, all forms of heroism, conquering, being of a material or spiritual kind, are unconscious attempts to deny mortality, making psychological illusions of precisely *immortality*. But behind all this lies the anxiety for death itself. According to Becker, this anxiety is often overshadowed or repressed and made unconscious in order to make it bearable and making it possible for us to function and handling our daily duties.

Becker, referring to, among others, Kierkegaard, point at the human paradox that we have the capacity for a symbolic identity *above* nature, but yet we are firmly grounded *in* nature itself. It is precisely this splitting or dualism that makes our prospects for life so terrifying, reminding us that in the end we are doomed at losing our very self.<sup>14</sup>

According to Becker, evil then is a by-product of our fear of death and our attempt to escape this reality by refusal of our own finitude. Basically most people, Becker claims, see death itself as the greatest “evil”. In religious terminology, for example Christianity, the originator evil, the devil, is often perceived as the symbol of death itself. Mortality is wicked, but ironically, in all our attempts to escape this greatest of all evils, we create even much *more* evil. This follows from the fact that in our desperate lust and hunt for self-perpetuation, we are forced to create much destructiveness out of the fact that our urge to expand, to conquer and gain explicit success, necessarily leads to suffering among others, at whose costs the very expansion and conquering have been made. Simply speaking, our frantic need for more - *and more* - often implies that others will have less. Thus our desire to transcend our mortal lives

---

<sup>14</sup> Interesting, while Becker associate himself with psychoanalytic theory, he makes a significant departure from Freud, stating that the primary repression doesn't concern *sexuality*, but *death*. And further, instead of a death instinct, Becker claims that we instead have a death *fear*.

leads us toward immoral behaviours. Others have to “pay” for the hatred we feel while trying to escape our own mortality. Becker himself states it like this: “*Each person nourishes his immortality in the ideology of self-perpetuation to which he gives his; this gives his life the only abiding significance he can have. No wonder men go into rage over fine points of belief: if your adversary wins the argument about truth, you die. Your immortality system has been shown to be fallible.*”<sup>15</sup> This fight against finitude, then, will have devastating consequences on our neighbours. Becker believes that the refusal to accept our true condition sets up an ongoing pattern of destructiveness. Man wants the whole earth, but an earth that is really meant to be a heaven, which is impossible.

As a consequence of this, Becker states, or believes, that as an ultimate deed, *killing* others becomes a way of defying our own death. It is *they*, no *us*, who are dying, thereby confirming some sort of illusion of immortality. By witnessing the death of *others*, we perpetuate the illusion that we are escaping it. But not only, and perhaps even not first and foremost just *watching* others die, but by ourselves holding others life in our own hands, making us feel real masters over life and death. This seems to include a high degree of *sadism*, namely having and not at least *enjoying* a sense of power over others, and indirectly over death. This enables us to focus externally on the death of other as we avoid the awareness of our own demise. Ultimately killing others serves as a means of killing our own self-contempt, our mortality, thus *proving* our *immortality* by exposing the mortality of others. This could for example explain our culture’s frequent preoccupations with crime and murder, tragic accidents and disasters and other forms of violent death, preoccupations that usually is considered manifestations of for example curiosity. However, interpreted a “Beckerian-way”, it could be considered an opportunity to come face-to-face with death, but instead pass on to others being the objects or victims.

Thus, our deep-rooted attempts to escape the greatest imaged evil for every individual – one’s own demise, becomes the source of the actual and *real* evil we inflict on others. This seems, to a certain extent, reasonable. By putting the fate of death onto others in order to expel it from ourselves, leading to the prime motive of more or less totally control over others, makes way for a feeling of lust which must be understood as nothing less than sadism. Sadism then, is to be considered the very essence of evil itself. Evil becomes a product of a Godlike, but malignant narcissism, a narcissism that maintains the potent illusion of oneself as ultimately good and other people as all bad or evil, thus disguising our real impotence concerning life and death. Becker’s claims concerning the universality and intensity of this kind of narcissism can however be criticised for rigidity and being exaggerated. By observation, for example, tendencies toward narcissism vary greatly from person to person, which makes it impossible to generalize to an entire population, not to mention to mankind itself.<sup>16</sup> Narcissism, understood as some sort of clinical diagnoses, only makes sense at the level of the individual, thus varying here in intensity from person to person. This makes it impossible in operating on a level postulating universal inbuilt tendencies of almost constant intensity or strength. At the same time it does not take into account the individual’s capability to handle and control his own narcissism and even compensate for it by other psychic manoeuvres. Thus, it seems impossible to base an entire concept concerning such a fundamental human enterprise as evil and evildoing on solely philosophical or theoretical grounds, not taking into consideration a more practical, clinical-psychological view. Further, if this type of malignant narcissism and potential evildoing really were dominant, it would be almost impossible for man to live in societies and cultures based on cooperation and reciprocity with at least to some degree connected to elements of altruism, empathy and

---

<sup>15</sup> E. Becker (1975). *Escape from Evil*, 64

<sup>16</sup> See: D. Evans, 1979.

positive affections. The consequence of this is that in addition other forces in man as a matter of necessity is operating, balancing and neutralizing narcissistic urges toward domination, destruction and evildoing. It should be a mistake of Becker then proclaiming or believing that almost all our activities are an outgrowth of our fear of death and nature. Perhaps the whole matter is better explained as variations in narcissism from person to person, leading to different degrees regarding our intensity of this denial of death. The more narcissistic, the more death seems intolerable. Anyway, Becker's thesis that we are all dominated by this narcissism doesn't seem plausible. But perhaps Becker has got the point, assuming that this strong and malignant narcissism is something taking place in *particular* individuals, originated in their specific or unique life-story, upbringing, socialization, inherent dispositions, and so on, making a strong case for a basic fear of death and consequently the strong possibility for evildoing taking place in real life. In that case, malice, cruelty and evildoing, based on a sadistic urge to control other people, motivated by a basic fear of death, is perhaps something existing, taking place among people, but not as universal phenomena pervading almost every corner of the world. The world itself could easily turn out to be a dreadful place, impossible for decent human life if Becker's assumptions concerning the universality of such a basic narcissism based on a fundamental and traumatic fear of death really actual was the case. Psychologically, for a great many people the fear of death is compensated for or counteracted by our ties to our close relatives, our family and beloved children by whom we not only live for, but also accept to live *through* in the future, beyond our own physical death. As Evans sees the case, meaningful participation in life and positive connection with others helps in *decrease* of the fear of death. Daily life is thus not unconsciously or consciously dominated by an awareness of death, leading to an intense anxiety forcing us into control of and causing evil acts upon our fellow human beings. According to Evans, the inevitability of death can be faced with assurance and acceptance as a fact on the periphery of life, leaving behind any need for attempts to outmanoeuvre our own mortality.

## 5

Cognitive-behavioural therapist Aaron Beck has in late years launched a theory of hate and hostility based on his idea of *distorted thinking* as the source of different psychological pathologies. Rather than focusing on merely on particular *affective* states, Beck, as a cognitive therapist, is interested in the underlying mental processes that *produce* such feelings. Irrational or distorted thinking always precedes emotional disturbance, according to Beck. Clinically, the cognitive therapist tries to track down and identify the thought distortions beneath troublesome emotions. Feelings are to be acknowledged, but not given the status of the *final* reality of the psyche. They should instead be seen as the consequences of specific cognitive activity. Beck and other cognitive therapists' postulates concerning the priority or precedence of thoughts compared with emotions, can, or should be questioned. However, in not stressing this rather controversial subject at the moment, I wish to focus on Beck's own hypothesis concerning some basic origins of human *anger*, *hostility* and *violence*. Out of this, it will be essential to discuss the meaning and essence of human evil connected to these concepts and phenomena.

One of the most salient features of distorted thinking seems to be *egocentricity*. Self-interest itself must be considered important or essential for survival, making a necessity for evaluating important and personal matters in terms of how it affects *us*. But there exists here the constant "danger" or inclination to "over-interpret" situations from our own framework. Other people's behaviour is usually interpreted exclusively in reference to ourselves. Beck

points out that our egocentricity pushes us to believe that other people interpret the situation in the same manner that *we* interpret it. The conclusions we make out of this are that when someone do something we dislike for any matter, they obviously “know” what they are doing but deliberately wants to hurt us, or at least apparently don’t care. Beck goes further from clinical psychology, asserting that such individual biases are also true of and can be observed in *group processes*. He uses the concept “*groupism*” as the collective counterpart of *egoism*, where individual interests are transformed to group interests, but in fact, in my opinion, not eliminating every element of individual motivation. Humans as group members, however, reinforce each others “us-them” thinking, a typical manoeuvre in keeping groups joint, but at the same time producing or reinforcing prejudices. Such collective biases may be especially difficult to see because it is reinforced by other group members and thus often not directly detected on an individual level. Strong needs for belonging and attachment seems to push individuals towards such dualistic “groupthink”. The consequences of such stereotyping often results in a paranoia about the hostile intentions of others and is almost inevitable encouraged and reinforced as a consequence of the group’s self-image, depending heavily on the existence or definition of an “outgroup”, upon which hostile, malicious and evil qualities may be projected, far behind any objective evidence of the matter.

Such dualistic, “either-or” thinking on collective premises may have been adaptive under certain circumstances in the past, but becomes in-functional and destructive in modern pluralistic societies.<sup>17</sup>

Beck’s chief argument is that evaluating the world egocentric, it be on individualistic or collective terms, is primitive and *distorted* thinking. It is typical – in the sense of being *normal* – in both early childhood development as well as earlier stages of human evolution. Life under these circumstances is simply perceived to dangerous to call for creative and rational reflection. If we are forced to believe that our vital interests are at stake, whether individually or collective, primal thinking is an automatic response. The disadvantage of this turns obvious in consisting of the selective reduction of data into a few crude categories. At this it wastes much available information. “*Certain features of the situation are highlighted or exaggerated, and others are minimized or excluded from processing. Personal relevant details are taken out of context, the meanings tending to be excessively egocentric.....it may be satisfactory for true life-or-death emergencies, but it is disruptive to the smooth functioning of everyday life and to the solution of normal interpersonal problems*”, in Beck’s own words.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, when feeling emotionally or psychological challenged, we tend to fall back to this old and primitive dualistic pattern. Even no threat is present, due to the particular situation, we nevertheless *feel* it that way psychologically. We are thus not capable thinking about alternatives or options to the conflict. Excessive anxiety has produced this hostile reaction, but for Beck, this anxiety has itself emerged from *exaggerated*, distorted thinking. The anxiety thus does not cause our distorted thinking. Instead it is this thinking that creates our anxiety. Beck then denies the Freudian idea of an objectless or “free-floating anxiety” causing various defence mechanisms, among them patterns of distorted thinking and rationalizations. If we, according to Beck, look carefully enough, we will find that anxiety is always based on subtle and distorted interpretations of life. The idea of these rigid patterns of thought, once functional and crucial for survival, now being obstacle for our personal development, may however fit well to the psychoanalytic notion of defence mechanisms, once necessary, later becoming the very problem itself.

---

<sup>17</sup> I shall return more thoroughly to the matter in part II, investigating especially relational and collective causes of evil.

<sup>18</sup> A. Beck (1999). *Prisoners of Hate. The Cognitive Basis of Anger, Hostility and Violence*, 73.

The most serious danger concerning this primitive and distorted thinking is that in creating and relying on this kind of egocentricity, cut us off from the important and crucial social traits like love, empathy, altruism and pro-social ways of acting and living. The existence or presence of these social and psychological characteristics and qualities in individuals seems to be the necessary guarantee for their humane and decent behaviour toward other people or group of people. On the other hand, the narrowed distorted self-protected reasoning easily leads to mistrust and hate toward others, and as the worst consequence, in forcing direct brutality and cruelty, even killing and torture onto them. Evil then, seems to be at worst part, the result of certain defence mechanisms, taken to the extreme, not unlike what is described by for example Klein, Alford and Vetlesen. The main point anyway, seems to be that evil comes from *within* under certain terms, from people that in the one way or another experience psychological threat that is transformed outward and executed in or upon social world.

Beck believes that his theory of distorted thinking causing hate – and evil – is necessarily trans-cultural, pointing at some universal conditions in man regarding the referred relationship between emotions and cognitive distortions. That counts, no matter the external circumstances or causes might be, the same psychological mechanisms being involved anyway. Regarding destructive interpersonal action, activated cognitive distortions incite anger and releasing hostile behaviour. According to Beck, unwarranted personal attacks that arise from it being prejudice, bigotry, ethnocentrism, military invasion, or so on, involve the primal thinking apparatus of absolute categorical cognition neglecting human status of suffering or as victim.

Beck's perspectives, of cause, open up for therapeutic treatment or curing of hatred, by a working through of distorted cognition itself. A universal formula for hate *reduction* is thus possible, regardless of the particular social, historical, racial or gender location of the patient. However, Beck also recognizes the difference of quality in what he calls "*cold calculated violence*" and "*hot reactive violence*", though he believes an, or perhaps the same underlying cognitive distortion occurring in each, but admitting that perhaps cold violence may not involve the kind of anxious reaction and display of exaggerated thinking involved in typical reactionary violence. One may wonder if lack of moral principles may be the issue in "cold" violence, rather than a lack of clear thinking. Beck, himself believes that "hot" reactive violence is much more common than the "cold" one where hate itself being largely a breakdown of information processing brought on by a bias.

Beck thus believes certain common psychological factors can be identified in all forms of antisocial behaviour, for the most part identifying or associating "antisocial" with hatred against one's surroundings in the one way or another. The common psychological problem lies in the offender's perception – or *misperception* – of oneself and one's relation to other people, these perceptions being the basis for the interpretation of *other* people, their words, behaviours and intentions. The offender usually sees himself as victim, projecting one's own distortions onto others or the surroundings in general, also seen in mere blind antisocial activities, for example vandalism. The cognition itself seems being that "authorities are controlling, disparaging and punitive, close persons are manipulative, deceitful and rejecting, outsiders are treacherous, self-serving and hostile - and nobody is to be trusted". Because of all this, the offender himself, and due to a rather fragile self-esteem, then frequently interprets *other's* behaviour as hostile, antagonistic – and even evil, shaping an inner or psychological need for defence and fighting back.

These *reactive* offenders according to Beck, is to be carefully separated from what he characterize as primary "*psychopaths*" who are quite rare. Psychopaths have to be understood as persons whose psychological dynamics seems mostly dominated by *lust* and pleasure when hurting controlling and dominating other people, they being relatives or strangers. While there



however are some similarities between the two groups, the main point is realizing the huge differences among them. The reactive offenders feel vulnerable and fragile, while the psychopaths on the other hand feel invulnerable and superior. The reactive offender sees others as hostile enemies, while psychopaths view others as inferior victims. The violence of the reactive offender is largely a defensive manoeuvre, while on the other hand the violence of the psychopath is simply *malicious*. The psychopath then, seems to have acquired some sort of *empathy*, but is perverting it by using this understanding to manipulate and if possible hurting other people in the crudest manner.<sup>19</sup>

According to Beck, psychopaths have basic deficiency in their information processing, something that in his theory precedes the emotional reaction, for example the pleasure or satisfaction of the mere manipulation itself. Non-psychopaths on the other hand, seem able to process and integrate clues that would cause them to pause and reflect on their own behaviour. Psychopaths are aware of the rules, but seem incapable in integrating them for working-through, instead distancing from them by believing they are superior to and above them. Consequently the reactive offender is much easier to work with in therapy, because his or her beliefs about the world and other people can be modified over time. In psychopaths it seems almost impossible to work with elements the person is not willing or capable of integrating in his personality.

According to Beck, distorted cognition in the individual psyche, is often seen in the group's or collective's attitudes as well. In fact, a main function of the group itself is often to build up a barrier between the "good-us" and the "bad-others": "Our case is sacred; theirs are evil", "we are the victims; they are the victimizers. This is classical political enemy making, under extreme circumstances leading to doctrines which consequence is that all members of the opposition is lumped together so that they lose their identities as unique individuals. And since they are all the same, they are interchangeable and hence disposable. We systematically strip the "others", the opposition, of any human qualities for which we might have empathy or compassion. The "others" are thus demonized as the very embodiment of evil. The paradox of this projection and distorted conception of evil as the object of (distorted) cognitive activities is that it in fact becomes the very *cause* of evil and evildoing itself. By attacking the evil *image*, we kill *real* people.

The very problem or theme of collective evil has, however, been object for heavy discussions in the late making room for theories of many kind especially more cultivated sociological ones being critical to psychological theories on an individualistic basis.

There is, however, another problem connected to Beck's view concerning the origins of human evil. As a strict cognitive-behavioural therapist he shows little affinity and interest in the supposedly repressed dark elements of the unconscious, it being individualistic or collective; that was largely presupposed in the theories of as well Freud and for example Fromm, Klein and Alford. But on these terms, Beck's theory faces the threat of getting stuck in a "dead end street" regarding basically assumptions of what lies behind our strong psychological needs for projecting evil upon others. Beck's answer is distorted cognition, but there seems to be no reason why this should give the final resolution to the problem. One may of course assert that this is the result of some sort of learning, still it may seem like a mystery why procedures of automatic and reflective learning should ultimately lead to mass murder and other forms of extreme cruelty against innocent people. Focusing on basic and archaic feelings getting repressed or disturbed at beginning of life, thus from the very birth leading to distorted and twisted views or attitudes regarding both oneself and other people, seems like a more basic or proper way of explaining the primitive and strong hate constituting the terms for factual evildoing. However, to a large extent behaviourists and social theorists in general

---

<sup>19</sup> And thus *not* being an empathic *person*, but rather the opposite.

would regard psychodynamic inspired theories' talking of and presupposing unobserved unconscious processes, as more or less empty speculation.

After all, Beck presupposes that humans also possess and are capable of traits of another and lighter character than the dark sides dealt with up to now. We also have the capacity for altruistic and helping behaviour that can balance and even override hostile tendencies, not to mention our capabilities for rational thinking which makes it possible challenging and overcoming our most distorted and primal thinking. Qualities such as empathy, cooperation and positive rationality are just as intrinsic to human nature as qualities of anger, hate and violence. Pro-social tendencies seem, after all, to be as fundamental to human nature as antisocial tendencies.

Beck's perspective however, originated in human reason and cognitive rationalisation, could, in my opinion, hardly claim to hold the whole truth regarding human evilness and wrongdoing. In fact, Beck could be accused of turning the whole problem upside down by making cognition and rationalisation superior to emotions and dark motivations in detecting the very origins of human evil and destruction. As pointed out dealing with for example Klein, deep rooted archaic feelings and emotions are in work from birth on, before any rational symbolization can take place, making room for projected hatred and cruelty when frustrated or bad handled. We also know that there exist perhaps some *biological* premises for regarding emotional elements superior to cognition, among other things from the fact that parts of the human brain containing centre for emotional impulses being older and deeper-seated than the parts conducting cognitive processes.<sup>20</sup> Thus, some significant feature concerning Beck's theory seems to be that he simply doesn't dig deep enough in his efforts to come to some sort of explanation, though his ideas can count as *partial* explanation, or part of a larger multi-factual explanation or model.

## 6

According to David Augsburger, hate cannot, that is however often presumed, be reduced to one single feeling or experience. Instead, hate has to be regarded as many *different* things or types, and not *all* forms being bad and destructive. Hate doesn't grow out from a single motive. Instead hatred has to be regarded as far more complex and nuanced. In fact it is composed of a wide spectrum of reactions, from emotion to behaviour, prejudice and certain cultural norms and values. "*It may be intense, focused and direct; or it may be impersonal, detached, instrumental and indirect*".<sup>21</sup> "*Hate is a complex series of negative feelings-attitudes-sets of behaviours. Yet a single word is largely employed to cover the whole set*".<sup>22</sup>

All this seems reasonable, pointing up to precise a multi-factual understanding or concept of hate - and perhaps evil. According to Augsburger, our "hate-language" does not adequately convey the varieties of the underlying emotions and motives. He describes hate as a "family" of emotions, rather than a singular feeling. Augsburger, like Klein, presupposes a psychological development regarding emotions, shifting from strict dualistic either-or thinking towards a tolerance for ambiguity to an empathic ability to at the same time seeing humanness in those we hate. With maturity and greater developmental achievement, we eventually begin to experience elements of empathy in which the hatred object or object-part does not seem alien to ourselves. This gives us the ability of experiencing other persons, not as solely divided parts of love or hate, but as whole individuals with their good as well as bad

---

<sup>20</sup> I will return to this question in part III.

<sup>21</sup> D. Augsburger (2004). *Hate Work. Working Through the Pain and Pleasures of Hate*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

qualities, which in turn makes it possible to differentiate the actor from the act. This differentiation, then, makes it possible for us – not to eliminate hate as such, but to make a clear distinction between hating the evil *act*, while at the same time *not* hating the evil-doer or other *persons* on more *general* terms. Augsburg, however, admits this in general to be a notoriously difficult task. This becomes especially true because a person's particular destructive act easily snowballs into a damaging pattern of behaviour that seems cemented to, or integrated in the structure of the personality as such, which in turn appears to express the full range of personhood. When certain patterns of behaviour seem such deep rooted in personality, it would be nearly impossible to separate act from person. This is particularly true if the primary orientation or mission of a person's life has served destruction and chaos.

Augsburger himself makes a strong case that hate is both *inevitable* and *essential*. The issue thus is not getting rid of our hate. Instead it is hating the *right* thing that becomes crucial, the question being: What *deserves* our hate? Augsburg's answer is that there exist *mature* kinds of hatred which is directed at injustice itself. Augsburg's perspective thus, is to separate hate from evil, stating that hate can exist in the service of the good. Such benign hate is then of cause contrasted to malevolent hate, or evil. Healthy hate then, is hatred *against* evil. It is thus both healthy and necessarily to hate as well as to love. Augsburg says we cannot love without also experiencing hate. When experiencing that all we hold for truth, kindness and justice being violated, we can't refrain from hating the violator. This hate is in fact what makes it possible for us to fight against injustice. A love of fairness assumes a disdain for unfairness. Usually, however, our hate is not solely directed against the evil act itself, but first and foremost against persons, which most often represents the basis of evil or malevolent hatred itself. This also represents the kind of hate that manifests itself in highly dualistic, black-or-white categories. Our hatred is targeted at specific persons or group, with no shades of nuance represent. The other(s) are one hundred percent evil, while *we* at the same thing are the good. Such dualistic hate does not acknowledge the personhood of the hated object. It is more considered a "thing", indicating a complete identification of the person with the evil act.

Augsburger identifies three types of hate that is operative within this dualistic framework. The first is *simple* hatred in which we merely feel a strong dislike for something. The second type of hatred is *spiteful* hatred which refers to a deep resentment toward someone who has hurt us, the enclosing feeling or belief here being that a deep injustice has be done against us by that very person or group. The third type is *malicious* hatred, which involves a strong lust for revenge. This is a revenge aimed at hurting the other person. According to Augsburg, all three of these forms of hatred are built upon the inability to distinguish the perpetrator from the injury. They may all be understandable and are forms that everyone inevitable experiences in daily life. Augsburg recognizes that the black-and-white stereotypes that underlie these types of hatred are both universal and unavoidable. These negative stereotypes against individuals, however, view every individual through the derogatory lens aimed at the entire group the person is supposed to belong to. Such negative stereotypes seem unwilling to be modified by objective data or contradictory evidence contrasting the false ideas underlying the stereotype(s). These categories of thought in rigid stereotypes are of cause emotionally charged rather than intellectually guided. To a great extent, they are held because they make life more convenient by turning complexity into easy-to-identify categories. This is, however, to be seen as common and "normal" reactions hunting every human being through daily experiences now and again.

As mentioned, however, Augsburg believes there being types of hate that are justified by the circumstances itself, namely "*just*" or "*moral*" hate directed against evil, or evil acts itself. This type of hate is characterized by principally disconnecting offender from offence, in the sense of seeing the person as more than the destructive behaviour. Such moral

hatred focuses primarily on the immoral act committed by the person, but still is not always ready to separate person from deed. Augsburger states that moral hatred at first may seem essentially *impersonal* since it focuses on the lack of morality in the other's action. But the person's evil behaviour, public acts and private choices get enmeshed in beliefs, personhood and character of the person. It seems difficult to separate hating of the malignant from respecting the benign. The very danger of moral hatred itself is that it in fact may blind us to the real humane and decent elements within others, it often being hidden behind the acts itself. The temptation of raising moral judgment against the person as such lurks behind all evaluations of this kind. The moral problem itself can according to Augsburger be formulated as this: Is the person more or *no* more than the worst act committed?

According to Augsburger, in the continuum of and affirming moral hatred, lies what he calls "*just*" hatred, aiming at defending the rights of the victim, but also seeking for the justice that respects the personhood of everyone involved, including the perpetrator. "Just" hatred, then, is supposed to be grounded in a passion for *universal* fairness, the target of hate being injustice itself. In "just" hatred we *hate* hate. Because of that it has to be perceived as synonymous with love and thus be considered as precisely the opposite of evil. It really represents a revolt and fight against the very existence of evil itself. As Augsburger points out, "just" hatred implicates that we go beyond or get rid of ethnocentrism in condemning injustice done by one's own group as well as others.: "*Just hate recognizes that we must face not only the other group's evil but our own as well. It realizes that there is no reconciliation between groups until people talk about their own ethic group's crimes as honestly as they point out those of others*".<sup>23</sup>

The central problem connected to this, according to Augsburger, is our tendency to see our own actions through the lens of our intentions, and not always in the light of the factual consequences of our deeds. We always feel we *mean* well and therefore our actions can't be that bad after all. Yet we rarely extend to others the same courtesy. When seeing our own actions as based on the higher ground of good intentions, no such good intentions are usually attributed to the expected "evil" actions of *others*. Of course, it is possible to experience several levels of hate simultaneously. One does not have to categorize others in exclusion-inclusion. Augsburger, however, states that hate is inevitable and therefore the point is not wasting our time getting rid of hate, but to hate the *right* thing.

The next point of departure of cause is reflecting upon reasons for hate. The question regarding Augsburger's answers to this is, however: Is he digging deep enough? Of course, one immediately reason mentioned by him, is that our biological equipment simply makes us hate. From this point of view, hate exists as essential part of our humanness as such. Hostility is seen as a built-in, necessary aspect of our *evolutionary* survival, making for example *prejudice* an inevitable outgrowth of self-interest. Perhaps these tendencies are genetically passed on to future generations as a way of guaranteeing survival. The further argument here could be that we have an essential and deep need to classify and categorize our surroundings and life itself for the purpose of our own survival, meaning that we should not be able to make it without such conceptual schemes.<sup>24</sup>

Another explanation mentioned is that we possibly the way or another is *socialized* to hate. In some way we all – individuals, societies and cultures – have to learn who is, or could come to be our enemies, urging to destroy us, given the opportunities or the right (or wrong) circumstances being present. In a little less dramatic way, Augsburger states: "*Our world is confusingly diverse, and one must learn labels and construct stereotypes in order to pattern and manage our interactions and relationships. Our need to simplify the complexity of human*

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 12

<sup>24</sup> I shall return to this subject during part III.

*community leads us to construct prejudices as manageable patterns of perception, definition, and interaction. Although these offer the desired efficiency, they have an inevitable and unfortunate dark side. They create bigotry and multiply negative prejudices, which alienate us from each other”.*<sup>25</sup>

Augsburger also considers the possibility of our hatred simply being grounded in *moral* flaw. Feeling insecure, threaten or being attacked by anxiety, we can be mislead by immoral ways to react with hostility toward any threat to our security.

The capacity for and even necessity of hating, pointed at by Augsburger, is also stressed by Richard Galston<sup>26</sup>, describing different groups of people with different capacities to hate. Galton asserts that when being passively unable to hate, we are usually incapacitated to fight against injustice, this perspective being in accordance with Augsburger’s view.

So after all, perhaps Augsburger *is* digging deep enough in explaining the origins of hate and eventually evil. His approach seems comprehensive and multifaceted compared with other theories and does not rely on one singular element of explanation. In this way it seems fair to characterize it as genuine *eclectic*.

Still, while Augsburger might be right on his own terms, the whole story seems not yet been told. To get a fully grasp of the total dynamics of human evil, we must move further beyond individual-psychological perspectives while incorporating social and other “individualistic” perspectives, namely biological, in a more deep-digging analysis.

## PART II Relations

### 1

Taking about a “social” dimension of evil, should at least involve *two* or more, however related scientific disciplines, like *social psychology* and *sociology*, but perhaps also including disciplines like *anthropology* and *history*. However, focusing on the social dimensions of evil, in my opinion does not exclude individual perspectives, like “inner” psychological forces, motives and conflicts dealt with in part I. Rather, the concept of this dissertation is precisely that of *integrating* several perspectives and dimensions into a more fully understanding of *all* psychological factor operating in the creating and maintenance of human evil. In my model or perspective, several psychological dimensions and factors simultaneous contribute creating the matter, in precisely the way that social and social psychological factor being dependent on subjective psychological elements and vice versa. Also add to this model the element or dimension of biology, parts of it being important for the creation of some significant psychological conditions and processes.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 33. Although Augsburger suggests it being the result of some sort of socialization, it could immediately be considered a *psychological* explanation. However, as I shall be pointing at later, it also becomes significant in the further, while discussing *social*, and even *biological* causes of prejudices and hatred.

<sup>26</sup> R. Galston (1987). *The Longest Pleasure. A Psychoanalytic Study of Hatred*.

<sup>27</sup> What I especially have in mind is gene-, neuropsychological and evolutionary biology, and I will return to these matters in the next part (III).

Social psychology, however, seems to represent a significant starting point in its own right identifying evildoing, especially identified as for example mass hate, large scale murder and even genocide. History of twentieth century has told us that the urge to do harm to innocent people combined with political power and authority, has had a tremendous and horrifying effect concerning the presence and bringing into effect the very nightmare of terror and evil. The key question here to be asked seems to be: How does it come that not just disturbed individuals, but rather adjusted and kind people under certain circumstances could be brought into situations taking part in big scale murder of innocent people; men, women and children? This very approach itself seems disturbing.

Some leading developmental line regarding perspectives in recent years has been to move behind *individual* views, toward a look a different *situations* involving individuals' social life. Some significant claims have been made, like: A social situation can be so powerful that it overshadows genetics, previous ethical standards, prior learning or any dispositional factors associated with a "personality". Put simply, the social context can pressure people into doing a lot of things they normally would not, saying that evil is usually not performed by "monsters" from whom we can feel safely disconnected. Instead more often results from a growing erosion of moral standards is due to some situational, social, cultural or/and political circumstances inflicting ordinary people no different than you and me. This is often related or referred to the so called social psychological term or concept "*the fundamental attribution error*", saying that mental distortion regarding conclusion is frequently made when we believe that all the persons' behaviour is due to, or comes from within the subject itself rather than being triggered by outside and situational factors. The fundamental attribution error thus assumes that all our behaviour is "endogenous", arising from "within", rather than being situational provoked. This error overly making *psychological*, or some would add, *biological*, what are in fact a social matter. This is explained by social psychologists by saying we humans have a natural tendency to attribute all destructive to internal dispositions - particularly connected to people different from ourselves. Social psychologists however, states that this represents a rather naïve belief that only "bad" people or personalities are doing bad things. From a social psychological point of view, evil is far more subtle than plain instinctual or dispositional theories have tried to convince us of. Instead, it looks more like an outside-in affair in which people are corrupted by a social context that pushes them toward greater and greater malevolence. This social psychological position does not necessarily argue for social and environmental *determinism*, instead stressing the "*influence*" factor itself as being the key to the understanding evil behaviour. Many social psychologists point out that evil occurs as a rather slow diffuse process brought on largely by social pressure of different kinds.

This clearly contrasts individualistic, especially psychoanalytical perspectives of evil, the latter presupposing unconscious forces and factors as the main source of evildoing, saying that individuals conscious self-reports can't be taken face value regarding the matter. Instead deeper conflicts and hidden meanings are working behind rather flattering individual self-reports. Social psychological research, on the other hand, takes individuals self-reports at face value, refusing to look for underlying psychological factors. Social psychologists for example are frequently stressing or reporting that rather inflated and excessive self-esteem is part of most destructive people's manner. They do this on the basis of self-reports and responses to questionnaires of subjects who has been involved in evildoing. The basis considering this kind of research of course contrasts that of digging for hidden forces and motives behind the

subject's own consciousness. Such an empiricism regarding the epistemology and corresponding way of doing research, often dominate social psychological science.<sup>28</sup>

However, my opinion is that focusing on empirical detected behaviour, self-reports and corresponding data, does not exclude data on another level or by different conceptual frames. On the contrary, such fundamental different conceptions have to be regarded supplements to each other, rather than antagonists. In getting a more fully concept of evil itself, it seems reasonable or even necessarily to stress both the "inner" and "outer" dimension of human psychic life.<sup>29</sup>

## 2

From a social psychological point of view, there exists quite a few significant and well known investigations that have thrown light on some crucial aspects of evil-doing itself and which has been considered as breaking new ground in the understanding of what parameters make large scale destructive behaviour possible. The works of Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo here seems to be two of the most prominent. Both of these fundamental social psychological thinkers strongly favour a *situational* rather than *dispositional* perspective regarding the sources and contingencies of human destructiveness.

Stanley Milgram's concern was examining the role of conformity and obedience connected to human's capacity for destructive behaviour. The background for his study, or experiment, was the experience of World War II concerning the willingness and non-resistance of common people in following Hitler and participating in mass murder. One of the questions Milgram asked himself was whether this had to be considered a character flaw of the German people, or a common trait in man itself. The technical matters and experimental design in Milgram's study is well known and will not be commented on in this text. It is however, well worth noticing that in Milgram's original experiment two-third of the subjects obeyed the experimenter up to a point believing they gave shocks of 450 volts, in spite of the "learner's" screams and protests and from the fact that the "teacher" or subject was in no way threatened and forced. Neither was he promised rewards, for example offered a large sum of money. The subjects simply obeyed the experiment leader's professional authority. The whole point of the experiment then, seems to be that the subjects indeed had a *choice*, but precisely *chose* to obey the leader for apparently technical, scientific and objective reasons. However, hearing the leader sometimes stating that the test had to be done for scientific purposes and that the subjects had "no choice", but to go on giving shocks, was enough for the majority to reassess or conceal the fact of choice and continuing the experimental "shock process". Out of this, some would probably assert that the subjects in the experiment did *not want to believe* they in fact had a choice. Instead they preferred to stay or act in accordance to what was expected from the context of the situation or arrangement. To start believing or realizing they were responsible for their own decisions would perhaps have forced them into moral calculations and responsibility on very short notice, something that they in fact would prefer to avoid. In situations like this one would often prefer to accept the authority figure's words

---

<sup>28</sup> This of course makes associations to the theoretical controversial known as "*The fundamental attribution error*", and is in the psychology of personality known as "*Person-interaction interaction*" or the question of "*Consistency vs. situation*". However, the concept of "person" and "personality" will have to be far broader defined than by solely psychoanalytical terms.

<sup>29</sup> As I make efforts to demonstrate in the following, there exist in fact *two* significant dimensions connected to man's "inner" life, namely the *biological* in addition to the pure psychological.

saying that they had no choice. Milgram himself seemed surprised finding authority that easy to elicit; much easier than he thought it would be. Conversely, disobedience did *not* come easy. His conclusion was, among other things, that ordinary people, in what they believed was just doing their job, and without any particular hostility against others or from their past, could easily be brought into a situation where they became agents in a terrible scenario of destructive acts against innocent people. Out of this Milgram also concluded that by no means a repressive nazi-regime was demanded for the purpose of finding “willing executioners” like guards for concentration camps and even administrators of torture, if they were told by some superior authority that the evil things they were asked to do was right, moral or just “necessary”. It could as well happen in liberal America. In fact, the Milgram experiment may seem to point at some basically denial and indifference in most of us, denials pointing at a hidden reservoir of un-neutralized aggression urging to get manifested under the “right” (or wrong) circumstances. Or may be the main issue or problem is man’s desire or inclination for *group participation* as the basis of the intent of confirming his own identity as social subject.

Milgram’s experiment has been linked to philosopher Hannah Arendt’s famous study of Adolf Eichmann and the concept of “The Banality of Evil”, referring to Arendt’s emphasis on the rather banality concerning Eichmann’s evil regarding his bureaucratic manner of killing of thousands of people in the concentration camps during the Second World War. The core of Arendt’s idea was precisely that quite ordinary people could be brought into a position of doing extraordinary brutal and terrible thing on a large scale, when social and political norms and pressures made tolerance for this possible. The trouble with Eichmann, Arendt stated, was that he didn’t appear as a monster different from ordinary people, but, on the contrary, that so many were like him. He appeared as a person “terrifying” normal, with no direct sadistic or perverted traits of character. Arendt made the comment that “*from the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together*”.<sup>30</sup> By claiming they are “just following orders” individuals can be put to engage in almost unimaginable destructive acts of obedience. The profile of Eichmann, together with Milgram’s study seemed like a powerful refutation of the earlier dominant theory saying that evil resides *within* human beings as a basic *disposition*. In other words, it clearly seemed minimizing the power of personality concerning destructive behaviour. The individual’s disposition is thus overshadowed by one’s *circumstances*. Destructive obedience does not result from beforehand destructive personality tendencies, like sadism, cruelty or other intra-psychic features. Instead it emerges as a result of powerful coercive forces that propel and even escalate human choices and corresponding behaviour. Like many, also anonymous commentators, has stated: “Perhaps there rests an Eichmann inside all of us, waiting for the right, perhaps accidental situation or factors to release its destructive potential”.<sup>31</sup>

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, relying on the conclusions made out of Milgram’s study, makes the point that it demonstrates that human cruelty largely is social determined and not originated in the psyche as some pathological structures and processes. Bauman takes

---

<sup>30</sup> H. Arendt (1963). *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 276.

<sup>31</sup> This statement and the logic behind this, grounded in Milgram’s study as well as Arendt’s philosophy, may however seem oversimplified as far as it is taken face value in pretending to give a fully and exclusive explanation regarding the subject of human evil. In Part I, I gave an account of *subjective* factors and theories concerning the matter. The chief thesis of this dissertation is that *both personal, situational* and even *biological* factors by necessity may be present in contributing to the actual manifestation of evil behaviour. A significant point regarding the statement including Eichmann, cited above, is precisely that it presupposes something of a “destructive potential” in man, in other words, a dispositional factor. I will return to this controversy in the concluding part, or Synthesis.



Milgram's study and conclusions face value in asserting that it in a nutshell *proved* that inhumanity and cruelty has to do with, or are originated in social relations. With referring to the frequently pointed out fact that the Holocaust was carried out on the basis of carefully planning and a high degree of technical rationalisation, Bauman's main thesis is precisely that a highly rationalized and well organised society form the basis of producing inhumanity on a large scale.

However, Bauman's argumentation here seems some sort of short-circuited. First, why should a highly rationalized society automatically turn into a state of horror, producing mass-murder and Holocausts? A quite different question seems to be that terror regimes itself may develop highly rational procedures to handle their mass-murder the most effective way. But Bauman's conclusion here seems to mix up causes and effects. At least his reasoning here seems pure "external" by method, meaning he is automatically trying to link together two factors that from the part of departure are not logical or casual connected, just presupposing that they *are*. Secondly, Bauman seems to operate on *dualistic* premises by the way he presents his alternatives for explaining the executioners doing evil, being *either* those who possess sadistic personal traits *or* quite normal persons who has become victims under specific circumstances. Bauman also stresses the well known argument of how *distance* to the victim lay the ground for directing cruelty toward him or her and document this precisely with the Milgram experiments where the test-administrator serves the function of both an external authority and intermediary making the distance itself.

Bauman's theory of evil *seems* throughout social or sociological. However, surprisingly, he rejects any idea referring to the possibility of a genuine *moral*, counteracting evil-doing, rooted in social conditions. The capability of moral itself, and thus the only effective barrier against evil and cruelty, lies *not* in socialization of any kind, but had to be found in the genuine "moral impulse" embedded in every single human from the start. Societal norms or the socialisation process itself at large scale only serves as manipulator of this moral impulse or ability. Bauman here explicitly refers to philosopher Emmanuel Levinas who essentially stresses a philosophy or ethic of *responsibility*, be a responsibility directed at "*the other*", a genuine and essential capability structured in every human being from the beginning and thus making the only prime and true fundament for human morality and inter-subjective relationships as such. In fact, Bauman, in building his whole concept of moral on Levinas' idea of subjective and inter-subjective responsibility and commitment, again seems to move into the logic of dualism. Responsibility directed at "the other" understood as a universal human capability can on these terms only be understood or interpreted as a human *potential*, allowed to take place under certain circumstances. Or else we would all be responsible, all the time and under every circumstance. Then we'll have to focus on *circumstances* themselves, which necessarily have to mean *combining* human and social, or societal, conditions, or possibilities. Bauman however, doesn't seem to follow this logic in rejecting any possibility for a human universal moral, as a buffer against evil-doing, grounded, at least partly, in socialization itself. By choosing one single basic reason regarding the possibility of moral, he thus has to face dualism, the "either-or", that turn out to be right or wrong.

Concerning Milgram and his rather provoking points of view, a basic question seems to be regarding some sort of a tension between personal *choice* and *social influence*. Exactly, what *is* then this relationship between individual choice and the social context? Are there in fact some mixed influence connecting human autonomy and circumstantial influence, or does the influence go one-sided, the one *or* another way?<sup>32</sup> There is however *one* significant point.

---

<sup>32</sup> This, by itself, represents a significant problem within as well social psychology as psychology of personality, perhaps demonstrating that these two separate disciplines within the one and the same

Milgram reports that the participants often felt very *distressed* about what they were doing during the experiment, but nevertheless continued fulfilling the tasks. According to Milgram, at least one of the participants was “rapidly approaching a nervous breakdown”<sup>33</sup> during the procedure. What should this tell us? Perhaps the most important fact associated with this observation is that there might be a significant *difference* regarding the attitude and status of Milgram’s participants compared with guards of the Nazi camps. The participant’s dissonance and stress of the participants in fact seems to represent an important element in what may separate Milgram’s own study from certain Nazi activities. Indeed, some significant part of the Nazi guards own attitudes and convictions was exactly that they believed they were performing a “good deed” or task relieving the world of “Jewish vermin” or other “*untermenschen*”. In other words: The Nazi willingness to unflinchingly eradicate Jewish and other people may need an explanation *beyond* that of Milgram’s obedient shockers. Out of the extension of this, an adequate clarification of the fact of and reason why nearly 35 percent of Milgram’s participants *did not* go all the way along the procedure in their shock infliction, has perhaps not been made. Instead, an intense focus has been placed on the majority willing to use maximal force and shock during the experiment. Perhaps not surprisingly, concerning the fact that these results on the behalf of the majority turned out to be astonishing, pointing in precise the opposite direction of what was predicted by experts, a band of prominent psychiatrists. Nevertheless, a minority of 35 percent itself represents a heavy argument for being caution regarding definite conclusions of what cause humans doing evil acts on each other. Then, pointing at the famous and often referred and already pointed at theoretical controversy between *dispositional* and *situational* forces determining human behaviour, could the case be that the reason explaining why so many refused following the leader’s instructions and demands of giving maximal shocks simply had to do with the fact that the forces and demands stemming from the authoritative situation itself perhaps appeared not to be that powerful and absolute after all? Is the case after all, in spite of the powerful results stemming from the experiments and observations in the “situation tradition”, like the Milgram experiment, at least to a certain degree, a matter of human *character*?<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the results from the Milgram study, no matter how strong the tendency run in favour of situation influence, yet makes it difficult to generalize exclusively in one direction. Instead it cast doubt upon its ability to conclude on the behalf of the human condition.

Concerning the further discussion of the Milgram study, let us consider some facts underlying it. First, the subjects in the experiment did *not* want, nor had any intentions of hurting their “victims”. So this certainly does not confirm the Holocaust idea. The SS officers or guards in the camps did not act out of the premise that the administrator or leader (Himmler or Hitler) made his request for the best interest of say the Jewish people, the way Milgram convinced his subjects during the experiment. The subjects acted out of the belief that they were participating in a genuine scientific experiment based on totally voluntariness of all the participants, which must have been perfectly clear was *not* the case with respect to the victims in the camps. Of course the Jews and other prisoners could not be perceived as social peers as did the participants in the experiment. The whole point with camps and the process of extermination itself was precisely that the objects or victims should become victims of *dehumanization*. The conceptualisation of the link between the Milgram study and the Holocaust also tends to minimize the dehumanizing anti-Jewish element that clearly represented a motive power for the Nazi killings itself. Some assert, but others have denied that the Holocaust represents a historically unique and unrepeatable event that cannot be

---

science are in need of some sorts of closer connections or theoretical ties to each other in order to produce models of explanations concerning human behaviour.

<sup>33</sup> S. Milgram (1963), 375 – 77.

<sup>34</sup> It should of cause be noted that the study itself is ethically problematic and thus hard to replicate.

duplicated in a lab or in real life. Nevertheless, a significant, if not decisive premise, regarding the Holocaust was the radical and consistently dehumanization of the Jewish people, including every subject of suspected Jewish origin. Clearly, the Nazis did not see the Jews as persons. This reduction of personhood allowed them to murder and maltreat, even children and babies, without any moral reflection or feeling of remorse. Here of course we walk into a mine field or difficult mix of sadism and duty, the last referring to bare willingness of following order. However, I'm not going to stress this further for the moment, but find it necessary to point to the fact that some sort of ideological dehumanization seems crucial for the execution of planned mass murder on a large scale. The main point here, however, is to demonstrate or at least give some indication of possible significant differences regarding the conditions underlying the Milgram study compared with the Holocaust. This again points at some significant, but often overlooked facts, namely that all situations involving some sort of harassment done against innocent people are not necessarily identical. The forces and causes involved in the Holocaust may, at least in some respect, be of another kind than what motivated or made the terms for the human reactions in the Milgram experiments, despite superficial similarities of some kind, first and foremost regarding some empirical results.<sup>35</sup>

The problem concerning the identification of the forces behind the Holocaust with those in certain social psychological experiments, creating situations of a more artificial kind, is that it runs into the danger of reducing human beings as stripped of their own will, solely becoming weak-willed objects for pure external forces. On the contrary, when including human *motives* as an autonomous factor or instance of power in itself, we would probably end up finding that the motives for participating and acting in the Milgram experiment be considered quite different from those of the camp guards, not to mention the SS leaders of the camps. However, the possibility that *some* of the participants in the Milgram study could actively have enjoyed and felt some sadistic pleasure in doing what they believed were giving the objects electric shocks, can not be ruled out, despite the fact, as mentioned above, that many felt distressed by participating in giving shocks. But this possible fact again turns our attention to some significant personal dispositions. Could it be the case that *some* people, but not everybody, under certain circumstances, regardless of reports of their daily life being normal, filled with love and positive affections towards their families and friends, could feel some pleasure in controlling and hurting strange but innocent individuals? If that being the case, then we are dealing with, not exclusively external, social or situational forces, but primary a *combination* of personal and situational variables. Not to neglect the power of the situation itself, but here we are confronted with a rather mixed up and more complicated picture regarding the famous comparison between the Milgram study and the Holocaust. First: Personal, or psychological factors and forces always have to be considered. Second: The bare situations or contexts framing the individuals' behaviour, motives, or whatever, can or should not be considered identical or copies of each other. It is, after all, impossible to consider equal a setting involving interaction between volunteers, principally being free agents, with a situation hallmarked of a relationship between guardians and slaves.<sup>36</sup>

Another point however, touching some ethical issues, is that the exclusive emphasis on *situation*, neglecting the importance of the individuals own *choices* from the one situation to

---

<sup>35</sup> This clearly, in my opinion, raises some fundamental question regarding the level of explanation embedded in fundamental psychological spheres, like personal and social psychology. Here I see a clear conflict, namely to what extent is it possible, exclusively using social psychological concepts and theories to explain human behaviour and motives. I will return to this in my conclusion.

<sup>36</sup> My basic idea, which I shall return to in Part IV, is precisely that we must consider different factors *simultaneously* operating at different levels, in order to understand such a complex phenomena as human evil, as a casual as well as a definition matter.

the other, has the ultimate consequence of eliminating the subject as a free and responsible creature or agent, the very foundation of our legality and judicial system.<sup>37</sup>

An interesting point of view has earlier been introduced by Langdon Gilkey<sup>38</sup> which in many respects move in the same direction as my own criticism of the “pure” situation argument. Gilkey’s conviction is that for example extreme situations, by *itself* does not make persons behave “wicked”. The situation itself is however important, namely in activating or revealing something that is already present or at least exists as some potential. The situation doesn’t create something totally new, but holds the ability to intensify and expose natural inclinations, meaning some traits of personality. This seems fair. Apparently he is at odds with Milgram’s one-sided emphasis on the power of the situation to turn ordinary, normal and decent people into destructive creatures. However, in my opinion there is no need for a total dismissal of the situation perspective itself. The fact here seems, and this stands as one of my main points, that man doesn’t solely live *in* situations, but as much *across* situations. This, in my opinion, gives us basic explanations or knowledge of the fact that in every (extreme) situation influencing man, one will always find the single subjects not responding in the usual manner, for example resisting demands of following cruel and inhuman given orders.

### 3

Almost as famous as the Milgram study, stands Philip Zimbardo’s *prison* study at the Stanford University. It is quite different designed compared with the Milgram study, but points in the same direction meta-theoretically, that is explaining the destructive behaviours of the participants out of *situation* factors and circumstances. Zimbardo refuses to include the variable of basic motivational factors, but sometimes talks of “good people doing bad things”. This could be interpreted in such a way that personality has no influence on the subject’s behaviour in extreme situations involving one person’s power over the other(s).<sup>39</sup>

The characteristics of the Zimbardo study, compared with that of Milgram, was of course that the former to greater extent was designed and carried out in a manner close up to a real situation. No wonder then, the experiment collapsed after only 6 days - although was planned to last for two weeks - mainly because very quickly disturbing personal traits came to the surface by those characters occupying the role of prison guard during the experiment. The logic of this, of course, turns out to be: Man himself must be considered the container of evil at starting point, but these traits of character are usually hidden and repressed, however are admitted entrance or brought to surface due to specific circumstances and situations. Notice, however, this argument logically means that *some* “inner” or psychological quality has to be included. Even if the variable of situation itself is considered “total”, meaning its effects pull through in every case, the dimension of personality could not be ruled out. The very factor of situation has to operate on “something” to manifest itself, and that “something”, taking for

---

<sup>37</sup> The “legal” argument or alibi of *obedience to the superior*, of course has to be considered some genuine *situational* one.

<sup>38</sup> L. Gilkey (1966).

<sup>39</sup> This provoked many believing social psychology itself being guilty of trivializing evil. At least one seems close to denying the existence of “evil” itself. As a matter of fact, this position is held by many, for example philosophers, who points at the concept of evil as primary not a scientific one, but instead created by theology and different moral systems. I shall however, argue for the position that the concept of evil itself can or should refer to real phenomena and thus there being good prospects for it attaining scientific status.

granted the situational effect being “complete”, has to be some common or universal conditions associated with human personality as such. However, we experience the power of situation, being it over all strong, doesn’t seem to hold total domination over mind and personality, giving room for more differentiated responses to situational influence. In any case, personality *has* to be considered or included, the important part being the investigation of which factors is significant or vital in activating and arousing aggressive and evil impulses and acting in man under certain circumstances. Of course we are not talking of evil individuals then, rather situations holding the qualities of making evil manifest. During this text, however, I hope to demonstrate that the task of making evil understandable and manageable is far that simple. Man himself should not be considered a somewhat bare responder of external stimuli. Psychological factors of individual character as well as biology, has to be included.

Regarding the Zimbardo experiment, it has often, like the Milgram study, been associated with the Arendt phrase “the banality of evil”, mainly because it apparently shows how easy it could be committing cruel acts, even systematic and on a large scale. This conclusion, however, seems dependent of one taking the situation doctrine for granted, not say as absolute. As psychologist Arthur Miller has stated<sup>40</sup>, whether one takes a situational or dispositional view, we usually find what we are looking for. Simply, you don’t look for the same things, don’t ask the same questions and consequently end up with different answers. The solution to this should be getting into a position enabling us to look for *different* things and ask different questions at the same time, thus enabling us getting at some sort of a multiple answer or explanation.

Zimbardo’s first explanation to the immediate results of the experiment was that when humans are given the opportunity to hide in the anonymity of a crowd, they lose all restraints and neglect ethical norms which they has shown respect in normal life. People in a mob change into a lawless herd of animals, lacking control, decency and pity. This makes it reasonable talking about some sort of a “collective evil” inevitable appearing under certain circumstances. The individual may be moral for himself or left alone, but not in a public crowd. The conclusion would easily be that man’s moral foundation being at least a vulnerable one, at worst being built on sand. The traditional and by far most comfortable perspective, which most of us prefer believing in, is that evil are committed by specific evil-minded persons far different from ourselves. But is the whole picture really that simple? Is it impossible to detect any further signs concerning the group to be able to predict its members turning into violent and cruel characters? In 2001 British social psychologists Stephen Reicher and S. Alexander Haslam repeated Zimbardo’s experiment.<sup>41</sup> Their conclusion was that the behaviour of a group is not settled from the start by the very organization of different individuals becoming a group. Instead the key factor determining the group’s way of behaviour depends on the members’ *expectations* of the social roles they were going to play. If they believe they are expected to exhibit authoritarian conduct, at least different grades of abuse and harassment are likely to occur. Zimbardo himself, for example, encouraged those playing the guards to behave “threateningly”. The key to which way a group’s individuals act seems to be their preconditioned beliefs about what they *ought* to do. Thus, it seems that it is not the group category itself that shapes inhuman behaviour. From history it is well known that massive group constellations have made the vehicle for great progress towards social progress and humanity, for example mass demonstrations and actions originated in the labour movement and charity organisations. However, recent history has taught us how dictators of the worst kind has used masses and group mentality for destructive causes, precisely by

---

<sup>40</sup> A. G. Miller (2004), 193 – 239.

<sup>41</sup> S. A. Haslam & S. D. Reicher (2005)

inducing certain destructive norms and encouraging the discharging of destructive attitudes of different kinds toward outsiders or non-members of the group.

Group dynamics and mass movements thus by itself become fascinating, specially related to what kind of extremes to which it seems able to push people. Group norms seem capable in inducing gruesome acts as well as self-sacrificing behaviour covering heroic deeds like risking one's own life for the rescue of strangers to suicide bombers acting for the sake of a "higher" collective goal or ideal. Still we are confronted with the problem that not every members of a group, at least not at large scale, like whole populations, ethnic groups, and so on, react in exactly the same way. In fact, individual differences occur and sometimes not infrequently. Zimbardo himself states: "We are not born with tendencies toward good or evil but with mental templates to do either".<sup>42</sup> This perspective, however, stresses what stands for me as the very point, namely that man in fact possesses the "inner" capacities of doing precisely the good as well as evil. Because of that, I'll draw the opposite conclusion from Zimbardo, namely that inner dispositions counts a lot, depending on each individual's personality and mind. Zimbardo himself admits that murderers, for instance, hardly share the same pathological background as the average man. Contrary however, this of cause differs from the very context and logic behind Zimbardo's own study showing how the extremity itself creates, or provokes evil. Zimbardo's focus, then, is not on cold blooded murderers, but on common people whose presumed hidden psychological conflicts are activated or permitted come to the surface in the anonymity of a group. Nevertheless, this forces us to include the dispositional dimension itself, in fact pointing in the direction of psychodynamic theory and concepts. Given that we all, deep down, hide or bear the urge to do evil or at least follow our bare drives and instincts, this forces us to move away from the "us"- them" approach that radically separates "good" and "evil" individuals. But this implicates some sort of *determinism*, not just from the fact that some certain "inner" dispositions is taken for granted, but out of the very premises of the situation perspective as well. Concerning Zimbardo, this seems to implicate a kind of a contradiction as far as he concludes that evil behaviour entirely seems to grow out of specific situations, but at the same time makes this factor or condition crucial for the very appearance of the phenomena. It seems reasonable to assess situations at least to a certain degree being a factor appearing more or less by coincidence, or in other words: being of a non-determinate kind. On the other hand, postulating the strong and almost decisive influence of the very factor of situation makes room for nothing else than determinism regarding causality and explanation. That kind of mono-causality seems to exclude the flexibility, interplay and mutuality found in most multi-factorial models of explanation. Zimbardo's perspective can thus be described as in a way moving from "situational influence" to "situational determination". However, when he focuses on minorities and individuals resisting or managing to raise above pressures and group norms towards evildoing, in some respect he nevertheless turns things upside down by reintroducing the realm of *internal dispositions* or "traits". But why should he hold any desire for focusing on dispositional factors like personal "heroism"<sup>43</sup> given the way he calls individualistic resistance to destructive group norms and behaviours, when already stated personal dispositions not being a primary factor concerning behaviour? If such dispositions are not part of destructive behaviour, how could they be part of "heroic"?

After all then, Zimbardo's concept concerning the origins of evil behaviour seems to suffer from some serious shortcomings and contradictions. His very language of causality and determinism seems inconsistently fused to a language of personal freedom. Perhaps this points toward some fundamental incompatible assumptions about the very human condition.

---

<sup>42</sup> P. Zimbardo (2004), 26

<sup>43</sup> Zimbardo, 2004.

And why should he, after all, operate out of some “either-or” assumption? Perhaps a better or more mature strategy would have been making a logic distinction between dispositional factors and “trigger” effects, in the next round combining them into one general view concerning analysis and method? However, in a flight away from disposition, overstating the influence of situation, Zimbardo ends up in some sort of determination. *Then* he seems being in need of smuggling freedom back by talking of the heroic behaviour of resistance outdoing the power of situation and group pressure. If our interior realm is a source and even key factor in why we *don't* choose evil, then it also seems to be a factoring why we *do*.

Concerning Zimbardo's apparently dualistic either-or model in the examination of group-evil, psychologists Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner later developed a more sophisticated model, incorporating *the self* in the concept of group itself, ending up with a “*social identity theory*”. The point seems to be that the belonging to a group creates some sort of a “we feeling” in the individual, a sense of a “collective self”. The more a person engages in a collective, the stronger he identifies with it and the more he or she accepts the group's values and norms. According to this model, however, individuals are not swept away by group norms itself, but “choose”, out of selfish motives, to perceive, think, feel and act in certain common ways in accordance with the specific norms enforced. Group norms thus in a way become a selfish matter, connected to one's own identity. The conclusion made out of this could be that group behaviour does not occur independently or out of itself, due to the situation alone, but are brought into action out of certain motives and needs associated with the individual's own self-system or identity.

Zimbardo, however, makes further affords to save his situation doctrine, among other things by escaping the problem of personal or dispositional *sadism*.<sup>44</sup> In a discussion of *torturers* and *executioners* he first points out that this category are mostly considered the very example of evildoing due to dispositional and individual causes. But Zimbardo stresses the fact that in organizing torture, say done by a certain regime or nation for the cause of getting hand of vital information, they carefully select out (eliminate) sadistic persons or others with assumed psychological pathology, simply because these seem less controllable and thus not fit for the job of producing information for the authorities. So after all, those doing the torture job for say a government, turns out to be quite normal characters which by certain circumstances just ended up in the specific situation where they by different indoctrinations, group processes and perhaps ideological convictions were made fit for their work. Much the same goes for say *terrorists* and *suicide bombers*, usually considered as the typical executioner of “pure evil” on dispositional or personal terms. A further study concerning the individuals behind these cruel deeds, however, turns out demonstrating that they seemed quite normal in every respect, while initially expected to be poor, desperate, social isolated, illiterate people without any hope and future; in other words true deviators.

Zimbardo's at least *indirect* argument here is that true evildoers, who commit evil deeds for its own sake, and out of his or hers personal dispositions doesn't exist – in that way saving his “situation thesis” giving no room for personality as casual factor. But this argumentation, in my opinion, seems incoherent and even illogical. First: Zimbardo's concept of personality, stressing the factor of *disposition* to do something, is basically *empirical*, simply because it is constructed solely for the sake of capturing categorized behaviour of a certain kind. An alternative *theoretical* or *structural* perspective on personality on the other hand, could have made the opportunity of explaining evildoing as the result of a combination or “union” of personal *and* situational conditions operating together. Second, and this turns out the most important: identifying or pointing at the worst examples of evilness carried out by presumed sick persons, then stating that in fact that even these misdeeds are committed by

---

<sup>44</sup> See P. G. Zimbardo (2004).

normal people like you and me, doesn't eliminate the category of *dispositional evil* itself. Surely, evildoers who commit or carry with them their lust to do evil out of pure individual sadism, regardless of different situations, *exist*, the whole point simply being they belong to another category than Zimbardo's torturers and suicide bombers, given his empirical analysis regarding these are correct. Zimbardo's strategy of turning down, or at least hushing up the dispositional hypothesis regarding evil by eliminating certain adopted categories on empirical terms thus fails, simply because it (the strategy) gives no room for grasping a totality on instead theoretical terms. Philosophically, Zimbardo's strategy is to be associated with the principle of *induction*, criticized among others by Karl Popper.<sup>45</sup>

4

Social psychologist Roy Baumeister seems convinced that one primary reason for human evil is the breakdown of inner controls and self-regulation, a breakdown, however often justified by certain cultural beliefs. Consequently, it becomes necessary to study evil from the perspective of perpetrators. Through the eyes of victims and spectators, the perpetrator's acts looks completely purposeful and intentionally vicious according to Baumeister, basically an act of moral breakdown. Baumeister himself, however, goes for bracketing moral judgements for the sake of psychological understanding. But according to him, this doesn't mean that the case for mortality is permanently abandoned. The issue, according to him, is to commit to descriptive understanding before one resumes a moral attitude toward the behaviour in question. From the view of perpetrators, the vicious act is not automatically experienced as one of evil. Contrary, they often believe their acts are completely justified. Baumeister himself emphasizes that we often prefer or have a strong tendency towards regarding evil in some one-sided black-or-white manner, mainly because this allows us to separate ourselves completely from foul, destructive individuals, from the incarnations of evil itself. The whole point here lies in making those characters totally unlike ourselves in every respect. We simply cannot tolerate evil to be ordinary. Because of that we want evil become a question of pure moral; terrible deeds the executioner himself experience as evil because that come to be his one and only motive. Evil should immediately announce itself as evil, thus making a clear and unquestionable barrier against or own normality. Should evil appear in features we may recognize in ourselves, it would become deeply disturbing. Baumeister, however, states that evil could often come clothed as a "good thing" and that the perpetrators of evil often appear as ordinary, well-meaning human beings with their own motives, reasons and rationalizations. For Baumeister then, if we'll make it possible to reach at an understanding of what evil really is, it seems of particular interest to hear what the perpetrators themselves could perhaps tell about their activities and motives. This however, is no easy task. Baumeister stresses that perpetrators often see themselves as *victims*; victims of relatives, neighbours, authorities and their own fate, for instance. According to this he stresses the necessity of a strategy facing the victims, namely sympathizing with their part of the story, but in fact *without* taking the victims account as the total, objective truth, particularly when it comes to understanding the *motives* and way of thinking of the perpetrator. Baumeister points at victim's themselves often are in need of making their own explanations of what has been done to them and the supposed motives behind. What Baumeister wishes to clear up, is that there might be nuances in the execution of so called evil. The motives behind could be of a different kind, even a reaction to harm and injustice previously done to the perpetrator himself. Baumeister has no wish in

---

<sup>45</sup> In recent years however, Zimbardo himself has asserted that he never was denying the existence of genuine evil individuals or characters.



defending immoral and evil acts, but sees the necessity in pointing at the fact that it often could be wrong or even impossible to separate pure evil from non-evil. Perhaps in most cases reality may lie somewhere in between. However, victims and non-victims may have a strong tendency and need for dividing the whole matter of evilness and evil vs. kindness into large black-and white categories, what he characterizes as “the myth of pure evil”, perhaps mostly for the reason of protecting ourselves psychologically? Furthermore, this position has the consequence of perpetuating evil. It becomes in a way *unchangeable*, leaving us with nothing to do to prevent it, except tracking down and locking up presumed evil and sadistic individuals, and thus being in danger of overlooking both social and individual variable circumstances that *may* cause evil behaviour, but at the same time could be prevented if we become aware of it. Indeed, thorough evil persons exist, referring to people who out of their very nature wishes to harm, hurt and destroy other people, but these people after all are rather few, not operating at large scale. Baumeister asserts that most evil is committed by common people living ordinary lives, as history has shown us. Because of that, it seems impossible to draw an absolute line between evil and non-evil persons, an ontological demarcation identifying “pure evil”. Evil then mostly appears when ordinary people are confronted with or being mixed up in situations of a certain kind. This undermines an old and traditional myth, namely that evil itself must be understood as the result and manifestation of an inborn sadistic lust to hurt and destroy other people.<sup>46</sup> Baumeister, however, admits that this myth of pure evil remains popular, even though there is a mountain of evidence against it, simply because it is more convenient to believe in it. Evil then, always belong to or is identified with the “others”, not ourselves or our own group.

How, then, does Baumeister account for real destructive behaviour? He suggests several different roots of such evil, one category being *greed, lust, and ambition*. Motivation like this involves for example *instrumental* violence, not violence for its own sake. In fact regarding this, if violence could be avoided in reaching one’s goal, this will be preferred. Violence here seems to be just a casual by-product of the prime goal being material gain of some sort, not terror itself. On the other hand, perpetrators like this seem willing to go to unfortunate ends to get what he or she wants, but not to do evil for evil’s own sake.<sup>47</sup>

A second category for Baumeister is *egotism and revenge*. Threats to self-esteem often provoke a need for revenge, often manifested as forms of aggression and violence. This should however, according to Baumeister, not be understood as products of low self-esteem. The point is not low, or for that matter high self-esteem, but a shaky and unstable one. More correctly, however, the greatest danger is represented by those with a combination of high *and* shaky self-esteem. Baumeister indicates that persons who have a high opinion regarding themselves but do not have this view confirmed by outsiders, has shown as much more inclined to be violent. The explanation of this should be that individuals with an inflated, but unrealistic self-esteem will naturally encounter more threats to their egos, resulting in a more aggressive and negatively self-asserting behaviour towards others and his environment. An unstable egotism thus becomes the most dangerous. According to Baumeister, research has confirmed his thesis.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> I have no intention here of discussing the argument that evil itself solely has its roots in religious mythology of the ultimately evil, namely Satan, and thus cannot be said to refer to any real or scientific concept or explanations.

<sup>47</sup> Let me add, however, that trying to avoid violence should not be understood as some sort of concern for the victim’s welfare. Rather, in most cases the motive seems to be the perpetrator’s fear of the worse consequences of hurting or destroying the victim, as long as this motive is not basic from the start.

<sup>48</sup> For example research on bullying by Dan Olweus.

Another root of evil identified by Baumeister has to do with what he categorizes as “*true believers and idealists*”. These are people willing or disposed to committing the worst acts towards innocent people following some “higher” ideals or in the name of some “holy sake”, that being of a religious or political kind. Obviously, *group norms* will be of crucial importance for this kind of “idealistic” evil. In fact the perception of evil is here reversed in that the evil doer himself, for example a terrorist, often believes he or she in fact is eliminating evil itself, destroying those who are in opposition with what is thought of as the “highest truth”, that being “God”, some political ideal, system, and so on.<sup>49</sup>

The final root of evil according to Baumeister is *sadism*, which should be understood or interpreted as violence for its own sake, as its own objective, in contrast to for example greed and lust where aggression occurs as mere instrumental. In the opinion, sadism often stands as the very manifestation of evil itself, namely the motive and need for hurting others. Here evil seems to be explained by individual *pleasure*. In Baumeister’s opinion sadistic evil is rare, a rather marginal phenomena. Nevertheless it is *real*. Baumeister points out that it somewhat seems like the dynamics of addiction. It develops some sort of a *tolerance* for a certain level of pain infliction which gradually needs more and more to produce the desired effect on the sadist.

Baumeister’s main thesis is that evil is a many-sided matter and not to be understood by some single-cause theory. He wants to move away from the black-and-white thinking implicated in the “myth of pure evil”. In doing this, it also becomes necessary to listen, not only to the victims of evil, but also to the perpetrators. But in doing this, he in my opinion, moves away or distances himself from a pure social and situationalist understanding or concept of evil, instead including individual and dispositional factors at different levels. Among other things, he doesn’t make affords of escaping the matter of individual sadism, like in my opinion, for example Zimbardo does. As far as Baumeister is described a social psychologist, I would consider his position most valuable, particularly because he seems to incorporate or add individual psychological element to his social perspectives.

## 5

The rather specific sort of “provoking” question or assertion, raised by social psychological research and theory, was that human evil not that much had its origin in isolated cruel individuals different from ourselves, but instead seemed to be a product of common and “normal” people’s behaviour in certain situations. The alarming message to get out of this then, is: given the “right” (or “wrong”) circumstances, we can all be brought into a situation which both prompts and motivates us to commit evils acts on both a large and small scale.

Of special interest here is of course modern research in group psychology, especially studies on how people behave and change their attitudes through group-behaviour compared with acting on pure individualistic terms, and attitudes of certain groups against other “out-groups” and their members. Muzafer Sherif, Stanley Milgram, Philip Zimbardo and others are responsible of classical studies within this tradition. Milgram and Zimbardo have been thoroughly discussed above. Sherif himself did studies on conflicts between groups in a summer camp for boys; or aggressive attitudes and behaviour among the boys. (The Robber’s Cave Experiment). The main question from start was why conflicts between groups come into being. Here, as in experiments of the same kind, the initial procedure was to select out individuals with personal problems of any kind, for the purpose of cultivating the bare effects of group-interaction. Also, factors like the existence of former or established acquaintance

---

<sup>49</sup> Below, in the concluding part, I shall further return to the problem of terrorists as evildoers.

among the boys was ruled out. A key factor was inducing both a cooperating and competitive atmosphere between the groups. The results from these experiments indicated how easily inter group conflicts arise and a discriminative and aggressive attitude toward out-group is established. Subsequent studies have, as indicated, mainly confirmed these results. However, to what degree could it, out of these classic studies and certain philosophical perspectives, like the Hanna Arendt postulate of “the banality of evil”, be concluded that they in fact showed or confirmed the same state of matter? At first sight they seem pointing at some basic and general terms concerning behaviour in types of situations where power, authority and obedience are at stake. However, a closer look at these experiments and views separately, in my opinion reveals some significant differences. In Zimbardo’s prison study, the subject of *aggression* initiated in group relations was in focus. In the Milgram study, however, aggression hardly represents the problem. Instead, the study seems to manifest the all over importance of *obedience and authority*. The Sherif study, on the other hand, stressed the importance of *competition* in initiating aggression between members of different groups. Arendt’s concept concerns *disengagement* and *thoughtlessness* when confronted with large scale evil and mass-murder at *distance*.

However, the general significance of group membership is not to be neglected. Later studies, to present day, seem to have empirically confirmed main conclusions drawn from the classic studies. Recently, the concept of “*xenophobia*”<sup>50</sup> has become significant. The concept of xenophobia seems linked to or logical connected to the well known social psychological concepts of *stereotypy*, *prejudice* and *discrimination*. For example, Tajfels and Turners theory of “social identity” proved helpful in analyzing and for the understanding of how the phenomena of prejudices developed. The theory is partly based on our tendency or desire to think highly of ourselves. For the sake of this we join different social groups identified as “in-groups”. These could be of political, religious, ethnical, national and immediate social kind. Then, we tend to think more highly of people in our in-groups than of members of strange groups, named “out-groups”, a belief based primary on group identity. In addition, a person, or group member, tends to experience others in the in-group as similar to oneself, and above all, superior to members of other out-groups, concerning for example intelligence, kindness, trustworthiness, and so on. The most significant point however, is that membership of a specific group enables one to perceive their fellow members in a more differentiated and nuanced way than foreigners from other groups, in other words: more as individuals and humans occupying their own value. Once this division of groups, based on one’s own memberships, has been made, the inferences and projections begin to occur. Different experiments have clearly demonstrated this type of “group logic”, and have further demonstrated how easily - and quickly - this ended up in hostile and aggressive attitudes and behaviour against members of foreign, but often competing groups. The logical consequences of the premises stated in the “social identity theory”, seems to be that man are made or “constructed” for such social bias by the way we tend to or are “forced to” categorize our surroundings.<sup>51</sup> On certain circumstances, our tendency to discriminate between our own in-groups and strangers in out-groups can turn into, not just conflicts, but bare hate and serious violence. A rather disturbing matter is the apparently accidental circumstances by which xenophobia or xenophobic feelings are put into action. A couple of public school experiments in the USA pointed at the seemingly logical arbitrariness underlying the process itself, the most famous of these experiments being the so-called “The Wave” on the initiative of teacher

---

<sup>50</sup> Derived from the Greek word for *stranger* and is to be interpreted as or associated with fear of and hostility against strange people precipitated as “dangerous” in the one way or another.

<sup>51</sup> However, perhaps this should be characterized as a “tendency”, however basic it might be, and not “destiny”; which opens up for the possibility of a more fundamental alteration of such human tendencies.

Ron Jones in California in the late 1960s. The design of the experiment was dividing the students into two competing groups, each representing their own ideology and symbols. Almost immediate, competition, confrontation and aggression arose. Perhaps this could be partly explained by the fact that it was precisely the competition between ideologies that was the point of departure. A few years later, however, a teacher in Iowa, Jane Elliott, made a somewhat corresponding experiment that perhaps in an even more convincing way demonstrated how quickly group distinctions are made. She simply divided her class into two groups: those with blue eyes and those with brown or green eyes. The brown-eyed group then received privileges and treats, while the blue-eyed students were denied rewards and told they were inferior. Within short time, the previous harmonious classroom had been transformed into two hostile camps, full of mutual fear and resentment. In 1998 the “Implicit Association Test” (IAT) was introduced by Anthony G. Greenwald and his colleagues of the University of Washington.<sup>52</sup> This was considered the most prominent method for measuring implicit biases in sorting social stimuli into particular categories. Empirical extract from the test showed an apparently implicit and strong tendency to associate *positive* words and characteristics to members of our own in-groups, for example our ethnic group, and a corresponding tendency to associate lesser positive or negative words to members of other out-groups. A famous study by Ross Hammond and Robert Axelrod<sup>53</sup> showed a clear tendency towards choosing cooperation with members of their own ethnic or “colour” group in fulfilling a task, regardless of subjective qualities more relevant for the task solving, by members of other ethnic groups. This was true both for whites and for example blacks. There seems to be a clear tendency to discriminate between people of different colours, probably due to a misconception and selective misperception deeply buried in our psyche. Studies have further shown that at the age of 3 *most* children already attribute significance to skin colour. Recently, brain imaging studies suggest that even adults, who claim not to be racists, register skin colour automatically and unconsciously.<sup>54</sup>

In sum, this tendency to immediately subordinate individuals under broader categories and dividing these categories into “in-groups” and “out-groups” seems more fundamental than just being a product of social circumstances, culture or learning. Especially this kind of misperception that is drawn along ethnic and racial lines may lay the ground or run the risk for further conflicts and even large scale evil like mass-murder and genocide.

## 6

However, despite this focus on biological parameters<sup>55</sup>, the whole point is not moving toward a tendency or conclusion presupposing mono-causality. Contrary, my position is rather multi-factorial in understanding such a complex phenomena as human evil. In this picture, psychological, social and in fact also biological factors has to be consider *autonomous tendencies interplaying* in “creating” or constituting the very or real phenomena experienced. The intention behind this model is, on my part, avoiding methodological reductionism. However, several authors seem not have taken this problem or matter into consideration, the

---

<sup>52</sup> A. G. Greenwald, et. al., 1998.

<sup>53</sup> Hammond & Axelrod, 2006.

<sup>54</sup> Which in fact point at a perhaps closer relationship, and perhaps a neglected link, between social and biological parameters concerning the matters of discrimination, aggression, evil, etc, and in my eyes thus has to become the object for further investigations. I will therefore return to the significance of biology in the next section or part.

<sup>55</sup> To which I shall return in part III.

result being the dead end street of *dualism*. For example, as mentioned above<sup>56</sup>, the referred sociologist Zygmunt Bauman seems like ending up in this position. Bauman himself leaves no room for any moral counteracting against, or the representation of a bulwark against human evil and genocide, originated in for example social structures or circumstances itself. According to him, a saving moral are solely originated in what he calls a “moral impulse” inside man himself, drawing heavily on moral philosophers Emmanuel Levinas. His position represents an ethics of “human proximity” and “responsibility”, where the foundation of human moral is laid in the close relationship between humans, built upon mutual obligation. In Bauman’s eyes, no social arrangement, structure or good intention could guarantee for a common moral as a secure buffer against human and institutional evil. On the contrary, social organisation and socialization seems more likely to do harm to the inherent and original moral impulse itself. However, in my opinion, the problem with Bauman is that he seems fixed to a mere *abstract* account of Human, neglecting the superior fact that humans from the start are embedded in the *social* itself. The logical consequence of *this* should of course be that social conditions become crucial and even deterministic for whether the inherent moral impulse could be brought into work. This impulse of course represents some sort of a potential, however being in need of nurture from life itself, that being social realities, to get into business. So the moral impulse, even considered as a fixed universal instinct, demands an identical or corresponding social impulse to be put in action, and thus becoming object for experience as well as detection through social praxis.

A prominent theory possibly capable of transcending this dualism is, in my opinion, Freud’s psychoanalysis, dealt with in the first section. Basically, this theory deals with “inner” psychic forces and conflicts making the ground for human manners and behaviour, that being of a moral, evil or another kind. However, I shall assert that Freud’s theory presupposes a somewhat *dialectic* connection between the “inner” psyche and the “outer” world, the subject’s social milieu. For example, the concept of “internalization”, apparently covering or referring to a process of interaction and social influence, but at the same time has to be interpreted as an “inner” process of building some significant psychic structure in the individual. The crucial matter here is precisely that these processes cannot be understood as logical separate processes, at least not as real dynamic matters, except on their abstract and analytic level. Instead, these “inner” and “outer” processes have to be regarded or understood *dependant* of each other, or parts of each other, referring to one and the same process or phenomenon. Consequently, it would be impossible to rule out social or interaction factors when dealing with fundamental phenomena like personal and social moral and their qualifications, simply because the presupposition for the (development and actualization) of the inner or personal moral “impulse” or capacity being the social process of learning and interaction and vice versa. Actualizing a positive moral, or activating the somewhat inherent moral impulse in man, requires a certain moralistic social milieu capable of reinforcing these inherent capacities in each individual. If one accept the psychodynamic assumption of “internalization” as a key factor in explaining the process and possibility of socialization, one has to conclude that in making socialization successful, not only becomes the process of internalization crucial itself, but also *what* exactly is being internalized. In other words, not just the structural capacity itself, but also the *content* of internalization should be of signification. This content of cause has to be of a social, cultural or sometimes even of a historical kind. Of course, growing up in a social milieu guarantee for socialization and internalization anyway, granted a normal development could take place within the individual. The problem however, concerning the actualization of moral vs. evil, especially in the case of large scale evil executed by authorities in power and totalitarian regimes and governments, is

---

<sup>56</sup> p. 51 – 53.

that destructive norms, rules and ideals are put into *power*; norms that under the influence of propaganda and other mechanisms of socialization could be internalized and accepted by the public and average man as the “right” moral, consequently leading to the accept of for example mass murder and ethnic cleaning being moral acts itself.

This, in my opinion, indicates that Bauman’s theory regarding the conditions of moral actualization as a significant way of preventing evil must be fundamentally wrong. Surely, moral actualisation itself stands as the only significant way of preventing evildoing, but unfortunately not the way Bauman himself recommend, reducing the whole matter to “inner” impulses and by same exercise ruling out social or societal moral. Bauman’s view here, however, has to be understood in the light of, or in connection with his deeply pessimistic perspectives on Modernity and its evolution, a matter not to be stressed further here.

In sum, Bauman seems to neglect the inevitable connection, or more correct, dialectic relationship between the psyche and the social, making a, so to speak, dualistic manoeuvre in logical isolating them from each other. He thus becomes incapable in telling us how to organize the society so that evil and genocide could be prevented.

On the other hand, out of this it must be concluded that it seems rather impossible to consider Freud an exclusively *individual* psychological theorist, manly out of my demonstration of the indispensable tie between psyche and the social inherent in his theory. In fact, Freud’s theory stands, for different reasons, some essential features mentioned here, as multi-dimensional, incorporating, or rather presupposing both inner dynamic and social relational elements in his concept as such.

Social elements or the social dimension itself thus becomes crucial in understanding human evil as well as moral, however not by neglecting, but instead including the influence of psychological and biological factors as well. The latter will become the topic of next section. The challenge here will be to demonstrate why biological factors relevant for understanding social interaction connected to evil as well as moral should not be considered as “pure” biology in a rather deterministic or one-dimensional manner.

*PART III*  
*Biology*

1

In recent years biology again has been hot stuff regarding explanations of psychological and even social phenomena. However, biological explanations always run the risk of scientific reductionism, tending to be absolute and deterministic. In that perspective, biology becomes some sort of destination, leaving no room for alternatives and radical change. My point of view or position here, however, and I assume several other theorists' as well, is a more flexible one, presupposing that biological factors and determinants interplay with others of a psychological and social kind.

Biological and social perspectives and explanations, after all, perhaps don't turn out that antagonistic to each other as it may seem. Remember the phenomena of xenophobia, prejudice, stereotypes and perceptual biases regarding our non-neutral and selective categorisation of people and groups discussed in the previous section. Significant studies suggest that these phenomena, all rough social in their manifestation, might be of a more inherently biological and constitutional kind, or at least containing or being dependent of certain biological determinants. Some may say that deep within our sub-conscious we harbour fundamental contingences for such biases, making them unavoidable at even a manifest level. Usually and consciously most of us don't like to admit or perhaps being reminded that we somehow share attitudes associated with prejudices, hate and disgust against people and groups of another kind, perhaps specially members of certain ethnic groups. Usually we prefer to associate that kind of beliefs with associates of say, fascists, the Ku Klux Klan, the Nazis and other racist groups and organisations. But given that we all to a certain degree are disposed to that kind "ethnic selection" or discrimination, what should that significantly mean in accordance to the moral demands inherent in every kind hearted culture and democratic society, namely to fight and hold campaigns against such ideas? Could it be - in spite of all our good intentions, our moral and ethical systems and (Christian) demands of "loving our enemies" and "doing on to others what we want them to do on to us" - deep within we are bearers of some rudimentary and un-socialized drives and forces operating beyond the premises of the intentions of a, say moral human community? In my opinion, we cannot escape the appraisal or even inclusion of such basic forces and conditions.

2

*Aggression* turns out a significant figure in assessing evil and cruelty. Surely, aggression itself doesn't explain evil. Aggression as such should be considered a basic human quality or property, meaning it should not logically be considered a human deficiency or some "problem" from the starting point.

However, aggression itself tends to emerge with many faces and in different frames, some to be considered abnormal and pathological and others not. Aggression may manifest itself verbal and physical, as well as administrative, depending on situational circumstances. A significant manner in which aggression shows itself is of cause through *violence* of different kinds. However, violence itself is not to be equalized with evil, but has to be considered an unavoidable component to it. Let's start then with a closer look at aggression and violence itself. Fundamental disagreement exists of cause among both scientists and laymen whether aggression and violence should be considered a part of our biological

equipment, or to what extent it could be understood as mainly *learned* through certain social and cultural inclinations. The rather traditional view represented, in different variants, was that aggression generally speaking, was inherent in man himself. This view has, in recent years got its renaissance, all rough in new and up to date versions, which it will be necessary to return to later. However, I don't here intend to go further into theories of aggression itself, but instead look at perhaps the most significant and troublesome consequences of aggression, namely violence, which bring us closer to the numerous facet problems of evil. Let me again make it clear: violence itself is not to be considered equal to evil, but will in most cases become an integral part of or manifestation of it.

One of the most premature efforts to connect human violence of a malignant kind, say in criminal behaviour, with biological dispositions, was the work of Cesare Lombroso. His approach was named the "science" of *phrenology*, trying to demonstrate how different areas of the brain gave rise to different human attributes, again showing as certain indentations on the cranium. This again opened up for the prediction of a person's character. Specific features in the face as well as the head gave crucial clues about, for example, antisocial and criminal behaviour. According to the theory, these features or "stigmata" were physical traits reminiscent of earlier stages of human development which however could reappear spontaneously after many generations of genetic invisibility. Eventually, or after a while, Lombroso's theory fell out of favour. The connection between skull/facial features and tendency towards criminal and antisocial behaviour was shown to be entirely spurious. However, different views, connecting antisocial and aggressive behaviour to biological factors continued mobilizing support. Even before Lombroso there was some evidence that certain regions of the human brain were intrinsically linked with aggression. The history of Phineas Gage, who in 1848, due to an explosion, got his head penetrated by a steel bar, is well known. The bar went through the frontal part of his brain, destroying most part of the front left side. He survived the serious accident, being able to talk and walk, but his emotional life seemed dramatically altered or destroyed. From being a calm, sensitive and respectful person, he now became aggressive, impulsive and rude. Later we learned to know that a region at the front of the brain known as the *prefrontal cortex* was disrupted by Gage's accident. This region plays a key role in our emotional processing and appears to have an important part in mediating aggressive reactions.

Modern research involving *scanning* brain activity has tried to reveal whether there could be a specific physical change or an unusual structural feature that causes one person to be more violent and aggressive than another. While it doesn't appear to be a specific "violent centre" in the brain, the *amygdala*, the almond-shaped communication centre in the heart of the *limbic system*, does appear to initiate feelings of fear and aggression under certain circumstances. The prefrontal cortex on the other hand, is wired directly to the amygdala and seems to function as a "brake" in controlling and modifying aggressive impulses when mediating the signals from the lower brain regions. Specific studies concerning violent criminals, for example convicted murderers, have to a certain degree shown abnormal functions in both the frontal cortex and deeper brain areas such as the amygdala. Some other studies assessed groups of individuals known to have violent tendencies and found that their prefrontal areas were much smaller when compared to other normal "equipped" individuals. However, certain care must be taken regarding this kind of evidence. The obvious question is (of course): Are these signs and clues biological *causes* of violence or mere *consequences* of some other unknown factors? For instance, there is strong evidence to suggest that other biological factors are at work. *Hormone levels* in the brain appear to affect levels of aggression. High levels of *testosterone* seem to influence the intensity of one's aggressiveness, levels that vary considerably between individuals. They also fluctuate significantly depending on the individual's day-to-day conditions and circumstances.



Generally, testosterone levels vary in line with general competitiveness. For example, there is found significant variations among persons within different occupations and professions, one study reporting the highest testosterone levels in trial lawyers in the US. Some studies focusing on prison inmates also indicated that men with the highest testosterone concentration were more likely to have committed violent crimes. Another suggestion is that low levels of, or a limited capacity to absorb *serotonin*, the primary indicator of depression, into the brain cells, correlates with increased aggression. Serotonin itself seems to have a calming effect on human behaviour, reducing the level of violence. This again leads to the focus of positively genes factors that contribute to or control the levels of neurotransmitters. However, the research done on these topics, doesn't show that the referred biological abnormalities itself *cause* violent aggression. On the other hand, it seems fair to conclude that some of these studies at least seem to reveal that biological factors play *some* role in the causality of violence, but that *that* role still is very much in doubt. The status concerning biological factors, like different significant *social* factors, seems to be that no single factor itself are causing manifest behaviour, but at least serves as an important *marker* of such behaviour. The most common and reasonable conclusion appears to be that the link between biology and violence is not direct and casual, but *indirect* and mediated by numerous social and psychological factors. An even more significant biological correlate linked to antisocial behaviour is *low resting heart rate*. Several studies have clearly indicated that problem children and some criminals tend to have significant lower pulses than do well-behaved and adjusted counterparts. The theory in front here is that a slower heartbeat probably reflects more fearlessness and under-arousal. However, other studies have failed to find abnormal heart rates in for example psychopaths.

So, despite the efforts to understand the neurological processes involved in aggression and violence, none of these projects has led to any solid, not say definitive, conclusions. Even if some significant differences concerning structural and functional levels of different brain processes can be detected, one cannot be sure weather these are *results* of, say an already existing disposition for violence and aggression. It is now well known that the development of the brain itself proceeds, in part, according to and intervened by the social environment the child is a part of and grows up in. The quality of upbringing, relationships and emotional experiences stimulates the development of the brain. Important physical changes in the brain can depend on external stimuli during crucial periods of development. It is not a matter of some automatic and solely inherent process going on inside the brain itself.

The task of separating environmental and biological factors thus becomes notoriously difficult. It becomes rather difficult whether to decide, or separate casual from non-casual factors with regard to basic biological processes, the latter being of either an effect- or non-related kind. However, this shouldn't prevent us totally from including biological processes in our efforts explaining phenomena of aggression and violence. The dimension of biology, as well as that of sociology and psychology, will have to, viewed in isolation, be understood as *abstractions*, containing its own logical and casual force, but left unexplained regarding how *each* of these internal forces manage to manifest themselves during real *interactional* processes, in confrontation with the others. That again, leaves us with a certain kind of insecurity with regard to causality itself, perhaps opening up for a more *interactional* view.<sup>57</sup>

A perhaps more abstract and theoretical angle of incidence regarding the link between biology and say aggression, is the *drive* or *instinct* hypothesis.<sup>58</sup> From animal studies it is

---

<sup>57</sup> I shall return to this specific and significant matter, in fact already introduced in the text, later, by me anticipated as rather *two-dimensional*.

<sup>58</sup> It seems however, necessary to make a theoretical distinction between "drive" and "instinct". The mix up of these two concepts has been the source of much confusion, from the days of Freud up to present.

possible to identify a distinctive drive for aggression necessary for survival, for example the struggle for food and space and fights over mates. But what about man himself? Surely, it doesn't seem difficult to identify aggressive tendencies and behaviour in humans. The most common matter brought into question, is however, how far there exist some specific biological drive or instinct for aggression, or to what extent it must be considered a product of specific socialization and traumatic experiences from life itself. From the starting point, the obvious counter-question seems to be: After all, why should man, as creature itself, be different from other high ranking creatures? As with our instinct for sexual reproduction, competition and survival, a human instinct for aggression and violence, maintained and developed through generations, seems reasonable to postulate.<sup>59</sup> Proponents of the instinct hypothesis will stress the point that the existence of an instinct for aggression and violence was crucial for our early ancestors in order to survive, while hunting for food, combating deadly enemies and fighting for the necessary resource of territory. If violence itself has always been necessary for our survival and considering the fact that man has survived for hundred thousands of years, then violence perhaps has to be programmed into our *genes*. The idea of man as an aggressive creature by nature, apt to violent behaviour, is not any brand new idea conceived by modern science. It also occupied medieval philosophy, for example Thomas Hobbes. In 1651 he published his famous work, *Leviathan*, stressing the problem of controlling the natural aggressive drives and impulses in man, preventing it, in some State of Nature, from culminating into a destructive fight, each single individuals against the others. Hobbes philosophically constructed some sort of a hypothetical agreement made up by us out of an interest to make order and cooperation, a *Social Contract*, to prevent this. In replacing the State of Nature with this Social Contract, the individuals voluntarily gave up part of their freedom for the sake of everybody's comfort, security and survival. Hobbes' reconstruction of this Social Contract is solely hypothetical and abstract and critics has stressed that it could never had taken place in real life, because what identifies or characterise humans from the very point of departure is that it also is a *social* creature bound to intimate cooperation, making no room for a original stage of pre-sociality and totally individualistic isolation. Hobbes' perspective thus appears to be too abstract to reveal or cast any significant light on human nature itself. The stressing point here, however, should be the question whether humans can be said to hold natural aggressive impulses or drives, or to what extent the different kinds of violent behaviour frequently observed in man, from warfare to criminal acts, is mere products of social stimuli and learning. This question, however, has not just appeared a *scientific* matter, but an *ideological* and *political* as well. If we accept the idea of an original aggressive instinct or drive in man, it will put us into a position where it perhaps becomes difficult to raise arguments for a more harmonic and peaceful society and world as well. The superior work for international peace taking place in organisations and nations all over the world may be totally in vain, if man's basic nature after all is to do violence to each other. In 1986 a group of scientists gathered in Seville under the auspices of UNESCO to mark the *International Year of Peace*.<sup>60</sup> The main purpose was to discuss the causes of violence and warfare and draw up a *manifesto* on the subject. The scholars were drawn from a numbers of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, neuroscience and zoology. Surprisingly, regarding the rather controversial issue in management and the widely divergent background of expertise dealing with the theme, the assembly came up with a rather homogenous and clear conclusion, specified into an assembly of central statements. Initially, at the end of the discussions, it simply made the statement that it was "scientifically *incorrect* to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our ancestors". This was

---

<sup>59</sup> I shall return to the specific *evolutionary* aspects of this later.

<sup>60</sup> Ref. Winston (2002).

surprising, looking like making a rather beforehand conclusion. Indeed, the further argumentation concluded that “war is *biologically* possible”, however *then* stating: “but not *inevitable*”, the argument here being that this is “*evidenced by its variation in occurrence and nature over time and space*”, an additional emphasis laid upon the fact that there are cultures which have not engaged in war for centuries, contrary to cultures which indeed have frequently waged war, at least in periods. Further statements from the conferences concluded for example that it was “*scientifically incorrect*” to say: that war or any other violent behaviour is “*genetically programmed*” into the human “nature”, that except for rare pathologies the genes do not produce individuals necessarily predisposed to violence, that human have a “violent brain”, that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behaviour more than for other kinds of behaviour – and: “*How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized*”.

No doubt, the Seville meeting was reflecting the political, cultural and ideological trends of its time. They consequently staked to *environmental* explanations. The logic, obviously founded in an aura of political optimism, seemed clear: Social conditions can be dealt with. Biology is more of a natural kind and cannot. The all through repeated phrase: “It is scientifically incorrect” can’t be taken face value, but is presented in a more suggestible manner with the intension of backing up one particularly political message. A problem for the Seville arrangement was naturally that the statement: “how we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized” appear at least to be inaccurate, but probably incorrect. This is primary due to the fact that it is solely based on a simple version of *empiricism* (mixed up of cause with political-ideological convictions) were for example more holistic theoretical reflections are not included. At least, the conclusions should have incorporated some hypothesis concerning intervening biological determinants. But this would perhaps intervene with the political aspects of the message. Although it seems true that “*biology does not condemn us to war*” it nevertheless seems plausible to imagine that it on specific conditions can contribute to it, for example in the brutal ethnic wars that we have witnessed the last decade. However, perhaps this do not allow us to conclude that there exist some *dispositions* to violence and war in *certain* groups, nations and the like, but that any such dispositions exist as part of human equipment in general, waiting for the proper circumstances to manifest itself.<sup>61</sup>

### 3

Before turning back to Freud and psychoanalysis, let’s reflect further the idea of a disposition to *aggression* and *violence* as immanent in the human creature. The point of view here is that aggression itself constitutes the normal and perhaps necessary equipment in man and thus should not be considered pathological in itself. Even violence, how negative it might be experienced, could not automatically be considered pathological or evil. Rather it is the manner, the meaning or context in witch violence itself is carried out that decide how “evil” or senseless it should be considered. In this perspective, even non-violent acts *could* be considered evil. Violence, for example could be understood as a rather spontaneous reaction to frustration, provocation and so on. However, aggression should generally be considered a necessary, though not sufficient fundament for malice and evilness. This should lead us to a better understanding of how, under certain psychological and social conditions, aggression and violence itself take the forms of sadism and cruelty, true markers of what should be considered as evil. Evil, however, seems to have another significant source than bare, or even

---

<sup>61</sup> Which bring up some strong associations with for example psychoanalysis.

first and foremost aggression and violence, namely *administration* in the heartless and insensitive meaning of the word. This of course was one of the themes in the discussion of Eichmann and the Arendt thesis of “the banality of evil”. I don’t consider this thesis adequate, mainly because it is not digging deep enough concerning the human psyche and motives, so to say, though it would probably be of *significance* regarding specific social frames for certain human acts itself. The importance here lies in the fact that it clearly demonstrates the fatal lack of *empathy* found in for example bureaucratic nazi-officials administrating deportations of Jews and running death camps.<sup>62</sup>

In my opinion then, some basic and original human capabilities, not to say primary and “unavoidable” qualities, being part of man itself and perhaps developed through *evolution*, must be included in the discussion.<sup>63</sup> But even the Freudian postulate of *drive* becomes interesting. Freud was dealt with in Part I. It is important to notice that the Freudian concept of “drive” covers more than just a biological matter. Usually the drive (or “Trieb” in original German language) refers to “instinct”, the organism’s urge for specific behaviours, either manifested as bare impulses or attached to different situations. While these impulses and tendencies seem rather deterministic in lower developed creatures, they seem rather absent in humans, meaning they, if they exist at all, can be reflected upon, be manipulated and perhaps distorted or misrepresented.<sup>64</sup> The consequence of this should be that drive, as a specific *human* variable, has to be considered as something more than just biology, for example adding a *psychological* component to it. The psychological factor in the evil-dispute thus becomes significant.

At present, one of the most prominent subjects or themes concerning violence and aggression as basically biological variables, is the focus upon the so called “*mirror neurons*”. In the early 1990s, Giacomo Rizzolatti and colleagues was starting getting some insight in some brain mechanisms or neurons perhaps important for feelings or attitudes like *empathy* and what have for example been clinical categorized as “Theory of Mind”, referring to our capability to gain empathic insight into other humans emotions, motives and way of thinking, the possibility of taking the mental perspective of the other. Shortly, mirror neurons refer to neurons that respond to, or being able to respond directly a particular kind of gesture in, so to say, the same *direction*. This makes for example the activity of the neurons of the self and those of others being directed at the same goal. Biologically it was discovered, for example out of experiments with monkeys that these specific neurons in the *prefrontal cortex* responded when the creature, say, grasped a peanut, but in the same way when it watched *another* monkey grasping it. The next step after the monkeys was of course to discover whether humans possessed similar mechanisms in their brains. Subsequently, brain imaging studies showed that mirror neurons apparently do exist in the *human* brain as well. In humans too, experiments has shown similar patterns of brain activities between “doing” and “watching”. Mirror neurons then seem to allow us to recognize and interpret another person’s actions, but perhaps also one’s feeling and experiences. A crucial question in line with this is whether mirror neurons have a role to play beyond that of just mentally imitating and then replicating actions or speech of another person. Could they perhaps also play some role in a more “deep” form of *empathy*, which means putting oneself emotionally in the place of another? According to the theory of mirror neurons, watching another person’s immediate suffer, say, being the witness of him or her having a tooth pulled out or having a needle jabbed in his arm, gives us some sort of wincing too. Being able to replicate the simple movements of another person, it follows that we should also be able to replicate the sense of

---

<sup>62</sup> The significance of *empathy* will be further considered.

<sup>63</sup> The discussion of biological factors of cause has to include *genes* and *evolution*, which will be demonstrated.

<sup>64</sup> Note the Freudian concept of *sexual repression*.

pain, as well a pleasure, in them to. But what happens if a person in a way gets so used watching other people's suffering and pain that he gets somehow desensitized, or simply lack the equipment of mirror neurons from the beginning? Under these circumstances some rather terrifying perspectives perhaps become actualized. Perhaps such people could easily be recruited for torturing other people. Research has revealed that being willing to commit torture doesn't necessary mean that one should be a sadist. Rather, "professional" torturer often turn out to be ordinary people willing to fulfil the job they are told to do without raising questions. Not to say that there should be no cruel sadist among torturers, just that this doesn't seems being a necessary "qualification" for practising this profession in a proper way. On the other hand, no clear evidence for such clear cut psychological desensitization seems apparent. Of course, you could, for different reasons, try to *hide* your reactions for some reason, for example from the motivation of not making people close to you worried or anxious.

However, it has been suggested that mirror neurons might be the very key in understanding the emotional state of mind of another person. In some sense, this ability plays a crucial role for our psychological and social "survival" and our capabilities of taking care of other people; qualities that are perhaps taking for granted among near related. Martin Hoffmann<sup>65</sup> has constructed a theory of the human development of empathy, based on four stages. Hoffman reports that so-called "*global empathy*" can be observed in the very first stage of development. Observations show that toddlers, even in the first year of life, start crying when observing other infants crying or apparently feeling bad. Although there are certain difficulties or obstacles connected to categorizing this as "empathy" per se, it fits well to the very idea, or perhaps more correctly, detection of mirror neurons whose functions were exactly getting humans equipped with the abilities to detect and respond to reactions and emotions of fellow humans, and thus putting oneself emotionally in the place of another.

With this in mind, what could be the connection between the idea of mirror neurons and evil? Obviously, if our capabilities for feelings of empathy itself and our capabilities of giving empathic responses are due to certain neurons in our brain, what about the situation when these neurons are set out of function, for example are not being activated, damaged or simply are nonexistent? Neurologists and neuropsychologists point out that the very *connection* between to areas of the brain, the area that directs the capacity for rational reflection and control, the *frontal lobes* and some areas within the termed *limbic system*, connected with our ability to produce *feelings*, more specific the already referred to *amygdala*, is crucial concerning our ability to "mirror" the feelings and emotional state of other people, a condition for "turning on" or activate our capacities of say altruism and empathy. Or more correctly, the neurological connections referred to, constituting the very basis for these conditions (empathy) itself. This means, literally speaking, that experiencing another person suffering or getting hurt, feels like being hurt ourselves. Seeing other people suffer make us suffer too. Where these neural connections, however, being undeveloped, damaged, or absent in the one way or another, the mirror neurons are made incapable doing their job reflecting other people's emotions. Now, the story behind these neural mechanisms or connections is one of human development, or certain aspects of it. Toddlers and newborns, for example, seem incapable to mirror other person's feelings and thus don't feel like being hurt themselves when experiencing *their* suffering.<sup>66</sup> According to plain psychology of development, not before the age of three years does the child start to experience or show more mature signs of paying attention to other individual's emotional states. Neurologists usually assert that not before the age of six are the neural connections needed for empathic reflections

---

<sup>65</sup> Hoffman, 1982, 1984.

<sup>66</sup> However, Hoffman's theory, referred, claims that some sort of empathy indeed *are* present in the toddler from the very first year of life.

of other individual's emotional states fully developed.<sup>67</sup> This constitutes the foundations of *moral* and *conscience*. At this phase, the frontal lobe then fully connected with the limbic system, the centre or reservoir for feelings. During puberty these capabilities are getting even more advanced. Parallel to this, theories and research and development have for a long time informed us how human egocentrism little by little is being replaced by a more decentred, flexible and real perspective of the world and other people taking all elements, including the "perspective of others, into account. Now, when these processes are denied taking place for different reasons, fatal consequences regarding the individual's moral behaviour, leading to what would be characterized as "psychopathic behaviour, or like that, becomes threatening. The process of connection between the frontal lobe and limbic system has its time, meaning, if obstruction of some kind occur during the sensitive period for construction, should later make it rather impossible to start and develop the process as such. This is plain theory, based on logic of development itself, meaning that certain processes can take place exclusively through stimulation in sensitive periods or phases. The conditions for a healthy "full-grown" socialisation, moral, conscience and the capability for taking care of and helping other humans, for example, will be absent, due to the fact it never had the change to get into business, meaning getting developed.<sup>68</sup> The very *product* of this deficiency, then, should be a human character traditionally characterized a "psychopath". We all know what this means; the psychopath doing evil deeds, out of motives like the need for power and control over others, personal greed and lust, sadism or lack of empathy with victims of mass murder, and so on. All this *could* be concluded out of the possible logic of structural failure within neurobiology itself. It also, however, seems necessary to point to the fact that biological and social factors to a large extent *interact* in the very process where malformation concerning the mirror neurons and its functions is taking place. To conclude: Mirror neurons themselves could be absent or *non-existent* from the start, concerning the individual's neurological equipment, or possibly *underdeveloped* due to specific and fatal circumstances having their background in the person's milieu or/and history.

#### 4

However, biology itself could be the source of further determinants leading to different kinds of evil behaviour, say discrimination between groups and group members, mass hate, ethnocentrism, racism and so on. A key-concept regarding these affairs should be *prejudice*. A more recently introduced term associated with this matter, as already dealt with in *part II*, should be *xenophobia*.<sup>69</sup> Starting with focusing on the *social* itself, or *social psychological* dimension of the case, we seem to have a tendency in dividing the world, meaning other people, or strangers into rude categories of "us" and "them". Recent research however, has concluded this tendency not to be solely categorized a *social* matter. Tests and scientific methods measuring human attitudes across situations, culture, social status and so on, have revealed people generally *unwittingly* hold an astounding assortment of *stereotypical* beliefs and attitudes about (alien) social groups: black and white, female and male, elderly and young, gay and hetero, fat and thin, different nationalities, ethnic groups and so on. Although

---

<sup>67</sup> This of cause may be disputed.

<sup>68</sup> Of cause, these failures may be due to different causes, for example socialization itself, conditions of upbringing or other factors in the social environment. The point here however, being that *neurobiology* itself constitutes some basic quality in the very process of realization of these psychological properties.

<sup>69</sup> Derived from the Greek word for "stranger". Here we'll deal with the supposed *biological* sides or dimensions with it.

these implicit biases seem to inhabit us all, we certainly vary when it comes to going into the particulars and matters of degrees, depending on a number of factors, for example: our own group membership, the contours of our everyday environment, our conscious desire to avoid bias and perhaps unconscious biases due to inner unsolved conflicts linked to certain drives of say aggression. For example, research tends to demonstrate that about two thirds of whites have an implicit preference for whites over blacks. Our proclivity too, so to say, *form* “in groups” based on crude markers, ranging from skin colour to clothing styles, this also including groups from racist organisations to inner city gangs, football hooligans and “cool” groups of stylish teenagers. Now, the worst problem related to this doesn’t seem to be certain extremist groups or organisations and their activities, although these certainly *represent* a huge problem for those getting confronted by them, but perhaps the more fundamental and underlying problem revealed in recent studies, namely man’s rather *general* or *universal* tendency to discriminate between groups, ruled by the principle “us” contra “them”.

Surely, this seems to be a matter for social studies and has also, from *that* point of view, been dealt with in part II. At the moment, I will go on deepening some significant biological aspects concerning this topic, even though, as pointed out, this should as well be considered a *social* and *interpersonal* matter.<sup>70</sup> The biological case for analyzing phenomena like discrimination, xenophobia and ethnocentrism should in a way move beyond for example Turner and Tajfels perspective, having its basis in *groups* and our urges for *social identity*. But moving “behind” should not mean “replacing”, but rather focusing on another source adding to or fitting into a totality or network of explanations or causality.

Regarding the idea or perspective of “in-groups” and “out-group”, being in accordance with social psychological research, it has been pointed out, from the biological camp, that even our basic *visual perceptions* are skewed toward our own in-groups. Many studies seem to have confirmed that people more readily remember faces of their own “race” or ethnic group<sup>71</sup> than those of other groups. In recent years scientists have begun to probe the *neural* basis for this rather qualitative phenomenon, often termed “the same-race memory advantage”. Neurological experiments using so called functional magnetic resonance (fMRI) imaging to track down people’s brain activity while they viewed series of white and black faces revealed individuals exhibiting greater activity in a brain area involved in face recognition when they viewed faces of their own “racial” group than when they were gazing at faces of a different “race”. The identification with a group on neurological and visual terms appears to occur astoundingly quickly. Another, perhaps opposite point concerning brain activity and visual recognition is that some implicit biases appear to be rooted in strong emotions. Measures of white people’s brain activity as they viewed series of white and black faces showed that black faces, compared with white ones, triggered greater activity in the mentioned *amygdala*, a brain structure associated with vigilance and sometimes fear. The effect was in fact most pronounced among people who demonstrated strong implicit *racial* bias. Studies of Elizabeth Phelps have also shown that those individuals whose amygdala was most activated also scored highest on standard tests for racial prejudice.<sup>72</sup> Psychologist Jennifer A. Richeson and colleagues suggest that for example American historical and cultural stereotypes traditionally have been linking specific young black men with crime, violence and danger, stereotypes so robust that our brains automatically give preferential attention to blacks as category, like threatening animals and situations.<sup>73</sup> Out of this one should however notices

---

<sup>70</sup> It should, above all, be in accordance with my general and meta-theoretical view claiming that the different levels of analyses should be regarded as complementing each other.

<sup>71</sup> Depending of cause of there being clear visual markers dividing the different groups, for example skin colour.

<sup>72</sup> Phelps, 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Note for example Richeson & Trawalter, 2008.

that these neural reactions above all should not be considered an exclusively biological process. On the contrary, the whole point seems to be that cultural – and therefore potential changeable – determinants play the crucial role here, activating some basic neurological mechanisms and patterns, originally developed for protection.

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) referred to in part II, points in the same direction regarding the rather intrinsic tendency to divide people into antagonistic “us” and “them” groups attaching negative biases of prejudice and even racism to the “out-group” when skin colour or ethnicity is on the agenda. Even adults who claim not to be racists and most children down to 3 years old seem to have certain inherent preferences for registering skin colour automatically and unconsciously.<sup>74</sup> Baron and Banaji<sup>75</sup> have shown that full-fledged implicit racial bias emerges by age of six and - most disturbing - never to retreat. Baron concludes that the cognitive and perhaps neurological filters by which people perceive the world, are present very early, and correspondently consolidated.

However, these arguments concerning race, skin colour and neurological based perception should attract our attention. In the next passage I shall deal with the subject of *genes* and *evolution* and their significance for perhaps both aggression, discrimination, ethnocentrism, xenophobia and other related phenomena of what could be considered elements concerning our subject in front: evil. Let me just anticipate one single matter here. A significant argument concerning for example evolution should be that certain traits and dispositions and their genes behind, shown to secure the individual’s adaption to his or her milieu, will tend to survive through generations. The inherent and biological determined tendency to discriminate between say white and black faces, supporting for example racism, then should be considered a product of such evolution. However, one can hardly imagine that our species has evolved to see the world in terms or categories of black and white. After all, our ancestors, living in small and many ways isolated groups concerning ethnicity and race, would normally not have met people whose skin was a different colour from their own. This just to note that the argument based on evolution in explaining, say perceptual discrimination has to be of another more sophisticated kind, which I shall return to.

## 5

The focus on violence, or the *disposition* to violence, has been that of consider it *pathological*, meaning it has no positive, rather just negative role to play regarding human interplay or the attention to human needs. In recent years, however, the subject of *genes* and *evolution* has become significant, not just connected to the violence/aggression question, but to the *empathy/moral* debate as well. Regarding *violence*, it should also be regarded as an adaptive form of behaviour<sup>76</sup>, which in turn makes it necessary to make nuances regarding violence’s connection to evil. Here, the study and significance of genes and evolution becomes significant. The question however, to what extent violence should be considered adaptive or pathological, has to take into consideration the historical and cultural milieu in which the violent behaviour or attitude occur. I shall return to this in the further.

The study of genes itself has gone on for decades, both scientific *and* in more speculative ways, long before the question of *evolution* came on the agenda. First, the idea that a disposition to violence is not itself a natural trait in man, but a certain kind of

---

<sup>74</sup> Notice part II.

<sup>75</sup> Baron & Banaji, 2006.

<sup>76</sup> For example in defending territory, mates and food.



*pathology*, has been around for many years. The inclination of violence beyond that of, say proper reasons like self-defence, extreme provocation, and so on, is considered a perhaps pathology or psychiatric disease like for example schizophrenia and depression.<sup>77</sup> In handling violence separated, as a problem itself, isolated from the adaptive-pathology difference, the question of the role of *chromosomes* is a rather traditional one, like the matters of brain structures and hormone levels dealt with earlier. Not surprisingly, men have been considered more violent than woman, due to their specific chromosome equipment. In that case, violence should be created in all men, at least existing as some *tendency*. The fact is that two chromosomes determine our sex. All eggs contain just one X chromosome, while sperm can carry either an X or a Y chromosome. On fertilization, when fusion occur, all normal embryos will receive either an XX, and so become *female*, or an XY, and thus become *male*, as their twenty-third chromosome pair. So everyone has at least one X chromosome, and women have one X from each parent. For males, the X chromosome has to come from the mother. Now, the case is that the X chromosome plays host to genes that have a huge effect to one's behaviour and personality. The so called *Turner's Syndrome*, a rather uncommon genetic disorder, is caused by a missing X chromosome and afflicting only girls. However girls born with this syndrome seem often relatively normal, even if some significant physical shortcomings are present. Another significant trait of character, however, is their inability in learning social skills and they tending to be more *disruptive, aggressive* and generally *anti-social*. They often are being characterized as acting like badly behaved boys. It has been discovered that this largely depends on that they have ended up with one single X chromosome from their *mother*, while missing that from the father. Researchers believe that there are genes responsible for modulating behaviour on the X chromosome and those genes causing the anti-social behaviour are imprinted and thus particularly active on the *maternal X* chromosome.<sup>78</sup> According to the researchers, in a girl with a normal complement of X chromosomes, any anti-social tendencies would be countered again by genes on the paternal X, but girls with Turner's with just the single maternal X are lacking that brake on their behaviour.

Then, what should this tells us about the role and significance of the X chromosome in normally developed children? One should have in mind that most girls have the maternal *and* the paternal X, whereas *all* boys have just the maternal X. Boys therefore, have the anti-social maternal genes without the paternal X "brake". In other words, this makes most girls nicer and less violent than boys, except for example those with the Turner's, and boys should be more programmed to anti-social behaviour of different kind, for example violence, aggression, etc.<sup>79</sup>, than girls, which makes sense from empirical material and daily experiences too.

What should this tells us? Surely, not that human of both sexes are pre-programmed robots solely ruled by genes. Fortunately humans are not just biological determined. They are necessary also *social* creatures, product of their environment, socialization and upbringing. It is, however, a fact that boys are many times more likely than girls to have learned aggressiveness from their parents and other significant people around influencing them. But it

---

<sup>77</sup> The former diagnosis of "*psychopathy*", in recent years named "*dissocial or antisocial personality disorder*", may of course seem relevant or adjacent here, but beware that this diagnoses also include traits like, among others: "callous unconcern for others", "attitudes of irresponsibility", "disregard for social norms, rules and obligations", "incapacity to maintain enduring positive relationships", "incapacity to experience guilt". However, this clinical and diagnostic description may seem plausible and relevant for the final discussion or conclusion with regard to evil itself.

<sup>78</sup> Referred from Winston, 2002.

<sup>79</sup> Attitudes and matters associated with, and in my opinion making a basis for what *could* or *should* been given the name of *evil*.

also turn out to be the case that it is difficult to separate *nature* and *nurture*, except in extraordinary instances like for example the Turner. Upbringing and socialization play a significant part in the construction of the individual's behaviour repertoire. Given this fact, it seems obvious that boys more likely than girls, at least due to their expected role, should be exposed to learning aggressiveness from say their parents and other influencing people around them. Recent perspectives in biological research focusing on genes and behaviour stress the point that genes and milieu are intertwined in a manner which makes it impossible to contrast "nature" with "nurture" the way Sir Francis Galton did in the 1880s. It seems for example impossible to conclude that siblings growing up in the same family share or are being exposed to identical milieu, because, as far as they not being identical twins, their genotypic and phenotypic variance is unique, thus evoking different responses from the environment. For example aggressive and hyperactive children evoke different responses from parents than do a nice, appealing and tranquil child, they being boy or child, resulting in qualitatively different milieus surrounding the children. With further development, the growing youngster seeks out different environment based in part on constitutional differences and in part on past experiences. Thus, regarding the heredity-environment controversy, rather than a simple *cause-effect* relationship the one way or another, we are confronted with an ongoing *interaction* or *reciprocal* process between these two instances. This however, in my opinion allows us to conclude that genes and heredity, by the very force of its own constitutional logic, plays a significant part in creating the qualities and characteristics of the different individual's personality, that being of a rather evil kind or the opposite, in different cases.

Another look at the influence of genes on human violence was carried out by the so called "*International Ciba Symposium*"<sup>80</sup> in 1995, which gathered many leading names within the field, for example the distinguished child psychiatrist sir Michael Rutter, suggesting that there existed a certain number of genes which *may* be implicated in, say, violent behaviour, but also called for a need to be clear about the risks of exaggerating any genetic influences. Of specific interest was the evidence of the missing of a particular gene on chromosome 6, a gene producing certain *brain receptors*, in particular receptors for *serotonin*.<sup>81</sup> Evidence was presented that these changes in genes was associated with anti-social behaviour, a violent nature, high levels of aggression and also a tendency to alcoholism. The research concerning the significance of this gene, however, carry on, for one thing to find out to what degree this gene varies in its structure in the *general* population, and in those with behavioural problems.<sup>82</sup>

Another significant or related gene being of importance here is one producing the substance of so called *monoamine oxidase A* (MAOA), which affects neurotransmission in the brain. In at least some single studied families this seems to affect male members to show increased impulsive behaviour, aggressive sexuality and among other things, commit arson. However, modifications were made emphasising that it was unlikely the MAOA gene itself could be considered an "aggression gene".<sup>83</sup> From the very fact that there exist a complexity of variation in behaviour of those observed and the reported significant multi-nuanced effects of deficiency of MAOA on neurotransmission, undermines any conclusions regarding some direct casual link. Perhaps the identification of specific genes, perhaps selected through evolution, expected causing or *determining* aggression, lay far off, or at least does not wait in

---

<sup>80</sup> The International Ciba Symposium on Genetics of Criminal and Antisocial Behaviour.

<sup>81</sup> Research on mice missing the equivalent gene to the chromosome 6 in humans, revealed that they acted very aggressively confronted with for example new and for them unknown members of their own kind, while in other situations behaving normal. Further, note from p. 78, the consequences of the limited capacity for absorbing serotonin.

<sup>82</sup> Of course, causality of socio-psychological factors has to be separated out here.

<sup>83</sup> From Winston, 2002.

the near future. Anyway, this underscores the supposed fact that *environment* plays a crucial role in the manifestation of aggression and violence, not just by its own autonomous casual force directly inflicting subjects and relations, but also out of qualities affecting the way the genes themselves will work. This again underscores the point of mutual dependence between genes and environment, making it clear that the one cannot exist or operate without the other.<sup>84</sup> In other words, the specific or autonomous biological determining element seems to be absent or undetected.

At a superior level however, genes or biological equipment seems to play a significant part. For example, as stated above, males seem far more violent than women, and have through history been demonstrable involved in several times aggressive, violent and evil acts.<sup>85</sup>

## 6

More traditional theoretical views have considered aggression and violence a solely mal-adaptive matter, bringing trouble for both victim and perpetrator. Evolutionary theory, however, stresses that aggressive behaviour, perhaps also including what would be considered *evil*, have been selected through history because it has contributed to the survival and reproduction of the bearers of the specific genes disposing for such qualities. Implicit in this is the assumption that violent behaviour from ancient times has been necessary for individuals and groups in order to survive regarding competitions with others. Note, however, that a distinction between *individual* and *group* selection has to be made. According to group selection, all individual aggressiveness and violence aimed at hurting or destroying members of the same group or species would be maladaptive and then be selected out, because any step in the direction of impairing one's own group survival would correspondingly weaken one's

---

<sup>84</sup> In the final concluding section my theoretical perspective will be emphasized, namely that the basic dimensions underlying evil being presented - that of individuality, social relations and structures and that of biology - all are in the position of holding some causality of its own, but that this is defined on the level of *abstraction*, meaning that for each the effects of the *other* dimensions are not taken into consideration. At the level of empirically based analyses, where real *manifest* phenomena are accounted for, the supposed causality of each level or dimension has to be integrated in search of an understanding of the phenomena in question, giving each of them the status of being perhaps *latent* instead of manifesting itself directly. This again requires an analysis of abstraction if revealing their real and universal qualities.

<sup>85</sup> However, there exist historical reports of cultures where women are found to be in leading positions regarding both leadership, aggression, and warfare, for example some ancient Celtic tribes. But as well as it being significant to search for human variation regarding aggression at the individual level, one should perhaps account for the same at the level of gender or sex. This *should* give us plenty of individual examples of women being significant more aggressive than many males, not undermining the superior fact that males generally being more aggressive than women.

own individually (surviving). On the other hand, individual aggressiveness seems to secure the person's own survival, perhaps at the cost of other individuals, allowing him to spread his genes to secure their existence for the future. However, both these strategies could themselves be considered to *abstract* to fit in with every social and historical situation confronting humans. Under changing circumstances different strategies concerning use of violence and aggressiveness would therefore appear functional. In a population of peaceful cooperatives individualistic aggressive strategies would often not pay. Instead altruistic behaviour would prove better for the purpose of surviving and maximize one's genetic fitness. Aggressive and egoist "free riders" would under these circumstances easily be isolated or excluded from rewarding group securing immediate survival. This then serves to explain why humans have developed altruistic and pro-social behaviour repertoires along with aggressive and antisocial. In a society populated with aggressive competitors however aggressive and even violent behaviour seems necessary for surviving and securing the success of one's own genes. In other words: Both group and individual selection seems necessary or functional under the right circumstances. Besides, altruism *inside* the group and aggression *outside*, meaning detecting and combating strangers and non-members also seems crucial for the individual's survival.

All this seem rational, of course depending on accepting the evolutionary theory and logic itself. Though I believe there exists strong arguments for evolution theory itself, I shall not bring forth any profound discussion on this matter here. Anyway I believe that evolutionary arguments have to be considered along with other biological in discussing innate or human conditions contributing to our understanding of human aggressiveness or aggressive potentials, simply because evolution helps explain why aggression exist in humans at all. As stated above, aggressiveness and violence cannot itself be classified as evilness, but seems to form an important basis for it. The most profound sign of evil itself is undoubtedly the amount of physical and sometimes psychological pain, violence, brought upon innocents.

One important part concerning the idea of evolution of group violence, that is one group attacking and even trying to destroy other groups experienced as threats or competitors, is that these patterns can be said to be present up to this day. Anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, the recent examples of ethnic cleaning and so on perhaps fully demonstrate the significance of the evolution of group violence and its, some would say logical consequence: group *hatred*.<sup>86</sup> This turns out rather disturbing. Recent observations have revealed organized violence groups not just among humans, but for example among chimpanzees as well. Until recently, organized violence within one specific species was thought to exist as an exclusive phenomenon among *humans*. However, concerning chimps, except from rivalling and battles for supremacy among males which rarely resulted in anyone getting injured, there has been strong evidence suggesting that they behave violent as groups against other groups of same kind or species. As individualistic aggression *within* the group hardly or never is classified as serious or deadly the opposite counts regarding group aggression against *other* groups, meaning alien groups dominating within their own separate territory. These attacks can be regarded as manoeuvres in the service of survival, namely securing a territory for say food supply. The attacks are unconditional brutal, resulting in murder of members of the rival group, including the murder of females from males of the attacking group. *Within* a group, a male would never hurt a female member. The fact that the same aggressive and brutal group behaviour are seen in both humans and other primates, stresses and far support the basic evolutionary argument that for example group violence through history has been crucial for

---

<sup>86</sup> Remember the Zimbardo experiment and the way apparently normal or average individuals, even in an artificial constructed experiment situation, easily turn into sadistic monsters as soon as social norms are altered and a number of individuals are divided into two opposite and antagonistic groups. Also note "The Wave" experiment and Sherifs "Robber Cave Experiment".

survival among some higher developed mammals and consequently has been selected and genetically spread by the individuals and groups best fitted. However, changing focus from chimps to humans, some important or crucial elements has to be included and counted for. The original group repertoire, including brutal murder of members of an alien group, could hardly be considered evil in a meaningful way object for our present investigation, because it must preferentially be considered *instrumental*, meaning it solely taking place in the service of *survival*, not primarily or with the presence of any primary individualistic lust for hurting or killing.<sup>87</sup> Focusing on humans seems to add a new and dangerous dimension to the problem, namely aggression against alien or “out” groups – *group hate* – serving its own purposes. Of course other factors to have to be included. For example group hate itself may serve the function of strengthen one’s identity by downgrading the out group<sup>88</sup> and thus legitimating different harassments and even cruelties upon its members. Group hate may also serve the function of projecting the frustrations and perhaps inner conflicts and unconscious feelings of inferiority of members of the in group itself outwards, precisely upon members of the other group. Maybe there also exists a strong need or motive for creating a concept of a threatening enemy. These tendencies and mechanisms, or group hate and fear more generally, have obviously served its functions by surviving through evolution. If that should be the case, it implies that violence and cruelty, truly evil exist, not as much an instrumental manoeuvre in the service of survival, but by virtue of its own manifestations. In reality, the transformation of instrumental violence inherited through evolution into group hatred, culminating with the Holocaust, adds new social and psychological dimensions to the matter. Among social factors, the dehumanization and demonization of the members of the out group has to be counted for. Regarding psychological mechanisms, significant *rational-cognitive* and certain *emotional* factor must be added to the story. A general and superior comprehension and concept regarding the members of the out group as inferiors, combined with a self image of superiority has to been maintained over time, fuelled with emotions of unconditional hate against indifferent strangers, their only disqualification being their membership of the “wrong” group.

So what perhaps finds its origin in the pure drive for survival, could become main reasons for cruelty and evil it self. Perhaps this should not appear surprising after all. Some cruelty was probably present in every fight for territory and against intruders where the ultimate purpose must have been causing maximal damage upon the enemy in defending oneself. According to Duntley and Buss<sup>89</sup>, a number of factors that would be considered bad and destructive, if not evil by itself, like lying, cheating, stealing and other harm-inflicting may have been evolved through evolution because it have served some vital functions for survival. These adaptations also seem to be fundamental and universal components of human nature through history and across cultures and cannot according to Duntley and Buss be attributed to different cultural factors, that be socio-economic circumstances, socialization, upbringing and so on. The actual *manifestation* of these phenomena in different situations may however be due to specific cultural and social factors operating under certain circumstances, contingencies that are themselves essential components of the design of the different kinds of adaptation. Further, humans seem, according to evolutionary psychology, to have developed special cognitive mechanisms designed for categorizing some phenomena as “good” and other as “bad” or “evil” and even humans and groups in exclusively white-black categories, as either “good” or “bad”.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> However, the possibility that aggressive behavior itself could elicit emotions of lust and excitement must be taken into account.

<sup>88</sup> Note here Tajfel & Turner (1986) and section II.

<sup>89</sup> Duntley & Buss, 2004.

<sup>90</sup> Note the discussion of *xenophobia* in part II.

As mentioned above, aggression and violence should not be regarded evil itself. On the contrary, aggression and violence should under certain circumstances be valued important and necessary for the individual's self-assertion and even survival. However, when certain aspects of this aggression get perverted, it can be directed into a malfunctioned and abnormal direction resulting in gruesome deeds against others which could be classified as *evilness*.<sup>91</sup> Aggressiveness then, constitutes essential qualifications regarding evilness itself. Note however, asserting that aggressiveness and violence should be regarded natural and evolutionary necessary, does not imply it should be regarded natural and somehow *tolerated* in modern societies and cultures of our time, or to day's world wide as such. Concerned with its "naturalness" should this just points to its origin or sources and not to any' social or normative legitimating.

Back to human groups, a group would benefit having aggressive members fighting members of a rival group or inflicting harm upon others. On the other hand, this would ultimately show not functional for the care and solidarity necessary for a group to exist and maintain its strength over a long period. Besides, the conclusions concerning the evolution of aggressiveness and violence in humans, groups and even civilisations should perhaps not be regarded as universal or deterministic. Perhaps one could talk of a human *capacity* which has to be confronted with other capacities and trends in man. Studies have revealed peaceful cultures existing for centuries where violence and rival for resources are absent. Finally, much violence seen in different cultures may have its origin rather in frustration and repression than in evolutionary aggressiveness, although some potential or inner sources for aggressiveness and violence probably have to exist. As a *general* term associated with human and societal development, the evolution hypothesis could yet be defended. It seems clear that our tendency to split people into groups of "us" and "them" is universal showing its many faces in different aspects of our daily life. Supporting your own school or football team is unlikely, say impossible without our deep buried instincts for splitting up the world into friends and foes.

As pointed out, especially by evolutionary psychologists themselves, evolution does not rule out social influence. On the contrary, social milieu and social influence itself must be considered part of the adaptation design determining human development and thus constitutes a significant part of the evolutionary theory itself.

Evolutionary psychology itself has pointed out that man has not just evolved capacities for aggression, violence and evildoing, but also for caring and altruism as well. On the other hand, empathy and pro- social behaviour seem under certain conditions to serve egoism and selfishness, qualities more often associated with evilness than with kindness. In more peaceful cultures, mainly based on cooperation and caring, helping and altruistic behaviour will clearly pay. Not to say that altruism is exclusively a *strategic* matter. Usually it will be considered having its basis in one' own personality and nature, meaning we act upon altruism for its own sake, because we *want* to do the right and good things and because our conscience tells us so. If however survival is the big question, being egoist among altruists may often pay, but perhaps just up to the point where you are getting excluded from the group and denied access to the group's or culture's resources.<sup>92</sup> In a situation like that, manoeuvres like committing altruistic act will surely pay and secure survival.

To conclude: there seems to be certain biological *potentials* for aggression, violence and hostility in man. However this should not bring us up in plain conclusions that following from

---

<sup>91</sup> Note part I.

<sup>92</sup> One may assert that some kinds of egoistic acts will always pay, let's say tax evasion in a welfare society, given you don't get caught. But permanently showing egoistic and hostile attitudes against other members of the same group will on the other hand seldom pay

this evildoing by itself is biologically based, say *determined*. It would not even be fair or correct to assert that aggression and violence itself is biological fixed. Surely brain conditions, genes and evolution do not explain everything. Obviously there exist different or multi-factorial sources for evildoing.

I have focused my investigation on three main sources or dimensions which should, I believe, help explain significant causes regarding the manifestations of what could be characterized *human evil*, namely *psychological*, *social* and *biological* determinants. As I will argue for or at least implicate in the final section or part, it is exactly the *combinations* of these factors, taking them all into account that seems able in giving us a correct idea of the matter in question.

*PART IV*  
*Synthesis*

The preceding sections or parts have presented a rather broad, fundamental and perhaps traditional account of some basic and fundamental conditions for as well evil deeds, and perhaps most important, the evil *mind*. Although some of the perspectives accounted for here doesn't gain distinction of giving brand new insights measures by present standards, they nevertheless represent some significant background or basis for present modern scientific discussions and research. Fundamental theories, although traditional by nature, doesn't necessarily get outdated by new empirical facts. Instead they sometimes incorporate new data into their established and traditional framework. In fact modern philosophy of science often point out that "theory is underdetermined by data"<sup>93</sup> This final and concluding section then gives room to a broader discussion of today's significant questions concerning the matter of human evil.

Psychology, biology and sociology/society/situational forces are operating at different levels and thus logically doesn't *have to* conflict with each other for example regarding theories and explanations of human evil. When they *do*, this seems to stem from some certain position or idea of *dualism*, presupposing an *either-or* perspective, meaning the belief that psychology, biology *or* social and interactional forces may explain the matter, but not within various mutual *combinations*. This focus on operating combinations, however, is in my opinion crucial for a clear definition and fully definition of the question of evil itself. On the other hand, presupposing *one* determinate factor here seems to bring us into the trap of *reductionism*. Does this imply that for example individualistic perspectives being of a psychological or biological kind doesn't count in understanding real evil? No! Rather, the whole point should be that every *single* factor or dimension is supposed to operate, but in different combinations with others, demanding an analysis along two levels: a *real* analysis of the case or matter in manifestation, in addition to an analysis of *abstraction* concerning the inner logic of each level or dimension. For example: suppose finding some personal and psychological deficit in subjects regarding their social function or interaction/communication with others, perhaps in small scale or just out of psychological test. Suppose we would label or diagnose this as a possible case of "psychopathy"<sup>94</sup>. Does that alone make the character "evil"? At least one has to make an examination or analysis under for example which *social* circumstances he or she is disposed to actually act in evil ways, for example under the command of certain authorities and in what way he/she in the situation given will differ from other subjects being the bearer of other personal qualities. Under these circumstances, to attain at an understanding or a concept of evil, one has to include at least two levels or dimensions: that of psychological (and perhaps also biological) personality and that of the social/societal situation. Concerning the social dimension, one also has to take into account the social act itself, its quality of badness, cruelty and the degree of harm which is inserted upon other innocents. This of cause again focuses on the personal and psychological dimensions and qualities. Who, given their personal characteristics, would inflict radical harm

---

<sup>93</sup> Note for example Lakatos, Laudan, Quine, Toulmin, a.o.

<sup>94</sup> No longer a legal or operating diagnostic label. Replaced with "*Dissocial Personality Disorder*".



on innocents? Obviously, not *everybody* one should assume (and hope). After all, beating up or cheating innocent people contrasted with, say committing mass murder seems enormous. It also forces us to make certain assessments concerning motives behind different acts and kinds of behaviour. The motives for cheating and fighting could be radical different from those making one commit mass murder.

In addition to the main dimensions dealt with, *philosophical* and *normative* matters should be included. This of course also includes the matter of *morality*. Philosophy and related matters operate on abstract and reflexive terms, thus, in my opinion makes it an indispensable tool in analysing and clarification of human/social theoretical matters. However, there seems to exist some pitfalls here, namely making the philosophical comprehension *total*, meaning that the question of evil becomes solely dependent of some sort of a pure philosophical reflection. Not surprisingly, such theoretical constructions often conclude that evil itself does *not exist*, instead having its origin or foundations in theological and metaphysical speculations alone.<sup>95</sup>

Given that philosophical reflections and analysis must be integrated or related to psychological, sociological *and* biological matters and dimensions then, what could be the relationship between them? Some theorists wish to rule out one or more dimensions in efforts of asserting some kind of a “mono-causal” explanation. In recent years much stress has been laid upon the *situation* factor. One reason for this is obviously the growing reluctance regarding the traditional *subject* perspective. The exclusive focusing on “evil” individuals executing evil matters of the world eventually was abandoned by a huge crowd of psychologists, social scientists and philosophers. The background for this is largely to be found in post war experiences, experiments and philosophical reflections. One significant traditional perspective presupposed evil just done by “evil” individuals, meaning psychopaths and sadists. Theoretical focus was on individualistic psychological factors determining or at least laying heavy influence on the subject’s behaviour as well as emotions and cognition. Logically, exclusive focus on individualistic factors tends towards including *biological* factors. However, this position at least the original versions of it, were subjected to heavy critics. In my opinion, the greatest dangers following the use of biological perspectives should be of two kinds, namely *mono-causality* and *determinism*. Neither of these positions should be defended, which of course modern research has revealed. But this should, in my opinion, not rule out biology as such. After all we are biological creatures, which in fact imply that some significant biological needs and motives have to be counted for. The “problem” however should be that these motives seldom, contrary to living organisms at a lower level, manifest themselves directly. Instead they are mixed up with or entangled in other more psychological and social motives and needs. In fact they can hardly be evaluated in isolation or on their own logical terms. This of course is mainly due to the fact that the human, in addition to being biological also represent itself as a genuine social creature, not to say psychological. The fact should of course be that significant biological drives and structures basically *manifest* themselves *as* psychological and social processes. The theoretical consequences of this should be that factors on different levels, that being biological, psychological and social, should and could possibly not be separated on the level of *manifestation*. However, we are in need of separating them at the *abstract* or *theoretical* level. In addition, concerning the matter of evil and evil-doing, one has to face some certain demands of *transformation*, that is: under what circumstances are biological drives and forces, that being evolution, aggression, etc. transformed into different manifestations of evil. Surely aggression itself, it being proper or improper, is *not* or should not automatically be considered evil. The significance of transformation itself then points to the very fact that more “natural” human properties could

---

<sup>95</sup> Note for example Cole, 2006.

be exposed to, or vulnerable concerning specific forms or sorts of perverting them. There is however some different kinds of issues here, namely insights derived from more recent evolutionary theory. According to this, for example acts we spontaneously would or *could* consider evil, like mass murder upon members of foreign groups, *could* be derived from basic evolutionary inherited psychological mechanisms, for example the urge to attack, combat and destroy members of foreign group, interpreted as threatening and deadly enemies. This may also be related to the phenomena and concept of *xenophobia* dealt with in section or part II.

Since the concept of “evil” is to be considered a *social construction* as such, as immediately given phenomena, some sort of a complete system of theory or explanation is needed for the intention of giving an account of the matter as such. This should *not* imply that the whole matter is a rather artificial one produced by ideology alone and thus not existing by itself, like some philosophers tend to assert. The will to cause ultimate pain and cruelty upon innocent people that be by intention, from instrumental or aggressive motives itself, or even due to thoughtlessness<sup>96</sup> or cold carelessness for the victim seems real enough.<sup>97</sup> Nothing logically prevents us for making definitions and concepts regarding this as carried through or basic evil. The case of cause should be that the explanation needed has to be taken from different theoretical territories as well as conceptual and logical levels.

Let us return to the *individualistic* concept of evil in the traditional fashion. Far the way this presupposed the view of the isolated, rather sadistic human doing evil acts for its own sake and pleasure. As pointed out, among others by philosophers, this is rather insufficient especially in efforts explaining large scale evil, for example genocide and ethnic cleaning. Neither should it explain more small scale evildoing, exemplified in the Zimbardo experiment. This due to the fact that the evildoing in question here is mainly executed by so-called normal non-pathological characters living normal lives most of their time.

Furthermore, philosophers often state that committing personal evil in the more sadistic way by so called evil persons requires the personal and direct *intention* to do precise evil for its own sake if the concept of evil should make any sense. As should be experienced, however, personal and direct evil, itself being cruel and barbaric, often is originated by highly idealistic motives, often seen in for example terrorism.<sup>98</sup> However, linking evil to individualistic factors and conditions in the way philosophers here do, fails, mainly because they misinterpret exactly *which* psychological factor(s) is significantly operating in evildoing. In order to make an understanding of the way individualistic and social factors “cooperate” or are integrated within a more complete conception of evil and thus get to a more complete understanding of the operating phenomenon itself, *both* dimensions or logics have to be taken into account, in addition to biology. To repeat: Each of these dimensions – individualistic, social and biological – operates according to two distinct logics: their *internal* logic having to do with the laws and causality within their own distinct domain, for example basic psychological laws and principles and corresponding social and biological, and on the other hand their *external* logic having to do with the relationship *between* them, how they influence and determine each other. Both kinds of logic are operating, but in different way from one case or problem to the other. The point is however that they should not logically be separated and made independent of each other during the analysis. The consequence of this should be that no mono-casual explanation should be tolerated or hold true. Ruling out psychology or social determinants, as well as biological in favour of one single different factor or determinant, should in my opinion have the consequence of ending up with further theoretical questions and problems. The same goes for isolated philosophical explanations and assertions.

---

<sup>96</sup> An assertion associated with the case of for example Eichmann.

<sup>97</sup> Note the definition for the use in this text in the Introduction.

<sup>98</sup> I return to the significant matter of “terrorism” later in the conclusion.

Philosophy itself should however be considered important, though not conclusive, handling with logical definitions.

But let us first have a closer look at the *social* factor or dimension to see why it becomes insufficient operating with it in isolation and more exactly *which* factors of an individual kind is essential in the combination with it in order to make it relevant. The most significant comprehension or outcome taking a superior social stand regarding perceived evil should be realizing that most evil, and especially its most extensive and brutal versions, is not committed by sadistic individuals operating in isolation, but by “ordinary men” usually living normal lives, however brought into situations, for example caused by ethnic conflicts, economic and social crises, extreme nationalism, and so on, then revealing their “dark sides” perhaps hidden under normal circumstances. The “Canon” experiments of Milgram and Zimbardo highly demonstrate the significance of the “ordinary men do evil”, not sadistic individuals in the first place. From the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments a direct link has been made to the explanation of the Holocaust, the concentration camps and more recent examples of ethnic cleaning, not to say to Hannah Arendt’s concept of the “banality of evil” referring to the Eichmann case. As argued for in part II, the comparison or even identification of the Milgram experiment with the Holocaust, seems mistaken. Of course, the very experimental design of that experiment seems unable to count for the significant factors operating within the Holocaust logic itself. Take for example the rather crucial manoeuvre of dehumanising the victims in order to make the executioners more willing to commit mass murder. This factor, by many researchers considered crucial (among of course other factors in combination) making “ordinary” people willing to kill innocent people, for example also children, on a large scale, is hardly present in the Milgram experiment. Still, out of the “Milgram-logic”, it seems important to further stress the “situation-factor”, however under different terms than his classic experiment. On the other hand, the bare fact of reports from these experiments more than indicating heavy elements of *stress* among certain participants being told to give electric shocks, perhaps gives us information of *personal* or *individualistic* factors playing some significant role here. Of course it should be added that a minor, but considerable minority of participants refused to participate in the experiment up to “the bitter end”, meaning giving the heaviest shock on the scale. With this in mind it also becomes problematic linking the Milgram experiment unreserved to the Arendt concept of “The banality of evil”, first and foremost referring to the Holocaust administrator Adolf Eichmann. The idea, as referred earlier, was precisely the picture of Eichmann as an all-through common ordinary man, not driven by emotional hate or fanaticism, but rather from a normal desire to do a “good job” as some legal employee or official. More recent publications regarding psychiatric reports on Eichmann however gave indications of a personality far more concerned with hate against for example the Jews and Jewish people, bearing on a wish to eliminate and killing as many of them as possible. This by itself points in the direction of a more pathological personality. Besides, it makes associations to a rather significant factor which will be stressed later, namely the phenomenon or quality of *empathy*. Thus it seems important and even crucial to include individualistic parameters, even in a basic social perspective. Empathy is to be considered a psychological, and thus a personal, quality, found in single individuals.<sup>99</sup> However, the whole picture perhaps turns out a little more complicated. It also seems relevant to include or involve *biological* perspectives and explanations in order to get an even fuller understanding of what could be lying behind evil acts of different kinds. In part III some biological parameters were accounted for, for example the more recent research on *mirror neurons*. Some typical reactions or symptoms regarding

---

<sup>99</sup> Which, of course, don’t imply that *social* elements say social norms of specific type a. o., should *not* be involved in the formation and manifestation of empathy itself.

deficits in this neuron system, is precisely a lack regarding the ability to recognize the feelings and emotional states in other people. Again, the bare presence of some shortcomings in the assumed mirror neuron system does not make persons evil. Fortunately, such deficits, if present, neither make us automatically killers and torturers, nor administrators of death camps. However, it should perhaps become rather easy to imagine that deficits of this kind under specific conditions at least *could* constitute some basis – among other factors – for later repertoires of behaviour, being classified as evil.

The however most important knowledge derived from this should be that say a basically social view on evil, does *not* rule out other perspectives, that being psychological and even biological. On the contrary, in *my* opinion the different views or theoretical domains and logics instead are in *need* of each other in explaining a rather extensive phenomenon like human evil and how it manifests itself. It seems however easy to mix up ontological explanations with factors, often of a more situational kind, *triggering* what would be perceived and categorized as evil acts or even evilness. This kind of “*situationism*” should be well known within social psychology and even in sociology. It fits of cause well with the doctrine of “banality of evil” presupposing that what we usually label evil occurs when ordinary men are put into extraordinary or extreme, however even everyday situations.<sup>100</sup> In my opinion however, a one-sided situational, or for that matter psychological and biological, nor say philosophical perspective, inevitably leads us into *dualism*.

Of cause, the parameter of empathy would show important concerning the Zimbardo-experiment as well. The rather disturbing matter here seems observing how easy supposed common human empathy is eliminated through an instant constructed situation the involved participants know is a rather artificial role play. This of cause gives ammunition to arguments in favour of the situation factor. Still, we are forced to ask the crucial question: How comes that a rather instant constructed situation involving plain ordinary characters can turn into serious maltreatment and terror? What should this us of the “human nature” as such? Stressing the situation-factor alone just seems telling *half* the story. The whole point according to this is of cause that the situation itself should be unable to reveal something that did not exist from the start. Where should the aggression, brutality and evilness have its origin? At least one has to presuppose a certain *potential* concerning traits and qualities like these form the start, perhaps deep *buried* in the human psyche as such, only present as open characteristics or features in a rather few individuals labelled as “psychopaths”, “sadists” and like. The situation factor then, how strong and forceful it might be, can not be studied in isolation, simply because it does not *explain* anything “left alone”, or being understood as or viewed autonomous. A concept of individuality or personality has to be presupposed or counted for. Then, are we back to Freud and the dynamic theorists exclusively focusing upon “inner” drives, desires, or so on? Not necessary! At least the (in my opinion) significant focusing on personal factor should *not* be exclusive or be operating in isolation, but be interpreted in combination with other logically associated factors, for example the social parameter of “situation”.<sup>101</sup> But perhaps this brings us into a situation were we being forced to postulate a general “dark nature” in man as such, though activated only under certain circumstances. This certainly excludes any imagination concerning evilness as a product of a few evil, sadistic individuals. However, as stated before and will be dealt with further, this does *not* rule out psychological, personal or individualistic factors and explanations. But they obviously seem to be of another kind than the traditional assumed personal sadism.

Reicher and Haslams conclusions regarding the Zimbardo experiment after reconstructing it were that the situation itself is not settled and determined from the start in

---

<sup>100</sup> For example operating as an official or bureaucrat in Nazi Germany.

<sup>101</sup> This, of cause, was emphasized in part II, p. 57 – 58.

some rather automatic way. Expectations of the different social roles one was going to play showed significant regarding the way to behave. Ideological demands supporting existing or potential prejudices and social biases then seemed crucial. As discussed in part II, such biases should not be considered exclusively *social*, although they are *manifested* that way. Research has revealed that basic perceptions regarding phenomena like ethnocentrism, prejudices, discrimination, and so forth, seems originating and buried deep in man himself, perhaps inherited through history by evolution.<sup>102</sup> This clearly underscores my main point: That evilness and evil deeds has to be understood and conceptualized through a theoretical reflection of the specific ways of combination of subjective and social determinants. Consequently, one has to go beyond the position of *dualism*, meaning operating with one single kind of explanation and explicit ruling out explanations and theories on different levels, and instead consequently seek and go for theoretical and scientific *integration* dealing with explanations on different logical levels.

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's position is rather interesting. Though he seems more concerned with *moral* than evil itself, the connections with evil seems obvious, among other things through his references to Milgrams work, by Bauman himself interpreted as an indication or symptom of a potential for inhumanity in modernity itself, mainly due to its highly rationalized and well organised structure. Bauman, like others, operates within the dualistic realm, arguing that evil behaviour<sup>103</sup> either find its origin in certain social situations and conditions itself, inflicting ordinary persons or has to be considered a rather marginal phenomenon emanated from certain sadistic personalities. For Bauman however, society itself or modern social conditions seem unable to counteract evil, thus making room for a more moral society. Instead Bauman turns to an understanding of a "moral impulse" apparently pre-existing in man from birth. But this impulse, giving source to an "ethic of responsibility", obviously demands further investigations concerning its psychological and even biological terms. Referring to outstanding philosophers like Levinas and Løgstrup however gives no answers since philosophy itself is concerned with and conceptual restricted to logical and definitional analysis and not operating from investigations of causality and causal connections from the very point of departure.<sup>104</sup> As already stressed: What we are in need of, is a concept or instance which seems fit to simultaneously clear up and explain the phenomenon of evil on its social, psychological and perhaps as well on its biological terms.

Concerning the perspective of social psychologist Roy Baumeister, his concept of evil seems more differentiated then those of say Milgram, Zimbardo and Bauman, mainly because he refer to different psychological mechanisms supporting evil behaviour, like greed, lust, egotism, revenge, idealism and sadism. Though he stresses the significance of the social concerning the manifestation of evil itself, asserting that it is committed mostly by ordinary characters placed in perhaps extraordinary situations, he never the less gives attention to the significance of psychological determinants. I believe Baumeister thesis that evil itself exists as a rather many-sided matter that should not be understood or interpreted by some single-cause theory or domain is correct, however his own position, though interesting and useful, is

---

<sup>102</sup> Note reference to the experiments of Greenwald (1998), Hammond & Axelrod (2006) and others in part II.

<sup>103</sup> Other authors make some category based distinction between "evil" or "wickedness" and "evil acts", thus denying that evil could hold any substance or ontology of its own. We may experience and observe certain kinds of behavior we would consider "evil", but this gives no rationale for the assumption that there should exist some certain "essence" of evil itself.

<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, postulating a original moral impulse in man brings our investigations and argumentations in direction of, at least to a certain extent, to the modern philosophical program of "*moral realism*", a position asserting that moral and ethics should not be considered normative constructions alone, but real phenomena existing in the world as such.

*incomplete*. First, the very psychological parameters he uses have to be further elucidated and explained. Second, his concept of social origins to evil seems vague and unclear. He talks about social conditions and situations arousing destructive or violent impulses in individuals which however are prevented from being acted out by mechanisms of self-regulation. But what is to be considered the superior factor operating here, or in the different situations? Third, we are in need of a more sophisticated or systematic analysis of the connections and interactions of the elements and levels, that be of a social, psychological and biological kind, operating through manifest evil-doing. In my opinion, a few significant or central psychological factors have to be included in understanding why social factors play such a significant role in evil and destructiveness. Human *empathy* should be considered such a factor.

What seems obvious then is that the social dimension itself appears very significant regarding the present matter, however not without including factors and explanations along other dimensions. It is precise the *combinations* of different factors that allow us reaching an understanding of the phenomenon as such. But what about the psychological dimension in evil-doing? Obviously, there should not existing evil of any kind without involving the human psyche. After all, humans are basically intentional and motivational driven creatures that experience certain kinds of meaning executing different acts. It is important to keep in mind that the human psyche does not exist exclusively as abstractions being excluded by significant social factors as soon as man is confronted with environment and milieu. On the contrary, psychological forces exist *as* real phenomena operating in a real social world.

As commonly asserted by a great many authors and theorists, pure sadism is a rather unusual motive for what we would consider evil-doing.<sup>105</sup> According to the Freudian concept however, certain deficiencies regarding need-fulfilling create the conditions for derivatives like say un-integration of aggression, hate and even sadism. Regarding Erich Fromm's concept, aggression is to be considered secondary, meaning a mere *product* of bad or non-satisfactory external life conditions. This position however, in my opinion makes room for some significant shortcomings in understanding concerning the matter of both aggression itself, in addition to the very concept of evil. When Fromm asserts that aggression itself come into being due to the lack of fulfilment of basic needs, not existing before, he has, in my opinion, created a rather *ontological* problem for himself. For *how* exactly, could something be made out of nothing identical with it in the first place? Or put it another way: What kind of logic supports the assumption that the lack of fulfilment of basic needs necessarily leads to precisely aggression, hate and defined evil? This seems rather impossible to account for within Fromm's logic. Contrary to this, Freud and among others Melanie Klein operate with an original and biological given aggressive drive functioning within the individual from the point of departure, though dependent upon social and individual experiences over periods of the subject's (early) life. The subject's social experiences with its caregivers determine the content and direction of the actual aggression operating, for example through his or hers interaction with others. This position then, clearly demonstrate the interdependent relationship between the biological, psychological and social.<sup>106</sup> The theorist that perhaps not consistently, at least implicitly, has called attention to this way of theorizing, is Melanie Klein.<sup>107</sup> Her position offers a rather fully fledged psychological theory of how human

---

<sup>105</sup> This rather popular impression however, may be disputed. On the contrary, experiences from brutal wars, incidents of so called "ethnic cleaning", defined genocide, and so on, seem to demonstrate sadism and brutality for its own sake or as basic motive, operating on a large scale.

<sup>106</sup> On this occasion I shall not consider deficiencies in the biological equipment itself, sometimes leading to uncontrolled aggression.

<sup>107</sup> Note Part I.

aggression come into circulation as say human hate, sadism and defined evil. Klein asserts that feelings of aggression and even hate, by necessity, are originated in the human psyche as such. Further, being tangled up in a rather deterministic process where innate aggression automatically turns into hate when the child meets natural frustration. However, only under specific negative and frustrated circumstances does this (natural) hate become permanent and thus *destructive*. This stresses the point that the social and the psychological, and for that matter also the biological, are not to be evaluated separated, but as operating under mutual or identical conditions, concerning manifestations of say hate and evil. This stresses the point that in order to arrive at a formulation of a coherent theory of human activity and attitudes, some basic psychological theory has to be included.<sup>108</sup> Psychological theory, however, as presented in this context and referring to the Freudian-Klein concept in order to try to throw light on human evil, may be presented, here strict theoretical and abstract, in a rather *either-or* shape or cut, may turn out to be too simplified regarding real life experiences and examples. Principally one should imagine or taking into account numbers of nuances regarding strains and frustrations placed upon the child, of a rather moderate and reasonable kind to the more severe and cruel, in the latter instance leading to the fatal permanent hate and perhaps even sadism and defined evil. In other words, there seems to exist some continuum in psychological influence as well as patterns of psychological reactions from one single case to others. This assumption or hypothesis should be maintained, without any appraisal regarding the validity of the formal theory as such. The theory of cause has to be formulated *as* an abstraction itself, though its application of cause will be saddled with instant or accidental factors of different kinds necessary operating in the different, that's to say real situations. This point of departure, however, enables us to attain some understanding concerning the question or problem often formulated by social psychologists studying say the Holocaust, destructive obedience demonstrated in the Milgram- and the Zimbardo-experiment, and so on; the fact that respected "normal" and social well integrated individuals, often deeply devoted and empathic family men, seemed able to cause pain and terror upon innocent people, men, women and children (for example during the Holocaust), to whom they were by no means engaged in any conflict with, out of one reason: obedience toward a formal authority. Seemingly normal and well integrated individuals *could*, according to this, in fact have developed different personal and psychological "biases" or derivatives of psychological pathologies, not activated under normal circumstances, but becoming operative during specific events, for example conditions where submission to external authorities is demanded, perhaps in addition to circumstances where frustration against or dehumanization of members of other ethnic groups are present, and so on. The consequences of this perspective however, seem rather horrifying. It *could* imply or force us to conclude that there is a killer or perpetrator inside almost every human, waiting for the appropriate moment or situation to manifest itself and turn into action. Though this normally should be considered a rather unrealistic matter, experiences from history, say the recent tragedy concerning elements of ethnic cleaning during the Balkan war, have taught us how fragile the boundary line between normalcy/kindness and cruelty might be, due to specific factors concerning ideological and national conflicts and confrontation.

When making evaluations from the biological standpoint, one should reveal positions or points of view moving into opposite directions considering good versus evil, though not operating on contradictory terms. The fact is, as stressed in part III, genetic and evolutionary determinants lay the foundations for both aggressive and empathic attitudes and behaviours,

---

<sup>108</sup> Of cause this should not imply or itself demonstrate that the Freudian theory, or say Kleins version of it is *correct* or follows logical from the matter in question here, human evil. Other theories may be considered, that be as supplements or alternatives. The crucial point demonstrated here however, is that psychological theory *in itself* is needed concerning the matter in question.

ontologically existing “side by side” as potentials inside the human psyche, each of them taking action under appropriate terms. Both aggression and kindness have evolved through evolution, simply because it has served some vital functions regarding the individual’s survival. For example, aggression has sometimes been successful in ousting rivals concerning food, territory and say mates. On the other hand, kindness and altruism seem necessary in caretaking and upbringing one’s offspring. The point stressed here, however, should be that some sort of innate *potential* for aggression, and under specific social and psychological conditions for evil itself, seem necessary in producing this evil on manifest terms. Operating exclusively under social terms in evaluating or the making of concepts of evil should by no means be regarded adequate.

While drawing the conclusions from this, a number of explicit models including determinants on different levels contributing to say aggressive behaviours, attitudes and so on have been constructed. One significant model developed over the last decades by a number of scholars, should be the so called GAM- or “*General Aggression Model*.”<sup>109</sup> *The GAM is described as a “dynamic, social-cognitive, developmental model that includes situational, individual (personological), and biological variables and provides an integrative framework for domain-specific theories of aggression.”*<sup>110</sup> More specific, it “*is largely based on social learning and social-cognitive theories...*”<sup>111</sup> Note of cause, that this should be an “aggression” model, and not a theory or model of “evil”. However, as asserted before, aggression itself forms a significant or essential part of evil itself, though not being identical to it. The whole point is that these overlapping phenomena has to be considered or understood multi-factorial, and not caused by any single-factor. Further, it seems essential that the elements or dimensions forming part of such models at least includes both personal (psychological) and social factors, and perhaps biological as well.

Focusing exclusively on the social dimension that is, social factors present in specific situation thus seems flawed. Why should individuals react with evil-doing confronted with specific situations? The prejudiced social philosopher would answer: *thoughtlessness*.<sup>112</sup> But what makes the human victim of his own defects concerning cognitive reflection in the first place? Basic psychology unequivocal teaches us that man is not defined, nor explained by cognition alone. On the contrary, it is the *combination* of cognition, behaviour, not least motivation and emotions that possibly gives the best account of what man “is”, at least psychologically speaking. Unfortunately, these social philosophers hardly should be regarded conscious concerning matters that have to do with human psychology. Furthermore, even if cognition itself has to be taken into account, the rather autonomic logic on which terms it operates is to be found on the *abstract* level. As a rather *real* phenomenon, operating in the empirical world, so to say, the meaning attached to it has to be found through a blend with certain behaviours, emotions, motivations and so on, simply because humans as such operate as psychological *integrated* creatures, not as either-or cognitive, social, motivational and so on. The social philosopher’s one dimensional concept of man then, seems doomed to failure. No wonder, this opened up for the (rather peculiar) postulate that for example Eichmann’s cruel misdeeds was mainly due to some lack of cognitive reflection.<sup>113</sup> Svendsen’s formula for avoiding evil then, or rather what seems being of vital importance, typically turns out to be whatever we *choose* to do.<sup>114</sup> Svendsen stresses his point further by asserting that the greatest

---

<sup>109</sup> See Anderson & Carnagey (2004).

<sup>110</sup> Anderson & Carnagey, s.173.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, s. 173.

<sup>112</sup> Note for example Arendt (1963) and Norwegian philosopher L. Fr. H. Svendsen (2010).

<sup>113</sup> See both Arendt (1963) and Svendsen (2010).

<sup>114</sup> This of course fits well with humanistic philosophy and even humanistic psychology, had it not been for the fact that philosophy just is to be considered a matter of meta-theoretical *reflection*, however



problem concerning mankind should not be the surplus of aggression, rather a deficiency concerning *reflection*.<sup>115</sup> I consider Svendsen's formulation: "*Our basic problem isn't a surplus of aggression. Instead it's a lack of reflection*"<sup>116</sup> as rather absurd, at least it suffers from "lack of reflection" itself, precisely because it presupposes dualism, excluding the emotional sphere of human mind, exclusively stressing cognition.

In my opinion, Svendsen also becomes guilty of a rather mistaken use or concept of biology. Quoting Wright who draws a direct link between biology and evil, Svendsen (correctly) asserts that biology itself should be evaluated as direct inconsistent with moral evil. Biology contains no moral values and because of that evil could not be founded in biology. However, in asserting this one has to presuppose biology defined the empirical way so to say, as a direct manifestation of different social and moral issues, here evil, and by doing that fails in using the very concept and object of biology analytically, defining it on both its abstract *and* concrete (empirical) level. As already stated, in my opinion, biology points to certain *potentials* regarding say human aggression and even violence which could be seen as part of the foundation making way for actions, behaviour and ideas which could – or should – be characterized as precise evil. Another important issue concerning this is of course the case of interpreting evil as an essentially *moral* matter, which means it gets its whole meaning out of some specific *values* connected to certain individuals, groups, interests, cultures, and so on, and therefore incapable in giving reference to something objective existing in the real world. This however brings us into the domain of moral philosophy, specially the dispute between *moral emotivism* and *moral realism*. Emotivism stating that all moral judgment could be nothing but expressions of *preferences*, of some kind of attitudes or feelings, while moral realism asserts that moral issues are real phenomena or ingredients of and in the world. All rough I consider evil itself to be real, consisting of a set of specific but conceptual interrelated thoughts, attitudes and behaviours existing in a real world which could be defined and justified by the term "evil", and not just an abstract concept based on preferences, arguments in favour of considering moral phenomena itself as real, seems possible. Note here the mentioned philosophical position of moral realism, which however, I shall not stress further here.<sup>117</sup>

In asserting evil as something real existing in the world, of course makes it possible, as this text tries to demonstrate, to differentiate and again connect it to distinct areas and domains of science, say biology, sociology, psychology, and so on. Svendsen tries to rule out psychology, for example in asserting that by defining evil by some concepts and matters beyond the moral definition itself, say clinical psychology, thereby defining it a natural phenomenon, make us immune concerning guilt and personal responsibility. I cannot approve to this argumentation. Acknowledging that something is real, for example as causes and effects, independent of ourselves does not excuse us from personal responsibility. The scientist searches for external causes and makes no moral judgement, for example in revealing how the Holocaust became possible, but this does not acquit the executioners of the Holocaust of responsibility. Svendsen's, in my opinion efforts to rule out psychology as well as say biology, then hardly succeed. Generally, Svendsen's position should perhaps be characterized by the philosophical concepts of *empiricism* and *dualism*. Empirical because he exclusively

---

important that be, and not a science revealing human psychology in itself and in addition, that humanistic psychology should be considered more an *ideological* matter than say scientific giving systematic insight.

<sup>115</sup> For further arguments against Svendsen's position here, note Vetlesen (2003). This text is being introduced in Norwegian.

<sup>116</sup> Svendsen, p. 232.

<sup>117</sup> For an outline concerning "moral realism" and philosophical objections to it, note for example McNaughton (1988) and Shafer-Landau (2003).

defines say biology as a direct manifestation in connection to evil, and not as some potential making it possible or manifest on one among different terms. Dualistic because he exclusively sticks to this level of empirical manifestation, ruling out the abstract status of every concept and matter itself, that being psychology, at least the domain of emotions, or biology, a status that overall gives information concerning the potentials of the matter in question, though perhaps not exactly its status as manifestation in different situations.

Much the same critic could be raised against other scholars dealing with the subject of evil, for example Michael Horne.<sup>118</sup> Horne asserts, among other things, that evil acts begin (!) when people make rather semiotic assertions concerning the “naturalness” of their own acts and the correspondingly “unnaturalness” of the acts of others. The whole matter than seems to grow out of a certain semiotic evaluation of a situation, making us forced to talk of evil acts, not of evil people.

The same kind of dualism seems inherent in a variety of literature and reports from philosophers and scholars of different kind in recent years. For example, Claudia Card<sup>119</sup> asserting that one should not focus so much on the psychological states of evildoers, but by the seriousness of the harm that is done. However, she is right in stating that most evildoers are not sadistic characters, rather negligent or unscrupulous. The point here, of course, should be that personal qualities like these should be highly associated with precisely psychological states, all though not sadism. The problem of cause seems to be a failure in integrating psychological and situational factors of different kinds. Card's theory of negligent characters perhaps may be associated with Arendt's concept of “banality evil” with the case of Eichmann in mind.

I shall return to that matter later in connecting it to a psychological concept, introduced in this text earlier and in my eyes of utmost importance for the understanding of evil, namely *empathy*, or rather the very absence of it.

The situation-person controversy however, seems to harbour further implications. Recently, the matter of *terrorism*, supplied with psychological explanations, has been of current interest. The very *phenomenon* of terrorism of course is not of a new kind. It can be traced back as far as to the first century. Modern terrorism however, should not be considered a homogenous group of characters. On the contrary, different background, motives, personalities, political sympathies seem involved. This of course makes it a more difficult case to trace it down and explain it, say psychologically.

The reason here for dealing with terrorism and the efforts of connecting it to evil, is of course the direct content of the terror act itself, namely an urge to kill innocent people in numbers. This of course spontaneously gives associations to unscrupulous even sadistic characters whose only mission in life seem to be destroying and killing as many innocents as possible. Or at least, persons who commit terror act must be deeply pathological, qualified for serious psychiatric diagnoses, say antisocial personality disorder, psychosis, schizophrenia, aggressive paranoia, and so on. However, investigations regarding terrorists mind and motives reveal a rather different picture. The latest research suggests for example that the vast majority of terrorists should not be regarded mentally ill, but rather essentially rational people who “*weight the costs and benefits of terrorist acts, concluding that terrorism is profitable*”<sup>120</sup>. The matter in question here, however, should be that these calculations have value only in particular social contexts. Specific kinds of group dynamics play a powerful role in convincing specific individuals in using extreme violence in fulfilling their goals according

---

<sup>118</sup> Note M. Horne (2008)

<sup>119</sup> C. Card (2002).

<sup>120</sup> Schaefer (2007), p. 74.

to Schaefer. This of cause is often mixed up with personal factors, for example feeling of belonging to a powerful group executing empowerment. The motive of revenge for past wrongs and unfairness also seems present. Note however, that the case here should be that psychological explanations seem prominent only that we are not talking of individual pathological states but normal social psychological ones. This underscores or stresses at least two significant factors or arguments: 1) At least a majority of the characters engaged in terror acts show mostly normal psychological reactions and motives and 2) the causes and explanations of terrorism is mainly to be found in social and situational circumstances, rather than in personal deficiencies. But in this way making terrorism a rather normal, nor say “ordinary” phenomenon, in many respect undermines the idea of terrorism as something deeply pathological connected to specific evil characters or groups. The motives for being included in a social group supplying its members with genuine care and the feeling of belonging to someone, something to believe in, authorities as objects of admiration and even power, should of cause not necessary be considered pathological, not even uncommon.

Some empirical research, for example interviews, has been done regarding the psychological condition among some potential suicide bombers and people who had actually committed terrorist attacks, both religious and political extremists. None of these studies has confirmed the hypothesis that terrorists should be mentally disturbed and qualified for any psychiatric diagnosis, say antisocial personality disorder. According to Schaefer concluded an expert committee on the psychological causes of terrorism in 2005 that individual psychopathology was insufficient to explain terrorism. In fact, it was reported, terrorist leaders typically screen out such people from their organisation because their instability would make them unpredictable and therefore dangerous or at least difficult to control. The most striking feature concerning the terrorists’ character seems to be their rationally calculating mind.<sup>121</sup> According to these studies, religious or political fanaticism here fits well with rational calculating minds and the absence of mental disorders. More specific data revealed that a great many of this characters came from caring, intact, even middleclass families, where well educated and had gone to college. Further, mostly were far from poor, socially isolated, unstable and brainwashed. What should this tell us? Perhaps nothing else than the fact that we will have to look for other explanations. The big question is where to find it. As already reflected on throughout the text, this makes the most urgent matter in question. I have made a strong case for the argument that factors and determinants along different logical dimensions should be regarded significant, that be biological, psychological and social. However, considering this, my specific point of view here is that principally it is exactly the *combination* of these factors or dimensions that offers some basic explanations concerning the matter of evil, which I consider terrorism to be a demonstration of.

As asserted through the text, the significant factor or dimension of biology should not itself be regarded as some direct or potential reflections of evil. On the contrary it is precisely the combination of biological factors, for example any genetic inclination to aggressive reactions and behaviours, and say certain psychological and social circumstances that make way for what in certain situations should be characterized as evil or evildoing. Resent studies however, has mainly focused on two apparently separated factors: The absence of individual psychiatric pathology and certain social factors, like the social milieu, membership in specific radical groups exerting heavy influence over its members and so on. Surely this represents no mistake or dead end. Social factors seem significant in understanding evildoing, not least terrorism. A growing number of researchers seem to conclude that terrorism is best understood from the standpoint of group psychology. It is exclusively through the

---

<sup>121</sup> An interesting question regarding this is of cause to what extent being possessed by a rationally calculating mind by any logic should rule out any psychiatric diagnosis itself.

membership of a social group the rational calculus of terrorist acts makes sense because the benefits of it are those of the group, not the individual. The rationale of this is of course a willingness to subordinate an individual identity to a collective one. The collective interests, meaning fighting for something sacred, are normally placed before individual ones. The role of charismatic leaders is of course significant too. Suffering trauma during some occupation should also be considered a significant factor. Psychologist John Horgan, an expert on terrorism, emphasizes the importance of group processes but at the same time underscores the seemingly fact that no single factor or cause explains terror.<sup>122</sup> So being member of a rather fanatic group, with charismatic leaders, being possessed with a strong feeling of injustice having been done against your people or social group and otherwise felt alone and powerless, make way for a possible career as terrorist. However this social dynamics is often seen in the recruiting to extreme political groups in general who not necessarily are in purpose of doing terror or even talk of or consider it. Interview with members and ex-members of such groups often reveal reflection and insight of high standard. I suppose one could get results like these by doing research on say war criminals and executioners through modern history. However, focusing on the *moral* sphere of these characters doings may reveal a quite different picture. They may score well on scales measuring psychological normalcy, but perhaps make poor on scales measuring moral standards. It is precisely this point of view I wish to focus in the text, namely some significant psychological parameters underlying moral consciousness and manners. I shall return to that matter in the final conclusion. However, when confronting terrorists or defenders of terrorism with the moral matter, they will probably assert that they are acting out of highest moral principles. There is no reason for call such confessions in question. They surely believe they are acting morally, referring to some higher order truth, liberation of the repressed, the hope for a better world, and so on. In my opinion, however, this is well on the way in confusing moral with *idealism*. For example, referring to some truths of higher order, that be religious or political, says nothing concerning the specific moral in these truths. In fact they could turn out deeply immoral in merely attending to the interest of a specific group. They may say they act out of moral, but just on the behalf of their own group. Perhaps the demand for justice for one's own group goes hand in hand with *injustice* regarding members of other groups. In fact this seems to be quite the case with terrorism aimed at pursuing the interest of some repressed group, their tool in restoring justice consisting of killing innocent people. Identifying this as proper moral is of course confusing *revenge* with moral. However, it is possible to go on asserting that this is truly moral, more specially following the rule "purpose justifies the means", being interpreted as some sort of an utilitarian principle or ethics. But this principle should just make valid *within* a group, counting costs and benefit, *not* through the relationship between say two different groups, cultures, nations, etc. In *that* case a proper description perhaps instead should be *chauvinism*. The problem then with doing terrorism, regarding moral, even when we acknowledge the terrorist good unselfish intentions is, in my opinion, that moral is mixed up with *idealism*. A moral that just account within and for the benefit of one's own group, should hardly be considered moral, simply because of the lack of being *universal*. A moral law saying you should not kill is moral by virtue of being universal, not by solely referring to your own social or ethnic group, family, etc.

The problem with or case for moral is, however, not just some cognitive-philosophical formulations or principles, but a whole range of specific attitudes coming into work through different situations humans are confronted with, that being of a small- as well as large scale, from daily meetings to cultural conflicts. Moral appears when subjects seem capable of

---

<sup>122</sup> Horgan, 2005.

consistently follow say ethic and moral paroles of kindness, respect and consideration against others without regard to specific interests and consequences, that being of a personal, cultural, ethnic or say political kind. Considering evil, it is precisely the absence of such consistency that makes way for immorality, and perhaps ultimately in large scale evil like genocide and the Holocaust. The problem thus, as earlier asserted, is not sadistic individuals doing evil all day long, but that certain individuals don't possess the human (and perhaps psychological) qualities for consequently acting out morally, no matter the consequences, interests or social pressure of different kind. It is precisely that kind of personal and psychological capabilities that are in question in regarding the matter of respectively doing or dissociating oneself from different kind of evil, that being terrorism, genocide and so on. The point here is that we should not look for psychiatric pathology in revealing motives for terrorism and other evil doing that modern research to a great extent has focused on and subsequently turned down. It may well be the case that, say terrorists generally are not qualified for any psychiatric diagnosis. But what kind of character would blow up totally innocent people, even children, with whom they have no conflict or controversies. Surely distorted idealism, repression and social pressure explain a lot, but in my opinion, by far everything. Because, besides from focusing on external factors and kind of pressure, one will have to consider what's going on in one's mind, one's conscience, inhibitions, and so on, against harming and destroying innocent people not unlike one's own dear ones, relatives and family members. The significant psychological factor in question is of course the mechanism of *empathy*. What is it then with empathy, making it such a crucial factor? Remember the reference to empathy in part III regarding for example the Holocaust and the Eichmann case. There seem to be a significant parallel here to the subject of terrorism, where the asserted absence of say sadism and psychiatric pathology in executing evil appeared significant. Note further the reference to biological factors, special regarding the hyper-actual research on the so called "mirror neurons". The very point, as already asserted, seems to be that biological mechanisms, like these neurons, probably form some sort of basis for an empathic mind being able to act out of sympathy and for the benefit of fellow human beings. Note however that mirror neurons should not be considered empathy itself, though recent research indicate or has in some cases revealed a rather immediate connection between perceptual stimuli and even strong and direct symptoms of empathy. The point regarding humans is however that the overt manifestation of empathy grows out of our development and experiences as psychological and social creatures.<sup>123</sup>

Besides mirror neurons then, there exist other rather natural mechanisms operating upon and within the human. Of course, evolutionary psychology appears significant. Another more specific matter or explanation grows out of developmental psychology. Different scholars have stressed the existence of an original and autonomous developmental line of empathy. Of special relevance here is the theory of Martin Hoffman.<sup>124</sup> The theory is biological based, asserting that humans are born with the capacity for affective reactions to other living creatures' emotional condition. He has proposed a model of age related changes in empathy running through four basic stages, the first stage starting even during the first year of life.<sup>125</sup> Hoffman names this stage "global empathy" and its characteristics appear to be the baby's reaction of stress when being witness to for example another baby's crying. However, what remains a bit unclear here, is whether the baby's reaction is of one's own stress or of real empathy for the others discomfort. Maybe this remains a matter of interpretation. Anyway it seems complicated to conclude or reveal that the toddler should be capable of showing real

---

<sup>123</sup> Note here of course the close relationship between the concept of empathy and those of "sympathy", "altruism" and "prosocial behavior", though not describing exactly identical phenomena.

<sup>124</sup> See Hoffman (1982), (1984), (1985). Note also Eisenberg & Fabes (1991).

<sup>125</sup> The assertion, that children show empathy during the first year of life, may however be disputed.

empathy for another person at this stage since it seems obvious that he or she is not capable of differentiating between oneself and other persons and conceptualizing them as autonomous. In other words, the baby has not yet reached the stadium of person- or object-permanence. The next stage, appearing round the age of 12 months, the child now seems able in differentiating itself and others, but where reactions of strong discomfort or distaste by others stress reactions is followed by efforts to assist and comfort them in different ways, for example by offering the other one's own toy, etc. The helping behaviour, however, seems *egocentric* in that children seem to help in ways that are likely to diminish their own distress. In the next stage, from 2 – 3 years and through the early years in school, the child develops the ability to take others perspectives, leaving behind its egocentricity. The reactions to others distress now seem determined by the *others* condition and internal states and not one's own reactions to it. These reactions now are more appropriate and responsive to *others* particular needs. Finally, in late childhood, children develop a more mature comprehension of the others condition as such, beyond the immediate stress and discomfort it may suffer in the situation and realize that the general condition of others, beyond occasional incidentally distress is of a more serious kind. This in fact might be seen as parallel to the final stage in Piaget's theory regarding the cognitive development, the "formal operational stage" where thoughts and reflection are made general and hypothetical, not restricted to concrete situations. The consequence of this should be that the individual now are able to experience empathy in its most complete form, as general affective reactions to poorness, illness and other more chronic phenomena and conditions.

In addition to this, recent research of cause has focused on evolutionary explanations regarding aggression and violence as well as empathy. In part III the importance of genes and evolution in association to aggression and violence was stressed. The importance of such explanations regarding behaviour antagonistic to this, like empathy, caring and activities of helping fellow humans, however, also seem prominent. There should not exist any contradiction in realizing that humans may – simultaneously and even connected to the same individuals – harbour the whole spectre of these qualities, from aggression to empathy, though not equally distributed in every single human. Connected to this, two main factors seem obvious. In the first place, humanity itself could not possibly survived through history without empathic capabilities and capacities in humans, for example regarding care for newborn members of any society or group. The issue here of cause is of cause that caring and upbringing should not be regarded exclusively instrumental, but as their own emotional objective. Second, it seems plausible that mankind, from prehistoric times had to posit both the capabilities of doing aggressive warfare *and* being able to show empathic emotions towards their relatives, offspring and the neighbor next door for the sake of survival. Without being able to fight for food, supply and territory and without establishing tight and strong positive emotions between members of your own group, no individual could positively have survived the very realities confronting primitive man.

It seems then we are controlled by antagonistic mental capabilities, perhaps each often and metaphorically formulated, fighting to get the upper hand of the other. Objectively then, one should assume that normally both instances are operating within the human psyche, but perhaps on different terms. There are however, certain complications concerning the concept and object of empathy itself. First, we took for granted the prevailing positive emotional definition of it, pointing at the affective concern for the personal condition of others. However, the point here should be that this constitutes precisely the emotional defined part of it. In addition to this, some have stressed that empathy should not be consider an exclusively positive matter. If some definition of empathy might be getting into the mind and feelings of the other person, in other words a matter of attaining insight, then it seems obvious that it

could be used as a tool for misuse, for example in manipulating the other. Anyway, having this sensitive information put you in a position where you can use it for good or bad. Heinz Kohut, for example has asserted that many of the Nazi interrogators were indeed highly empathic, out of being experts in reading mind and feelings of their victims, then of cause using it for bad purposes.<sup>126</sup> One should note here that this perspective on empathy sticks more or less to a *cognitive* definition of the concept. A cognitive view regarding empathy has been stressed in connection to different traditions within psychology, for example within the field of social psychology dealing with role theory and the abilities to identify with others by entering into their feelings and thoughts. This opens up for the subjects ability to show respect to other persons and in accordance with this to regulate ones' own behavior. In other words, it seems a matter of *realizing* or acknowledgement out of cognitive capacities. The concept of "social intelligence" should be proper here. In recent years, however, the *emotional* side of empathy has caught attention, largely due to a growing interest in and focus on ethics and morality. Empathy based on readings in ethics and moral, where scholars for example are trying to explain man's capabilities for moral reflection and acting as based on empathic responses, surely focus on, not just the attention to others needs, stresses and suffering, but combined with a concern for the aiming at easing the other's suffering. Surely, this complicates the matter of empathy a bit and in turn contributes to confusions regarding the very essence of the concept. However, when reflecting on some assumed ancient origins concerning the concept's subject matter, one will find there existing a strong case for the emotional interpretation itself. The evolutionary hypothesis, presupposing that the capacities for empathy are built-in in the genes and contribute to the survival of the species, points directly to the fact that it is precisely the empathic *caring* for other humans, based on precisely an emotional sensitivity of that other's needs, possible suffering and distress, that constitute the very essence of empathy. Reflections on for example the developmental concept of empathy, exemplified by Hoffman's theory, point in the same direction. The child's growing capacity for empathic attitudes and behavior, states clearly that what is in business is an emotional care for other person's needs and condition. One significant question should for example be weather the hypothesis regarding genes and evolution could be combined or at least be consistent with the developmental perspective. Of cause, one could assert that questions and perspectives concerning development could be turned into the direction of culture, milieu, learning and social ideology. In my opinion, learning and social reinforcement becomes significant, but not as manifestations of purely isolated or autonomous processes or logics. Being able to social reinforce or cultivate some specific qualities in man should logically imply an existing potential *inside* man from the point of departure, simply because you cannot *reinforce* something non-existence from the very start.

Another significant matter regarding the cognitive and emotional side of empathy is the related concepts of *altruism* and *pro-social* behavior. These concepts refer mainly to behavioral dimensions or consequences of empathic feelings and attitudes. Usually they have been interpreted as by far identical. However, there exists a certain nuance here. Altruism means something like "love thy neighbor" principle carried out in practice, meaning helping others without the benefit for oneself. In other words: out of (empathic) concern for the other. It looks as if there exists some guarantee here that altruism not exclusively refers to a certain kind of behavior, leaving the very (psychological) motive out. Pro-social behavior on the other hand, refers exclusively to behavior. The point should be that identical behavior may grow out of different motives. Engaging in pro-social activities then, doesn't mean that one's motives are altruistic, say empathic. On the contrary, they could be largely *selfish*. Precisely this has been stressed by evolutionary psychology. In their concept, empathy and altruism, in

---

<sup>126</sup> Se Restak (2006).

turn are leading to variants of pro-social behavior in the service of survival. To mechanisms guarantees this, namely *kin selection* and *reciprocal altruism*. *Kin selection* refers to altruism as a strategy in securing our genes will survive in the future, through our successors, making us disposed to help relatives close to us bearing the same genes. *Reciprocal altruism* on the other hand states that people seems more likely to help each other when frequent contact is expected in the future, simply because one then should expect this generosity will later be repayed. A third hypothesis, however, could be added, namely so called *reputation theory*, saying that it generally should turn out advantageous and to one's own benefit to establish a reputation for benevolence through the systematic use of good altruistic deeds, the aim being to enhance one's own image and status among significant people on whom one depend on and whose help and support one probably will need in the future. However, this reference to evolution and genes, by far deals with processes and qualities behind our conscious control. Besides this one can image a multitude of selfish motives and interests underlying overt pro-social and helpful behavior, some of them may even turn out to be of a rather dubious and in the long run even destructive kind.<sup>127</sup>

Pro-social behavior too, precisely as empathy, has been explained out of developmental psychology. Nancy Eisenberg<sup>128</sup> has constructed a stage model concerning the development of the pro-social mind. Here it becomes obvious how a rather mature attitude concerning pro-sociality grows out of rather selfish motives or concepts. According to Eisenberg, just gradually and later through development the child becomes capable of mature pro-social behavior, that is, behavior basically aimed at helping and supporting other individuals and not motivated by selfish interests. In other words: when pro-social behavior matches real empathic attitudes and emotions. According to Eisenberg, this stage does not occur or becomes dominant before the age of approximately thirteen/fourteen. Before that, the child's perspective regarding pro-social acts are by nature restricted within the frames of its own egocentric perspective, meaning no being capable of consequently taking the perspective of others. Mature pro-social capabilities imply the power of orientation towards the needs and conditions of precisely others and besides, the internalization of universal norms and ideals expressing respect for other individual's rights, dignity and equality of status. One should note here that Eisenberg's concept of pro-sociality shows as not identical to empathy, thus underscoring my point regarding the possibility of pro-social acts containing quite different and perhaps also antagonistic motives. According to Eisenberg, "real" empathy occurs not before teenage, while Hoffman's theory regarding the development of empathy operates with a concept of empathy occurring during the first year of life. This discrepancy however is due to the fact that they operate with different and even logically distinct conceptions of empathy, where Hoffman is dealing with the very development of it from rudimentary to more mature forms while Eisenberg exclusively operates with or presupposes it a rather mature stage itself.

Anyway, this should tell us that phenomena like altruism, pro-sociality and empathy represent certain capacities in man, irrespectively of if they being regarded as originated in say biology or psychology. However, in my opinion biology generally has to be included or taken for granted, simply because we from the beginning or at the moment of birth so to say are or exist *as* biological creatures. From birth and hereafter it is the interaction between biology and milieu that becomes significant. As already asserted, man inherits capacities for both empathic and evil or destructive manners and impulses, but it is each individual's unique experiences through socialization that by far determines what kind of person one becomes,

---

<sup>127</sup> Imagine for example systematic helpful behavior in the purpose of making the recipient helpless and totally dependent of the helper, out of a motive to control and manipulate him/her, a behavior one will positively associate with the personality of psychopaths. This possibly brings us to some kind of doctrine like "helping in the service of evil".

<sup>128</sup> Eisenberg, 1982, 1986. Eisenberg et al., 1983. Eisenberg & Fabes, 1991.



that be of the more altruistic/empathic or evil kind. Of course, generally most individuals fortunately come down on the empathic side. There exists however, certain complications to this, precisely growing out of the fact that neither empathy nor evil turn out plain and unequivocal in certain individuals. In fact, analysis and observations often reveal that both empathic and more suspicious properties seem able to manifest itself, precisely not out of variations regarding person to person, but out of variations in the very social situation, that be of a group-dynamic or broader cultural, political or ideological kind. Still we will have to keep in mind the significance of personal matter, they being psychological or/and biological.

According to this there appears to be certain significant problems concerning the presence empathic capacities in man, having to do with its co-existence with other more destructive tendencies and forces operating within the psyche. A rather disturbing fact associated with this is the earlier observation of how individuals who apparently seemed capable of committing the worst misdeeds and atrocities against complete innocent and defenseless humans, at the same time could show warm, empathic traits of genuinely caring for others, for example family members, friends, colleges, and so on. How should this be explained? It is of course important to have in mind that evil manifests itself in a number of different ways. Of course one can find the bare sadist finding pleasure in hurting and torturing innocent people. However, more common is the torturer who just does his work and in the evening returns to his family and into the role as say empathic father and husband. Another and more important category is the mere bureaucrat who exclusively unfold himself as, say an administrator of a death camp or the whole “solution” of eliminating certain ethnic groups. Here we are dealing with problems like the Eichmann case.<sup>129</sup> Surely philosophers who make efforts to interpret or analyze Eichmann on exclusively philosophical grounds fail. As asserted in part III, it was mainly the lack of including psychological and motivational parameters in the analysis that led to, at best, an incomplete understanding. By sticking to definitions or characterizations of Eichmann’s conduct as “banality” or “thoughtlessness”, the whole matter in my opinion, became shrouded. But how should “thoughtlessness” be understood here? What does it mean being thoughtless in a situation when you willingly, by administrative procedures send millions of people to a certain death? Perhaps, in everyday speech one would say Eichmann lacked *conscience*. This in my opinion, in spite of everything, gets closer to the matter. Talking of “thoughtlessness” focuses exclusively on the *cognitive* side of human psychology. It seems obvious that this rather narrow focus should be wrong concerning the matter in question. What if Eichmann had not been thoughtless, but, on the contrary, most reflected? What difference would that had done? Surely you can reflect upon something being wrong, but still commit it. Research in social psychology has revealed that *knowing* what is wrong, and even teaching others, say your own children, what is wrong, doesn’t automatic lead to evading wrongdoing. Different motivations operating within different social contexts of course contribute in determining the manifest conduct appearing. Furthermore, and this in fact turns out even more disturbing: The very *perception* or *interpretation* of what is right and what is wrong sometimes change dramatically from one single situation or context to another. Let’s first start with a rather unimportant example. Usually we react with greater affection and a conviction that injustice has been made when someone close related to us are affected. Anyway, witnessing a conflict between say acquaintances and a complete stranger to us all but automatically do justice to the former. This follows from the fact that we simply don’t exist as exclusively cognitive creatures, but emotional too, which in turn leads to the consequence that our emotional attachment to those closely related to us to a great extent determines our cognitive perception of what (and who) is right and respectively wrong. This asymmetry regarding the perception of right and wrong, of what is to be considered moral and

---

<sup>129</sup> Note the earlier discussion of the Eichmann case in part II and III.

not, however gets problematic when, say, questions of life and death are inflicted. A rather basic assumption regarding moral or moral principles is that they define themselves *universal*, meaning they are or *must* be valid behind or across circumstances, interests, political and historical changes, and so on. Recall Kant's categorical imperative. "Thou shall not kill" existing as a moral law precisely out of its universality, meaning that it has to be considered binding and guiding for every significant situation where killing other people in one way or another becomes current or pushing.

The matter in question now is precisely the opposite of some variant of a black and white or either-or approach. Concerning evil, the focus should not be on sadistic individuals finding pleasure in torturing others, contrasted with a huge majority of normal people exclusively preoccupied with altruism and empathy. Instead the focus should be that of a totality, meaning that all relevant parameters and nuances becomes relevant regarding the analysis and evaluation of evil. As already asserted, generally each individual should be considered the bearer of both altruistic/empathic and more destructive properties, though rough distributed on individual basis. Most people, if not everybody, perhaps hold the capacity of both right and wrong, to a certain extent dependent of the social contexts they take part in. It seems like this factor itself contributes to the complexity when say evil itself enters the arena or comes into question. There are further complicating factors working within such a scenario. Have in mind the more recent definition of *xenophobia* accounted for in part II and III, defined as our perhaps *inborn* tendency in roughly dividing people into to broad categories of "us" and "them".<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, social, cultural, political and ideological issues of cause also come into account. Not surprisingly, these factors or parameters of cause are operating on moral terms or at least holds moral and ethic complications. Social contingences then, become significant as some sort of a framework so to say for both psychological and biological parameters. Or more specific: social contingences *together with* psychological and biological ones make a specific kind of constellation explaining the manifestation of both historical and recent properties of the matter in question, evil. So far so good, but this further confronts us with huge difficulties. The multi-factorial accounts regarding the very matter of evil bring us into a position where plain definitions and questions regarding causes apparently become unclear and diffuse. This however is due to the very fact that no single determining factor is operating autonomously within the context of matter. We are, as asserted through the text, faced with a multi-causality forcing us to make analysis on different conceptual grounds or levels, abstract as well as manifest ones. This ends up in some kind of a two-piece form: an analysis of the very substances in question, psychology, biology, social factors and metatheoretical definitions and, second, their very reciprocal manifestations, through different combinations due to the situation in question. In my opinion, this makes a starting point in understanding the many rather confusing faces of both moral, empathy, altruism and evil, and not at least: why these apparently contradictory matters often seem to appear simultaneously, even inside the same person or individual.

Finally, this brings us back to the Eichmann case. My assertion was that the "thoughtlessness" hypothesis failed, mainly because it solely sticks to the cognitive dimension in man. Dealing with moral and evil, however could positively not have been done without considering emotional aspects. Note here for example that postulating a "lack of emotional feelings", say human conscience, implies precisely that emotional parameters are taken into account, not the opposite. That's why I would assert that the rather everyday doctrine of "lack of conscience is more precise than the philosophical doctrine of "non-reflection". Perhaps Eichmann, behind his desk, did not reflect on the thousands by thousands of individuals he sent to death. But even if he had, it is not obvious that this would have made him act or feel

---

<sup>130</sup> For the empirical testing of this hypothesis, note the IAT test accounted for in part III.

quite different regarding innocent people's death, not say his own responsibility in it. The lack of mobilizing emotional feelings concerning the case may not qualify for a psychiatric diagnosis, but surely, in my opinion, involves an (emotional) flaw in the character. Besides, the idea or statement that Eichmann was considered rather normal according to psychiatric logic, must be considered a myth. More recent research has revealed that the results of psychological tests of Eichmann demonstrated emotional instability, strong and pathological aggressive impulses, even sadism, and rather instability in close relations.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, it also seems to be something of a myth that Eichmann himself was not an anti-Semite. On the contrary it has been documented that he held some rather aggressive attitudes against the Jews.

Then, are we forced back to the perspective of the isolated psychopath doing evil for the sake of his own pleasure? Not necessarily. The point here is precisely to demonstrate that evil, especially in its most extensive and grotesque forms and variants, is to be found in conditions somewhere between the normal and pathological individual. Of course, that does not constitute the whole story. One may argue that the most insane sadist will do evil on every occasion. According to my arguments however, that's not the real problem. What *is* the big problem is, as indicated by different scholars, precisely *ordinary* people doing evil. I would consider this a syndrome itself. What history has told us is that large scale evilness has been executed by large groups of ordinary men or people operating precisely on group basis. Note here the explanation of the dynamic forces rooted in especially two distinct factors or parameters: The logic of group identity and xenophobia, or established fear for strangers or strange groups. These factors mixed together in situations where role expectations are settled or work in the direction of reinforcing these basic forces may then be fatal. Another significant factor here appears to be the ideological leadership dictating the norms and moral operating under the specific prevailing political circumstances. Note that this may be valid for examples like both Zimbardo's prison experiment and say totalitarian systems like the Nazi as well as the Stalin regime, both built on among other things, mass murder. Some substantial factor however comes significant. Frequently a comparison has been made between the Zimbardo and the Milgram experiment. In my opinion however, this should be considered a mistake and built on a misinterpretation of the logic behind and the results of the two studies. Note here the ingredients of the model outlined through this text. First, it is necessary to bring in individualistic perspectives based on as well biology as psychology. Concerning psychology, it is possible to consider more psychodynamic factors like *drives* and *conflicts*, say following the logic of Klein and other theorists of object relations. Second, several biological parameters have to be considered, for example dispositions for *aggression* and *anti social behavior* associated with *brain structures*, *hormones* and *genes*. Regarding genes, recent research has put stress on *evolution*, and specifically factors like altruism and empathy, but also qualities of the quite different kind, say aggression, egoism and dominance, all in their own way working in the service of survival regarding the individual, the group and/or one's own genes. Additionally, one has to include specific biological, perhaps evolutionary developed mechanisms like *mirror neurons* and inborn *xenophobia*. Finally, factors like *group identity*, *group selection* and *group chauvinism* often seem crucial, specially under conditions where evil at large scale are current, say ethnic cleaning, Holocaust, and so on. The same goes for *political* and *ideological* terms systematically pursuing anti-moral and barbaric ideas and demands, for example dehumanizing members of other ethnic groups. The point here, in my opinion, is precisely that these factors or parameters are operating on different terms and specially concerning their presence or not in different settings, say in the Zimbardo contra the Milgram study. Apparently, a majority of the participants in the Milgram study felt

---

<sup>131</sup> Vetlesen, 2003.

uncomfortable and showed stress symptoms when being forced to give electric shock, yet doing it just under the influence of a scientific and not ideological authority. On the other hand, the Zimbardo study took place under conditions where participants were expected to play out particular roles based on authority, repression and even brutality, revealing certain brutal, even sadistic traits of characters in each or many of them. Of significant importance is of course also the presence of *group mentality* and *group anonymity* in this setting. Regarding the Milgram study, the symptoms of stress may indirectly indicate basic empathic feelings concerning the expected suffering of the participants. However, it may also be interpreted as a result of anxiety for breaking fundamental rules of a humanistic and democratic society, namely hurting or bringing discomfort upon innocent people. In the Zimbardo study, on the contrary, no such signs of at least some hypothetical empathy seem apparent. Some interesting element here should be that the personal status of the participants in the Zimbardo experiment, given the role of prison guards and often exhibiting significant brutality and even sadism, was that of a normal, harmonious, peaceful, kind person. Persons with possible psychiatric deviations had been screened out before the experiment started. Then one has to assume that this was characters capable of empathy and altruism in advance. This of course underscores the argument that both empathic structures as more aggressive ones are to be found within the (same individual) human psyche, stressing the fact that the human mind may seem ambiguous and equivocal.

This of course leads to the conclusion that at least the Milgram study should not be turned to account for explaining say the Holocaust or “ordinary men” doing evil, for example ethnic cleaning, genocide, etc. There is however another message existing here, that makes way for some further interpretations regarding a comparison with the Holocaust. A rather significant ingredient connected to the Holocaust, perhaps crucial for the very accomplishment of the whole grotesque project, is the process of *de-humanizing* of the victims, in this case the Jews as an ethnic group. Mechanisms like this seem absent in the Milgram study. In the Zimbardo study however, such elements should be considered part of the case, at least to some extent. Making a design with one group positioned superior to another, probably make room for it, though of course not to be compared with the Holocaust or incidents of ethnic cleaning. Another factor implicated in the Zimbardo study, at least more obvious in regard to Milgram, is the apparently move toward hiding in the anonymity of the crowd, probably making more room for breaking rules and norms regarding decency and respect towards fellow humans. Besides, both the Milgram study and other field studies revealed that *nearness* to the (individual) victim is of significant importance in regards to treating them on human or decent terms. This also reveals that empathy and altruism by itself in most cases has to be considered present in most humans, at least as inborn capacities. Note for example genetic capacities and the development of mirror neurons reported in the text.

The focus, then, still rests on empathy and up to a point on altruism. How come that well established capacities for empathy don't manifest themselves during some decisive situations and circumstances where such qualities and properties seem essential? Instead precisely opposite attitudes is demonstrated, with of course fatal consequences. The answer is apparently to be found when further analyzing two significant operating factors. First of course, the fact that aggressive and egoistic factors are operating or at least existing as potentials, side by side by the more benign. Next, the social, cultural and ideological circumstances and power relations largely determine or apply pressure to which human qualities will manifest themselves in the different individuals involved. This became evident even through the Zimbardo study where the participants playing guards were instructed to behave “threateningly”.<sup>132</sup> No wonder then, these mechanisms frequently manifest themselves

---

<sup>132</sup> Note Part II.

in real situations where group hate and even ethnic cleaning is on the agenda. It is however, of importance to note that there of cause exist individual differences, as well in psychological profile as distinct patterns of behavior or conduct when confronted with different situations and contexts. There seem to be no logic of strict determinism present, however circumstances that for the most part, as earlier stated, bring pressure on the participants in question.

Regarding Eichmann as well as other characters placed in more or less identical roles, as administrators of mass murder, death camps and often torturers and executioners too, one significant feature reported concerning their personality and way of behaving outside their context of death and murder but within their sphere of family, children, friends and so on, is that empathy, altruism and pro-social behavior is often reported. How could this come? The answer to this may perhaps come rather simple. Empathy clearly exists in these characters. However, it typical exists exclusively within the named spheres, towards their love ones, friends, etc., which implies, when restricted to these human categories, that empathy is not made universal or global, rather restricted and “local”. Psychology of development may inform us that this fact in the next round may indicate a fixation at some premature stage in the natural line of development regarding the very capability of empathy.<sup>133</sup> The same goes for the development of explicit *moral* performance, moving in stages from the more restricted and selfish perspective and motives to universal principles of general validity and obligations, *for* and *to* everybody.<sup>134</sup> Social circumstances, as already stated, of cause are of most important significance here. The most crucial factor operating here, as already stated, is probably the de-humanizing of members of other ethnic or social groups. Being systematically told to believe that these individuals should not be considered proper humans concerning status, personality, feelings, needs and elementary rights, frequently becomes extreme efficient in switching of so to say natural empathic feelings and attitudes. This phenomenon, however, may be experienced under normal circumstances, even serving positive functions. Imagine the world news bringing tragedies and catastrophes constantly into everybody’s home. What if each single case of human suffering experienced through television should trigger the same amount and intensity of empathy as say the suffering of a close relative or friend? That would sooner or later drive us into insanity, or at least serious psychological trouble. Keeping emotional distance to human suffering regarding at least extreme and continual disasters, may be seen as something of a mental defense mechanism in the service of the psyche. However, the drawback concerning this also seems obvious. A more or less totally denial of getting emotionally involved in other humans suffering, how enormous that might be, may create some agenda for not assisting those who are in need of our help and assistance. True altruism involves precisely the motive and will to help, not just those nearest to us, but the complete stranger, without the expectations of getting something back or being repayed later. The very mechanism of not getting involved in human suffering, injustice and harassment however, assumes rather pathological forms when it comes to accepting them as soon as they are being committed against innocent members of say different ethnic group or indeed worse, more or less the very participating in the cruelties itself, while reserving one’s empathic and altruistic qualities and attitudes for members of one’s own clan.

So that appears to be the very problem concerning evil and human agency operating within, not just an objective, but also a *normative* social context, namely the deficiencies in manifesting or make real one owns empathic or altruistic capacities and potentials. Note here that the problem is not that of a more pathological *absence* of empathic or altruistic properties *as such*. Neither is the case that isolated social and situational factors are autonomously

---

<sup>133</sup> Hoffman, op. cit.

<sup>134</sup> Kohlberg, 1984.

operating on their own terms. It is precisely the combination of empathic capacities not being allowed to operate on global terms under critical circumstances and confrontations, making way for more destructive capacities and potentials in man that makes the problem come real.

The very subject of empathy then becomes crucial. Empathy itself appears significant in explaining say sadistic as well as non-sadistic, rather bureaucratic forms of evil, for example affectless administrating genocide and mass-murder/murder in concentration camps, what Hannah Arendt in some respect characterized as “the banality of evil”. It also explains the assertions that apparently few or none pathological and psychiatric symptoms seem present in perpetrators doing evil that be terrorists, guards of concentration camps, administrators of genocide, and so on. Certainly, the absence of identified psychiatric pathology does not rule out psychology.

On the contrary, we finally realize that ruling out psychology and individuality becomes fatal regarding the understanding of evil. Psychology itself thus stands as fundamental concerning an understanding of the sometimes deep senseless cruelties humans are capable of inserting upon each other. However, not a psychology operating solely on its own terms, but rather out of social circumstances and contexts and through interactions where psychology really manifests itself.

## REFERENCES

- Alford, F. C. (1999). A psychoanalytic study of evil. *American Imago*, 56, 1, 27 – 52.
- Alford, F. C. (1999). *What Evil Means to Us*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Anderson, C. A. & Carnagey, N. L. (2004). Violent Evil and The General Aggression Model. In: Miller, A. G. (ed.). *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Arendt, H. (1963). *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking.
- Augsburger, D. W. (2004). *Hate Work. Working Through The Pain and Pleasures of Hate*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
- Baron, A. S. & Banaji, M. R. (2006). The Development of Implicit Attitudes. Evidence of Race Evaluations from Ages 6 and 10 and Adulthood. *Psychological Science*, 17, (1), 53 – 58.
- Bauman, Z. (1989). *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (1993). *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bauman, Z. (1997). *Postmodernity and its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1997). *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty*. New York: Freeman.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1999). The Intrinsic Appeal of Evil. Sadism, Sensational Thrills and Threatened Egotism. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 210 – 221.
- Baumeister, R. F. & Vohs, K. D. (2004). Four Roots of Evil. In: Miller, A. G. (ed.). *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Beck, A. (1999). *Prisoners of Hate. The Cognitive Basis for Anger, Hostility and Violence*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Becker, E. (1968). *The Structure of Evil*. New York: Braziller.
- Becker, E. (1973). *The Denial of Death*. New York: The Free Press.
- Becker, E. (1975). *Escape from Evil*. New York: The Free Press.
- Berkowitz, L. (1999). Evil is more than Banal. Situationism and the Concept of Evil. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 246 – 253.
- Bernstein, R. J. (2002). *Radical Evil. A Philosophical Interrogation*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Brown, R. (1995). *Prejudice. Its Social Psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Buss, D. M. (2004). *Evolutionary Psychology. The New Science of the Mind*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Buss, D. M. (2005). *The Murderer Next Door. Why the Mind is Designed to Kill*. New York: Penguin
- Card, C. (2002). *The Atrocity Paradigm. A Theory of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chiro, D. & McCauley, C. (2006). *Why not Kill Them All? The Logic and Prevention of Mass Political Murder*. Princeton NJ.: Princeton University Press.
- Cole, P. (2006). *The Myth of Evil*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Cooper, T. D. (2007). *Dimensions of Evil*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Darley, J. M. (1999). Methods for the Study of Evil-Doing Actions. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 3, 269 – 275.
- Dews, P. (2008). *The Idea of Evil*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Duntley, J. D. & Buss, D. M. (2004). The Evolution of Evil. In: Miller, A. G. (Ed.). *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Eisenberg, N. (Ed.). (1982). *The Development of Prosocial Behaviour*. New York: Academic Press.
- Eisenberg, N., Lennon, R. & Roth, K. (1983). Prosocial Development. A Longitudinal Study. *Developmental Psychology*, 19, 846 – 855.
- Eisenberg, N. (1986). *Altruistic Emotions, Cognition and Behaviour*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Eisenberg, N. & Fabes, R. A. (1991). Prosocial Behavior and Empathy. A Multimethod Developmental Perspective. In: Clark, M. S. (Ed.). *Prosocial Behavior*. London: Sage Publications.
- Evans, D. (1979). Ernest Becker's Denial of Death and Escape from Evil. *Religious Studies Review*, 5, 25 – 34.
- Fiske, S. T. (1998). Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination. In: Gilbert, D. T., Fiske, S. T. & Lindzey, G. (eds.). *Handbook of Social psychology* (4<sup>th</sup> ed. Vol 2). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Freud, S. (1975/1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.
- Freud, S. (1991/1920). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. London: Penguin Books.
- Freud, S. (1991/1930). *Civilization and its Discontents*. London: Penguin Books.
- Fromm, E. (1964). *The Heart of Man. Its Genius for Good and Evil*. New York: Harper & Row.



- Fromm, E. (1973). *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Galston, R. (1987). The Longest Pleasure. A Psychoanalytic Study of Hatred. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 68, 371 – 378.
- Gazzaniga, M. S. (2005). *The Ethical Brain*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Gilkey, L. (1966). *Shantoung Compound*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Gilligan, J. (1992). *Violence. Our Deadly Epidemic and its Causes*. New York: Grosset/Putnam.
- Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E. & Schwartz, J. K. L. (1998). Measuring Individual Differences in Implicit Cognition. The Implicit Association Test. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 74, 1464 – 1480.
- Hammond, R. A. & Axelrod, R. (2006). The Evolution of Ethnocentrism. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50, 6, 926 – 936.
- Haslam, S. A. & Reicher, S. D. (2005). The Psychology of Tyranny. *Scientific American Mind*, 16, 3, 44 – 51.
- Hillestad, T. M. (2008). Hatets psykologi. In: Hillestad, T. M. *Psykologiske tekster og essays*. Stavanger: Concreto.
- Hobbes, T. (1981/1651). *Leviathan*. London: Penguin Books.
- Hoffman, M. L. (1982). Development of Prosocial Motivation. Empathy and Guilt. In: Eisenberg, N. (ed.). *The Development of Prosocial Behavior*. New York: Academic Press.
- Hoffman, M. L. (1984). Interaction of Affect and Cognition on Emathy. In: Izard, C. E., Kagan, J. & Zajonc, R. B. (Eds.). *Emotions, Cognition and Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoffman, M. L. (1985). Moral Development. In: Bornstein, M. H. & Lamb, M. E. (Eds.). *Developmental Psychology. An Advanced Textbook*. Hillsdale, NJ.: Erlbaum.
- Horgan, J. (2005). *The Psychology of Terrorism*. London: Routledge.
- Horne, M. (2008). Evil Acts not Evil People. Their Characteristics and Contexts. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 53, 669 – 690.
- Izard, C. E., Kagan, J. & Zajonc, R. B. (eds.). *Emotions, Cognition and Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kelman, H. C. (1973). Violence without Moral Restraint. *Journal of Social Issues*, 29, 29 – 61.

- Klein, M. (1975). Love, Guilt and Reparation. In: Money, Kyrle, R. E. (ed.). *The Writings of Melanie Klein, vol.1*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The Psychology of Moral Development. Moral Stages and the Life Cycle. Volume 2*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Krahè, B. (1996). Aggression and Violence in Society. In: Semin, G. R. & Fiedler, K. (eds.). *Applied Social Psychology*. London: Sage Publications.
- Kren, G. M. & Rappoport, L. (1980). *The Holocaust and the Crises of Human Behavior*. New York: Holmes and Meyer.
- Kressel, N. (2002). *Mass Hate*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Lakatos, I. (1970). Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes. I: Lakatos, I. & Musgrave, A. (eds.). *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laudan, L. (1977). *Progress and its Problems. Toward a Theory of Scientific Growth*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McNaughton, D. (1988). *Moral Vision*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Midgley, M. (1979). *Beast and Man. The Roots of Human Nature*. London: Routledge.
- Midgley, M. (1984). *Wickedness. A Philosophical Essay*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral Study of Obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and social Psychology*, 67, 375 – 377.
- Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience and Authority*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Miller, A. G. (ed.) (2004). *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Miller, A. G. (2004). What can the Milgram Obedience Experiments tell us about the Holocaust? In: Miller, A. G. (ed.). *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Nelson, T. D. (2006). *The Psychology of Prejudice*. Boston: Pearson.
- Nelson, T. D. (ed.). (2009). *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Oliner, S. P. & Gunn, J. R. (2007). Manifestations of Radical Evil. Structure and Social Psychology. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 30, 108 – 143.
- Olweus, D. (1994). Bullying at School. Long-term Outcomes for the Victims and an Effective School-Based Intervention Program. In: Huesmann, L. R. (ed.). *Aggressive Behavior. Current Perspectives*. New York: Plenum.

- Phelps, E. A. (2006). Emotion and Cognition. Insights from Studies of the Human Amygdala. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 24, (57), 27 – 53.
- Potts, M. & Hayden, T. (2008). *Sex and War*. Dallas: BenBella Books.
- Quine, W. V. O. (1961). Two Dogmas of Empiricism. I: Quine, W. P. O. *From a Logical Point of View*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Raine, A. (1993). *The Psychopathology of Crime. Criminal Behaviour as a Clinical Disorder*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Raine, A. & Sanmartin, J. (eds.). (2001). *Violence and Psychopathy*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- Restak, R. (2006). *The Naked Brain*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Richeson, J. A. & Trawalter, S. (2008). The Threat of appearing Prejudiced and Racebased Attentional Biases. *Psychological Science*, 19, 98 – 102.
- Rizzolatti, G. & Craighero, L. (2004). The Mirror Neuron System. *Annual Reviews in Neuroscience*, 27, 169 – 192.
- Rutter, M. (2006). *Genes and Behaviour. Nature-Nurture Interplay Explained*. Malden MA: Blackwell.
- Schaefer, A. (2007). Inside the Terrorist Mind. *Scientific American Mind*, 18, (6), 72 – 79.
- Scimecca, J. A. (1996). Humanist Sociological Theory and the Problem of Evil. *Humanity and Society*, 20, (4), 16 – 31.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2003). *Moral Realism. A Defence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sherif, M., Harvey, O. J., White, B. J., Hood, W. E. & Sherif, C. W. (1961). *Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation. The Robber's Cave Experiment*. Norman, Okl: University of Oklahoma Book Exchange.
- Sherif, M. (1966). *In Common Predicament. Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Sontag, S. (2003). *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador.
- Staub, E. (1989). *The Roots of Evil. The Origins of Genocide and other Group Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Staub, E. (1999). The Roots of Evil. Social Conditions, Culture, Personality and Basic Human Needs. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 179 – 192.
- Staub, E. (2003). *The Psychology of Good and Evil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Staub, E. (2004). Basic Human Needs, Altruism, and Aggression. In: Miller, A. G. (ed.). *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Stein, D. J. (2000). The Neurobiology of Evil. Psychiatric Perspectives on Perpetrators. *Ethnicity & Health*, 5, 303 – 315.
- Svendsen, L. Fr. H. (2010). *A Philosophy of Evil*. Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press.
- Tagney, J. P. & Stuewig, J. (2004). A Moral-Emotional Perspective on Evil Persons and Evil Deeds. In: Miller, A. G. (ed.). *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C. (1986). The Social Identity and Intergroup Relations. In: Worchel, S. & Austin, W. G. (eds.). *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Thordsen, S. N. & Sørensen, H. D. (red.) (2008). *Ondskab – et politisk begreb*. Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlaget.
- Toulmin, S. (1953). *The Philosophy of Science*. London: Hutchinson.
- Vetlesen, A. J. (1994). *Perception, Empathy and Judgment*. University Park, PENN: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Vetlesen, A. J. (2003). *Menneskeverd og ondskap*. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- Vetlesen, A. J. (2005). *Evil and Human Agency. Understanding Collective Evildoing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Volkan, V. (1985). The Need to have Enemies and Allies. *Political Psychology*, 6, 2, 219 – 247.
- Wells, R. H. & McFadden, J. (eds.). (2006). *Human Nature*. London: Continuum.
- Winston, R. (2002). *Human Instinct*. London: Bantam Press.
- Wright, R. (1994). *The Moral Animal. The New Science of Evolutionary Psychology*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Young-Bruehl, E. (1996). *The Anatomy of Prejudices*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (1995). The Psychology of Evil. A Situationist Perspective on Recruiting Good People to engage in Anti-social Acts. *Research in Social Psychology*, 11, 125 – 133.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (2004). A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil. In: Miller, A. G. (ed.). *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (2007). *The Lucifer Effect. How Good People Turn Evil*. London: Rider.



4036 Stavanger  
Tel.: +47 51 83 10 00  
Fax.: +47 51 83 10 50  
E-mail: [post@uis.no](mailto:post@uis.no)  
[www.uis.no](http://www.uis.no)

ISBN 978-82-7644-588-6  
ISSN 0806-7031

2014 nr. 46: Kjersti Ørvik: Velferdsteknologi: En studie av holdninger /oppfatninger om bruk av velferdsteknologi for unge med nedsatt funksjonsevne i eller på vei til egen bolig

2014 nr. 45: Anne Nevøy og Stein Erik Ohna: «Spesialundervisning – bilder fra skole-Norge»

2014 nr. 44: Editing by Pablo Vidal-González: «Landscape Protected Areas»

2014 nr. 43: Eva Johansson, Kristin Fugelsnes, Elisabeth Ianke Mørkeseth, Monika Röthle, Berit Tofteland, Berit Zachrisen: «Verdier i barnehagen: Mellom ideal og realiteter»

2013 nr. 42: Rita Sommerseth og Helen Hanssen: «Hadde eg bare vist...» Pårørendes behov for informasjon i møte med helsetjenesten

2013 nr. 41: Brit Hanssen og Sissel Østrem: «Rutinemessig plikt eller produktiv læring»

2013 nr. 40: Ellen Ramvi, Lisebet Skeie Skarpaas og Lise Løvereide: «Veien inn i arbeidslivet»

2013 nr. 39: Rita Sommerseth: «Pårørendesamtalen»

2013 nr. 38: Stein Erik Ohna: «Alternativ opplæring med utvidet praksis: deltakelse, læring og måloppnåelse»

2012 nr. 37: Reidar J. Mykletun and Tommy D. Andersson: «A comparison of answers to a survey of festivals in Norway, Sweden, Western Australia and UK»