

Robert Ardrey, *The Social Contract: A Personal Inquiry into the Evolutionary Sources of Order and Disorder*, 1970.

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## 8. The Violent Way

Britain's Guardian -- formerly the Manchester Guardian -- is not only the best-written newspaper in the English-speaking world but is generally accepted as our most steadfast spokesman for the liberal conscience. That conscience was given new voice in the summer of 1969 when, like a verdant volcano, Northern Ireland erupted in a flame of religious hatreds. A pungent odor of lunacy pervaded the smoky scene, for issues seemed irrelevant, even old-lace. The Guardian pondered the Laocoon intricacies of grievances involved, accepted all, but concluded that Ulster was showing itself to be "a profoundly neurotic society," more the problem of the psychologist than the soldier or politician. A leading editorial titled "Man an Aggressive Animal" referred to the "paranoid minorities" that appear so commonly in conflicts throughout all the world:

In recent years the study of human aggression, and of aggression in society, has attracted growing interest. . . .

To know how the trigger mechanisms work in human society will not by itself avert explosions. But at least there is a better chance of avoiding conflict if we know what brings conflict about. In fact we have all been too casual about the hazards of our innate aggressiveness. It is something the United Nations could very well take up as a major international research project.

Neither the population explosion nor the density of urban populations, neither nuclear catastrophe nor the devious adventures of youth, represents a threat to our civilized future quite so perplexing as man's propensity for the violent way. Yet no aspect of human behavior is so confused by misunderstandings or so subject in discussion to bitterness and prejudice. The courage of the Guardian was to reassert the free mind's venerated liberal tradition of open investigation, and to confess that we truly do not know what violence is. Just what are the ingredients of human belligerence? We may have our hunches, but we must inspect them. We may hold to dogmas, but either we can reinforce them with evidence or we must deny them. If we are to have any success at penetrating our history's terror-strewn trails, then our one clear area of agreement must be that even as we cannot know where these trails will lead us, we cannot even be sure where they started.

The task of penetration is compulsory. If the social contract represents a delicate balance between a degree of order that the individual must have to survive and a degree of disorder which society must have to ensure fulfillment of its diverse members, then a significant ascendancy of violence from any quarter tends radically to revise the contract. The balance then will and must be maintained by force. No triumph of disorder can be other than temporary. When order has been destroyed by one force, so will it be restored by another.

A few years ago our eminent journalist and historian of the making of presidents, Theodore H. White, published a play called Caesar at the Rubicon. While Rome sank deeply into anarchy, Julius Caesar by agreement stayed with his powerful army beyond the river. The play of course concerns his final reluctant decision to break the agreement, proceed to Rome, and assume power. And it closes with a simple comment worthy of being stamped on the coin of every democracy: "If men cannot agree on how to rule themselves, someone else must rule them."

White's statement hangs like an ancient sword over the heads of all free peoples. Violence -- to paraphrase Wynne-Edwards -- is the pursuit of conventional prizes by unconventional means. When social partners can no longer accept the same rules and regulations, then violence becomes the normal pathway of departure. And it is a paradox that the more successful the violation, the more certain will be its ultimate failure. Order must prevail if men themselves are not to perish. But in the course of such reconstruction of the social contract, many a man has seen freedom perish.

We shall be wise to inspect violence now while our social contract yet permits diversity of opinions. Or we shall wait too long, and our contract will be lost, and we, the violators and the violated, will in silent agreement bow to a higher, invulnerable force. Then order will be all.

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Since Konrad Lorenz and I, though scarcely the sole proponents of the view that aggressiveness is a quality innate in all living beings, have been the principal targets of environmentalism's aggressive attacks, it seems appropriate that one of us define a few terms. Although I cannot speak for the great Austrian scientist, I regard it as unlikely that he has concluded that war, piracy, murder, mayhem, blackmail, burglary and the clobbering of strangers are either essential or commendable activities in the human species. Neither can I believe that all of our distinguished opponents have cynically made use of that proven trick, the twisting of meanings, to discredit a witness. Instead it would seem to me that an honest confusion takes place in many a mind between what is aggressive and what is violent.

Recourse to Webster's Dictionary I normally regard as that dullest of devices occurring only when debate has exhausted all more stimulating plays and the players themselves are exhausted. Yet perhaps with a sigh we should begin with the dictionary and get done with it. In its distinction of meanings, Webster testifies that "aggressive implies the disposition to dominate, sometimes by indifference to others' rights, but now, more often, by determined, forceful prosecution of one's ends." And if we turn to "violent" we shall find: "Moving, acting, or characterized by physical force, especially by extreme and sudden or by unjust or improper force." With a shade more ambiguity, Webster offers for the noun "aggression" the definition: "A first or unprovoked attack, or act of hostility; also the practice of attack or encroachment."

Aggression, then, places emphasis on primary, unprovoked impulse, but leaves the question of force open. What is aggressive is the disposition to dominate, to seek one's ends whether or not by forceful means; what is violent consists exclusively of those actions characterized by

physical force. When Lorenz writes of aggression, he considers the innate (unprovoked) drive to dominate. When in this chapter I discuss the violent way, I confine my objective to those actions implemented by physical force. But just how far confusion can be pressed may be read in a quotation from Leonard Berkowitz, one of our foremost American psychologists:

Since "spontaneous" animal aggression is a relatively rare occurrence in nature (and there is a possibility that even these infrequent cases may be accounted for by frustrations or prior learning of the utility of hostile behavior) many ethologists and experimental biologists rule out the possibility of a self-stimulating aggressive system in animals. One important lesson to be derived from these studies is that there is no instinctive drive toward war within man.

Berkowitz within an admirably short span of words succeeds in misusing almost the whole of aggression's vocabulary, misleading the reader as to ethology's conclusions, and capping it with a reference to that special category of violence, war, which appears as a sequitur to virtually nothing. In his *Human Aggression* Anthony Storr comments on the passage that "such a point of view can only be sustained if a vast amount of evidence from ethological and anthropological studies is neglected." We may note that it cannot even be sustained by the dictionary.

In this inquiry I shall attempt to discriminate as clearly as possible among three categories of conflict: There is aggressiveness, arising from the competition of beings without which natural selection could not take place. There is violence, that form of aggressiveness which employs or effectively threatens the use of physical force. And there is war, that particular form of organized violence taking place between groups.

Not for money and not for space, neither for women nor a table in heaven do men seek to best one another. We obey a law that, for all we know, may be as ancient as life on this planet. We seek self-fulfillment. Within the limits and the directions of our individual genetic endowment we seek such a state of satisfaction as will inform us as to why we were born. We have no true choice. The force that presses on us is as large as all vital processes, and were it not so, then life would return to the swamp. If there is hope for men, it is because we are animals.

This is the aggressiveness that many would deny. It is the inborn force that stimulates the hickory tree, searching for the sun, to rise above its fellows. It is the inborn force that presses the rosebush to provide us with blossoms. It is the force, brooking no contradiction, directing the elephant calf to grow up, the baby starfish to grow out, the infant mamba to grow long. It is the implacable force which commands the normal human child to abandon its mother's protective shadow and to join the human adventure.

The aggressiveness that commands us all, hickory trees or human beings, must from the moment of bursting seed or bursting fetal sac direct us to overcome obstacles. The gasp for air, the grasp for the nipple, or if we are a newly dropped wildebeest calf, then the shaky following of our mother, represents for all of us the first commandment of independent life: that we come to terms with our environment. And so, as our bodies are born, our drive to dominate comes into overt being. But the obstacles need not be physical. Whether lions or lemmings, should we be of the sort who arrive in litters, then we shall find ourselves from

birth in competition with our fellows. Natural selection will begin. And in moderate probability the least aggressive among our litter mates will be selected out. If we are of the sort that comes one by one, as do normally monkeys and people, then severe competition will arrive more slowly. Undivided maternal attention will protect us for a while. But competition and conflict will come, whether with our siblings, with our parents, or most certainly with our peers.

We seek the sun. We pursue the wind. We attain the mountaintop and there, dusted with stars, we say to ourselves, Now I know why I was born. We win a Grand Prix or a Little League ballgame. Or we achieve a transcendent vision of heaven and earth and God. We find a scarred desk high-piled with old books and, enraptured, we discover in the musty past our shining selves. All is aggression. We live for, search for, spy, covet, connive for that thing sometimes inexplicable to others but of utmost meaning to ourselves. Some portion of space, real or symbolic, small or large, glorious or inconspicuous, we besiege, we assault, we capture and make our own: and in that conquest -- or even in that flashing glimpse of an unconquerable peak -- we fulfill whatever it is we are. Rarely, however, do we take what others do not seek.

Competition may be denied as a common event in the vertebrate world by as elegant a zoologist as Harvard's E. O. Wilson; but he refers only to competition for food or scarce resources. As sensitive a naturalist as Sally Carrighar may write that "nothing could so prolong man's fighting behavior than a belief that aggression is in our genes." But she is simply falling into the vocabulary trap of confusing the violent and the aggressive. An ethologist for whom I have the greatest respect, Britain's John Hurrell Crook, does little better. Doubting its innateness, he writes that "aggressive behavior occurs normally as a response to particular aversive stimuli and ceases upon their removal." If he refers to violent behavior, then he has a point worth inspection; but if he means what he says, then he reduces the processes of evolution to the circumstantial.

Aggressiveness is the principal guarantor of survival. Although like any other genetically determined trait such as mental or physical potential, individual aggressiveness must in degree suffer random diversity, still normal incidence should be sufficient to ensure the survival of populations and species. We may even accept Crook's reference to "aversive stimuli." It is the innateness of the aggressive potential which guarantees that obstacles will be attacked, the young defended, new feeding grounds found when old lie waste, that orthodoxies give way to innovation when environment so demands, that when social traditions rot in obsolete alleys social change will come about. It is the heart of the Lorenzian principle that without aggression as an inborn force, survival would be impossible.

But it is likewise at the heart of the Lorenzian principle that survival dictates aggression's limits. Without traffic laws, aggression is a drunken driver in a lethal midnight. As no population could survive without sufficient numbers sufficiently aggressive, so no population could survive were competitions customarily carried to deadly decision. And so has evolved throughout the species that body of rules and regulations of infinite variety which, while encouraging the aggressive, discourages the violent. The problem of man is not that we are aggressive but that we break the rules.

Any species must risk extinction when aggressiveness finds its fences in ruin and violence an ever available entertainment. But social species risk most. When beings become biologically dependent on the group and existence is impossible without the cooperation of one's fellows, then the violent solution of natural disagreement becomes a form of suicide as emphatic as the migration of lemmings. That the human being exhibits a propensity for violence beyond any other vertebrate species is a proposition that none with a reading of human history will dispute. But that propensity must be inspected with care.

I have been discussing thus far aggression in Lorenzian terms and its compulsory appearance in the genetic endowment of any species with prospect of survival. When competent authority fails to distinguish between the aggressive and the violent, then constructive debate hprnmes a wasteland of words. But having made the distinction, we court further failure if we do not distinguish between two sorts of violence, since one is subject to the command of evolutionary inhibition. The other is not.

Civil disorder -- the use of physical force as the final arbiter in the disagreements of social partners -- has been the subject of evolutionary disapproval so long as social groups have existed. An environmentalist as confirmed as Britain's cultural anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer has written: "All known societies make a distinction between murder -- the killing of a member of one's own group -- and the killing of outsiders." Gorer speaks of human societies. But unwittingly he reveals the evolutionary continuity of animal and human morals, for there is no animal society that does not make the same distinction.

An abused cliché is the proposition that only men and rats kill their own kind. We have witnessed in the Indian langur what happens when the social order becomes incapable of restraining primate aggressiveness. The young, for reasons quite unapparent, get systematically bitten to death. We have witnessed, in the questionable conditions of captivity, what happened in the Bloemfontein zoo when two strange baboons were introduced into a stable baboon society and all wound up dead. Southwick, in his great Calcutta experiment, saved the lives of strange rhesus monkeys from the antagonisms of a stable society only by withdrawing them.

An illustration presenting us with an answer to why, in a natural state, non-men and non-rats do not normally kill one another came to me through a friend in Kenya, David Hopcraft, who on his farm has for many years explored the possibilities of raising indigenous African ungulates as a meat crop superior to cattle. There is a problem of fencing, since most antelopes can jump over anything. Granted the aid of a benevolent foundation or two Hopcraft enclosed a ninety-acre field with a fence of which any concentration camp would be proud. He then began his experiments with the most innocuous little animal on the African savanna, the Thomson's gazelle.

Hopcraft today, as a result of his many experiments, is a wiser man concerning animal behavior than when in relative innocence he began. The Tommie, weighing only about forty-five pounds, is an animal so small that the new but normal technique of capture by means of a dart injecting a tranquilizer is dangerous. The dart, fired with considerable force, may enter

the chest cavity. And so Hopcraft, to begin the stocking of his enclosure, captured half a dozen or so Tommies by netting. Introduced to their new home, a male killed two females within ten minutes. Shortly not one remained alive. He had taken his animals from two different herds.

It may be argued that an enclosure is still an enclosure, whether a ninety-acre field or a laboratory cage. Yet today one may watch the peaceful field from a tall observation tower in its center. Almost a hundred gazelles share it without problem. But Hopcraft did not repeat his error. Furthermore, he introduced his males slowly so that each could establish a territory the defense of which would absorb his animosities.

It is the effect of natural arrangements, not the inoffensiveness of natural dispositions, that minimizes violent behavior in a natural world. Territory is perhaps the supreme peacemaker. Tinbergen records that herring-gull chicks, straying outside the family territory, will certainly be pecked and frequently killed by territorial neighbors. Latent violence is there. Antarctic skuas prey on their neighbors' eggs and young, resulting in powerful territorial defense on the part of parents. The effective spatial distribution and separation of animals, whether individuals or groups, may be just one of the mechanisms reducing the opportunity for violence in the natural world. But that men and rats are the only creatures who will kill their own kind is a statement of dubious validity in any consideration of the violent way.

Another cliché accepted too often even by continental ethology is the proposition that the more dangerous the animal, the more harmlessly will he ritualize and contain his aggressions. Impressive observations point to the conclusion. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, for example, has shown that poisonous snakes in combat will never use their fangs. A study of captive wolves demonstrated that the defeated wolf has only to bare its belly to the victor to inhibit further attack. But one may doubt.

Those ancient animals, snakes, have had eons in which to perfect their ritualized relations. Yet I recall the stunned observation made in Florida by Arthur Loveridge, of Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, regarding the behavior of two coral snakes, the most lethal of American species. A triumphant friend there captured a twenty-nine-inch male coral snake and placed him in a vivarium with a twenty-three-inch male which he already possessed. They made a beautiful if deadly pair. Taking Loveridge to view his new prize, the friend found his triumph replaced by mystification. Only one snake remained, the twenty-nine-inch. Reluctantly it disgorged the twenty-three-inch, which it had swallowed entire. The victim was in perfect condition, beyond being dead.

Of wolves in the wild we know far too little, and one cannot doubt that ritualization within the pack represents normal behavior. Students from Purdue University, however, have winter after winter observed from light aircraft a wolf pack on Lake Superior's Isle Royale. Constant observation made the observers familiar with every individual, including the leader over several seasons. Then one day he was spotted with a limp, and shortly thereafter he vanished. They landed, searched the area where the pack had been, found a bloody stretch of snow. A few bits of fur remained, and there were broken bushes testifying to a struggle. The pack had not only killed but eaten him. And times were not hard.

I carried my doubts to Africa when in the summer of 1968 I made a general survey of predatory communities. Hunting dogs will kill and eat any member of their pack disabled in combat, and this perhaps was the explanation for the Isle Royale wolves. But Hans Kruuk and George Schaller, our foremost authorities on major African predators, both dismissed as imaginary any proposition that the more dangerous the animal, the more will he ritualize his aggressions. Kruuk, in the Ngorongoro crater, had witnessed territorial wars between adjacent hyena clans involving large numbers of animals in which no least restraint separated the aggressive from the violent. Since hyenas eat anything, those killed in combat present a certain problem to the survivors. Hyenas do not enjoy hyena flavor. The problem was solved by allowing the carcass to lie in the sun for a few days. By then, presumably, it no longer tasted like hyena.

Schaller regarded violent outcome within a lion pride to be an unlikely resolution of debate not because of ritual, but simply because members are too familiar with each other's capacities to test them. The relation between members of different prides, however, is a quite different matter. Strict territoriality normally prevents contact. But should contact take place, then the weaker's only dependable ritual is how fast he can run. Schaller's most sobering experience throughout three years in the Serengeti concerned such a contact.

Not very far from Seronera, the Serengeti's lodge, are two famous lion prides much admired by visitors. Each has a territory of fifty or so square miles. One boasts -- or boasted -- two large males and nine mature lionesses, the other three males and seven lionesses. Both have cubs and juveniles in plenty, adding up to impressive lion societies. In Schaller's first year, however, there was a stretch of dubious territorial boundary. And in the disputed area a lioness from the two-male pride one day killed a zebra.

One of her lords came along and, following lion propriety, took over the kill while she retired to await his appetite's satiation. But then two males from the three-male pride appeared. She wisely fled. Unwisely, he fought. They killed him. Not content, they returned later and found the three cubs of another lioness. These they bit to death. One male ate a cub on the spot. The other carried his away, in Schaller's phrase, "like a trophy." The third dead cub was abandoned. Schaller waited. The mother finally returned, found it, ate it.

I followed the story of lion violence, that season, around all of Africa and found not a major game reserve without a valid record. While Schaller's observation might be regarded as one of intertribal war, a recent Nairobi incident was one of murder, since it involved members of the same pride. Here a male with a magnificent mane was for long the park's hero. Then, for reasons quite unknown, he killed a lioness. The park authorities were shocked. He was their principal tourist attraction. They decided against prosecution, and put him on what might be called probation. Before long he killed another lioness. And the decision was made to castrate him.

It was then that my friend Anthony Harthoorn, professor of physiology at the University of East Africa, was called in. As the developer of the process of tranquilizing animals through injection by a propelled dart, Harthoorn is famous throughout the world of animal

conservation and his authority can scarcely be questioned. He supervised the operation. The great lion, sad to say, ceased to be a tourist attraction, for his mane promptly fell out. And sad to say, too, a year later he killed another lioness and so was destroyed.

Any inspection of human violence must recognize that in dangerous predators other than ourselves lethal propensities may appear. What motivated the Nairobi lion? I do not know. As bewildering a question was presented in South West Africa's Etosha Pan, perhaps the world's largest game reserve and certainly the least visited. Here lion violence could by most unlikely logic be attributed to overcrowding, for lions are relatively few.

Etosha itself is a giant pan, half filled with water in the average wet season, that resembles in size and shape the Lake of Geneva. Spreading around it is the park, adjoining the homeland of the Ovambo tribe just south of the Angola border. The park is precisely the same size as Switzerland itself. Though no Alps break its monotony of endless horizons, Etosha is a tourist's collector's piece. At countless waterholes one may watch rare species difficult to find elsewhere -- the gemsbok, the dik-dik, the greater kudu in number. Even the lodge where visitors first normally arrive is a collector's piece, for it is an old fort straight out of Beau Geste, a relic of the times of German occupation.

An ecological setting so immense and so sparse cannot support the massive herds of prey animals that one finds in a Serengeti. And so lions are less numerous and their prides are smaller. Nevertheless, for several years Etosha had its attraction to reward any visitor's hopes. It was a pride dominated by two enormous males, and it could almost always be spotted, since they kept almost always together. Inevitably, I suppose, they became known as Castor and Pollux, and the stars they were of this African stage. Who took the greater pleasure in them, wardens or guests, would be hard to say. When South West Africa's chief of conservation, Bernabe de la Bat -- who described the incident to me -- visited Etosha from Windhoek, the distant capital, he invariably paid his respects to the two great lions as he might to two great friends. Then one day Castor killed Pollux. Why? None of Etosha's staff has ever come on a clue. I am assured by Schaller that sexual jealousy could not cause conflict between males, in a pride. And, in any case, I am assured by De la Bat that no lioness was in heat.

As mysterious as the violence of men is the violence of lions. Having completed my season's visit to the animals, I stopped in Pretoria for a night before returning to Europe. And there authorities of the Kruger Park informed me of a lion fight the previous day. It had involved solely lionesses and occurred just outside the gates of a park camp before dozens of awed witnesses. Eight or nine lionesses had taken part. One was dead, several were seriously mauled. What the fight had been about no one knew.

Since lionesses defend territory against lionesses, never against males, one might guess that the Kruger incident was territorial. But I have learned my lesson about guessing. In African Genesis I described a well-witnessed fight which had occurred three years earlier between two giant male gorillas on the high slopes of Mount Muhavuru in western Uganda. (The ape, we are assured, is never aggressive, let alone violent.) The fight lasted for twelve days until one of the monsters died. Not badly injured, he died apparently, like the Glasgow rat, of defeat. No sexual motive for the fight was possible. I ascribed the fight, dubiously, to territorial

conflict since there seemed no other cause. But then later Schaller's studies of the mountain gorilla in the same chain of volcanoes revealed no tendency toward territorial defense. And so I do not know why the gorillas fought, as I cannot be sure why the Kruger's lionesses fought, and I have no inkling why Castor killed Pollux or why the Serengeti males killed the cubs or why the lion in Nairobi Park developed Jack the Ripper tendencies. All may be understandable to lions, but not, as a human being, to me.

It may be argued that such evidences of violent behavior in dangerous animals are isolated and of small significance. But the evidences have been gathered from a relatively small number of animals regularly observed. I should suggest that the incidence of violent solutions among observed lions compares excellently with the murder rate in our most lethal and highly publicized cities.

By no means does such a suggestion return us to the nineteenth century's "nature red in tooth and claw." But neither should we accept the nice-kitty fallacy that today is becoming all too fashionable. Dangerous animals are so described because they are dangerous. And if we are to inspect the propensity for violence in the most dangerous of all species, our own, then we cannot -- through a reverse interpretation of human uniqueness -- pretend that we alone in all nature sometimes fail to resist the temptations of the violent way. Such a procedure replaces the over-simplifications of the nineteenth century with the over-simplifications of the twentieth.

Having presented what evidence I have for deadly quarrels among species boasting reputations better than ours, I find it time to turn to those two quite different expressions of human violence, the struggles among groups of social partners and the struggles between organized societies. And since I regard war as the least of the threats to the human future, may I be permitted to turn to it first?