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[Estudios sobre comportamiento y psicología social]

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The Anatomy of violence . . . John Paul Scott

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A boy murders an old woman because she will not give him 50c, or a stranger is set upon and beaten by a crowd of unemployed youths. Crimes are committed in public in the presence of onlookers who refuse to become involved even to the extent of calling for help. These occurrences are alarming because we cannot easily understand them as the acts of human beings. Is some mysterious animal or primitive drive toward violence beginning to spread through human populations?

While crime is an old phenomenon, its scientific study is rela-

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tively new, and the study of the basic causes of violent behavior is newer still. One set of answers is being given by the study of fighting and aggression in lower animals, from which an intriguing picture of normal animal social life is emerging. For example, wolves have been traditionally pictured as bloodthirsty slaving beasts, but the field studies of Adolph Murie in Alaska show that the home life of a pack of wolves is a delightful affair, the group cooperating peacefully to obtain food, feed their young, and keep off other predators. Wolves reared by hand under proper conditions make delightful pets, better behaved than many dogs. Wolves can indeed be extremely destructive of livestock, and the pack may mercilessly attack and drive off a strange wolf, but the traditional slinking, slaving and treacherous animal of fic-

tion corresponds only to the behavior of a wolf that has been recently trapped and is extremely frightened.

The behavior of wolves is mirrored in their relatives, domestic dogs. The pet dog behaves as if the human family were his pack and its house his den. Within the family he is peaceful and cooperative, but unless trained otherwise he will attempt to attack and drive out any strange person or dog that enters the yard. Hence the frequent difficulties of postmen and other visitors. In a neighborhood with many dogs, the area around each house with a dog is recognized by every other dog as a territory, not to be entered except by permission, and this arrangement results in generally peaceful behavior. However, if a dog owner disturbs this organization by attempting to lead his animal into the territory

of another, a serious dog fight is very likely to occur. The human being has introduced the element of social disorganization by leading his pet to break the bounds of territories.

I have studied the way in which peaceful behavior develops in a litter of puppies. Starting early in life, they begin playful fighting, biting and chewing on one another, and occasionally barking and threatening. Sometimes this develops into a serious fight; the puppies are too small to do much damage, but the result is a dominance relationship. In any conflict, the former winner of a fight has only to threaten the other pup, who responds by rolling on his back and yelping, thus indicating that he is subordinate. As the animals grow older these gestures may be reduced to a point where almost no overt aggression is seen.

Similar peaceful relationships can be developed between puppies and their human handlers. Indeed, puppies provide a model for the development of social control of aggression. In one experiment in which I participated, we raised more than 500 puppies from birth to maturity. For theoretical reasons we never punished them, yet I was bitten only once—a slight nip from a mother who resented my handling her newborn offspring. On every occasion these animals appeared to be extraordinarily submissive, but we achieved this without any overt repression. Instead, we started to pick up the young puppies and carry them from one place to another soon after they were born, and we continued the practice as they grew older. If we ever wished to control the behavior of a dog, all we had to do was to pick him up; we could even stop a dog fight in this way. The basic method was gentle restraint, beginning early in life, and it appeared to be enormously effective.

The means for the social control of aggression differ from one kind of animal to another, but common methods, as seen in wolves and dogs, are the development of dominance and subordination, and of territoriality. The results of a breakdown in social control have also been observed in many kinds of animals, and one of the most striking examples comes from the lower primates.

The behavior of baboons was first seriously studied by Zuckerman in the London Zoo. He described a situation in which a large number of strange males and a small number of females were confined in an area about the size of a small city lot. Then a large group of strange females was introduced, and the males began to fight with one another for the possession of the females. Sometimes females were torn to pieces, and during the three years that Zuckerman studied the group only one infant animal survived. The picture was one of unrelieved brutality and senseless violence. One could conclude that this is an analogue of man's primary nature, kept in check only by civilization.

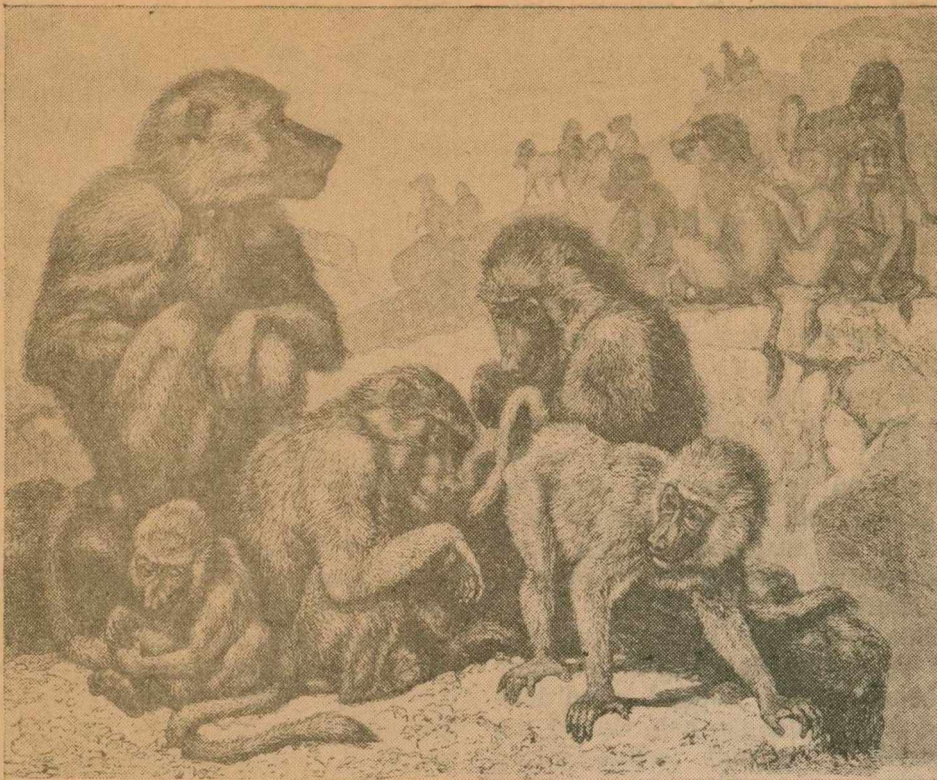
But some time later, Washburn, De Vore and Hall began to study baboons under natural conditions and found that the behavior of the animals in normal, well-organized social groups on the African plains presented an entirely different picture. There was almost no serious fighting. The males were organized in a dominance order and kept their distance from one another. As a result, the younger and more subordinate males stayed on the outer edge of the group where they were most likely to come first into contact with predators. When a cheetah or other dangerous animal appeared, an alarm cry was given and the males all combined to attack and drive off the intruder. The females and young, far from

being attacked as in the disorganized zoo society described above, traveled inside the protection of this outer circle. If a juvenile baboon played so roughly with an infant that it began to cry, the mother or one of the senior males immediately came to its rescue and drove the older one away. When a female was ready to mate there was little excitement and no fighting. Rather than compete for her, the males waited while she chose a male, who might be, but was not necessarily, the most dominant animal. She could also pass from male to male with no disturbance.

In a baboon society, peaceful behavior is developed in many ways. One of the most important is the formation of strong habits of acting peaceably toward other members of the troop, which begins early in life and is enforced by the older members. Second, the formation of a dominance order establishes habitual modes whereby each baboon relates to every other member of the troop. Another important factor is undoubtedly the simple necessity of spending a great deal of time in the search for food. This peaceful and constructive activity makes it difficult to find leisure for destructive action, and tolerance in the course of time becomes a strong habit.

We can conclude that the social animal is capable of maturing into a peaceful and cooperative individual within a well-organized so-





ciety, but that he is also capable of developing destructive and violent behavior under conditions of social disorganization. In short, the major cause of outbreaks of destructive violence in animals is acute social disorganization.

We can no longer put the blame for irrational and destructive human behavior on man's "animal nature," for animal nature appears to permit a high degree of perfectibility. There is every reason to believe that our human ancestors, even before they developed language and a verbal culture, had evolved and developed similar mechanisms to control aggression through basic social organization. Whether culturally derived or not, territoriality is a common human device for control of aggression. Indeed, in our society, violation of territory is considered a serious crime. Dominance and subordination relationships are developed between every parent and child, as well as through quarrels among children on playgrounds. However, these primitive methods of social control all depend upon the ability of individuals to recognize one another and thus determine what behavior is appropriate—something much easier to do in a small group of lifelong associates than in the large crowds of a modern city.

One of the appealing characteristics of an urban community is that within it one may escape from

the petty restrictions of a closely organized village society. On the other hand, almost all the examples of senseless human violence come from large cities, and it may be that one price that must be paid for freedom from meddling scrutiny is the danger of violence from unknown hands.

Accurate figures are difficult to obtain, but it is clear from FBI crime reports that the incidence of most crimes of violence is correlated with the size of the city. In a recent year, the rate of aggravated assault (including all attempts to injure another person physically) was twice as great in cities as in suburban and rural areas, and the rate in cities greater than 250,000 was more than four times that in rural areas. This is the class of crime most likely to include acts of senseless violence. Robbery and forcible rape follow similar patterns, with an almost perfect correlation between city size and crime rate.

Crimes resulting in death follow a different pattern. The rates for murder and negligent homicide are high in rural areas, low in small cities, and jump again in cities of more than 100,000. The safest place with respect to any class of violent crime is in a town or city smaller than 10,000. Violence also occurs here, but the crimes are understandable: husbands beating wives and wives shooting husbands; have-nots stealing from the haves. Fur-

thermore, in a stable village community the author of a crime is almost always apprehended because everyone knows everyone else.

It is hard to determine whether or not crimes of violence are actually on the increase. FBI figures report greater total numbers of crimes over the past few years, but this may in part be caused by better methods of reporting. These figures also show increasing crime rates, but those relating to violence are concentrated in the large cities. Cases of aggravated assault actually decreased in the ten years from 1953 to 1963, except in cities of more than 100,000, and murder similarly dropped except in cities of the very largest class.

The figures may be misleading also because they are based on the total population rather than on age groups. The baby boom following World War II has produced a tremendous increase in the relative numbers of young people. This could cause an increase in per capita crime rates because a larger proportion of the population is now in the age bracket which commits most of the crimes.

Who are the criminals who commit apparently purposeless violence? Frequently they are lost in the anonymity of a large and partially disorganized city community, but when they are apprehended and the facts concerning them can be investigated by trained scientists, certain generalities begin to appear. Such criminals are almost invariably young unmarried males. Partly this is so because the male sex hormone lowers the threshold of stimulation for fighting, and partly it is because boys and girls receive different cultural treatment. These young male criminals are often unemployed and almost invariably have a history of broken or disordered homes. They may have been illegitimate children brought up by unwilling relatives, or children whose fathers were dead and whose stepfathers mistreated them. Many have lost both parents and been passed from one foster home to another. In short, the great majority of such criminals come from disorganized families.

What does a male parent do in a well-organized family? In the first place, he provides an example of restrained and peaceable adult be-

havior and thus gives the child a model which he can follow and with whom he can identify himself. Second, he enforces peaceable behavior and thus starts the formation of useful habits, not only of peaceful living with peers and adults but also of respect and obedience for figures of socially accepted authority.

The reasons why any given individual becomes violent can be discovered only by a thorough investigation of that particular case. Besides the general absence of social control, there are immediate factors which produce violence. In the case of fighting, one should always begin by looking at outside circumstances, for the physiology of fighting indicates that the primary stimulation comes from the outside rather than from a spontaneous inner need. There are two common sources of such external stimuli. One is the organization of a group for purposes of violence, as in many juvenile gangs and in the more highly organized forms of fighting seen in war. The other is direct emotional stimulation, and one of the best examples came to me many years ago in the case of a young boy who had been expelled from kindergarten for violent behavior. According to his teacher, he would begin each morning by attacking either her or his classmates for no reason. Investigation showed that the boy was coming to school on a bus with several older brothers who delighted in alleviating the tedium of the ride by teasing their little brother. As a result, he arrived at school seething with fury and attacked the nearest available object. Similarly, almost any case of destructive violence

becomes understandable in terms of the past history and immediate provocation of the individual concerned. However, such facts are not ordinarily available to crime reporters, who are under pressure to turn out their stories at once rather than to wait out the days or even weeks which it may take to dig for these facts. And in any case, a mystery makes a better news story than a well-documented case history.

It is relatively easy to find a remedy for the behavior of a small boy who is just beginning a life of violence, but what is the cure for the person who has developed a strong habit of violent behavior over a period of years? This kind of person is often described as a psychopathic personality, as opposed to an individual who may have made one impulsive mistake or succumbed to unusual pressures. At present there is no conspicuously successful method for dealing with the psychopath. Psychiatrists agree that their chances of improvement are poor, and since they are highly dangerous, few people wish to work with them except under the conditions of physical restraint provided by prisons and detention centers. We can only conclude that prevention of violence is far more effective than its cure.

We must be concerned to prevent social disorganization, which has three main aspects: family disorganization, the disorganization produced by the normal transition from one's original home to the founding of a new family, and the occurrence of large disorganized populations in cities. (Social disorganization can also occur in rural areas, and studies by Alexander Leighton have shown that it has

much the same symptoms and results: poverty, broken families, high crime rates and even high rates of mental illness. His results also give a laboratory demonstration of the improvement that results from improved organization.)

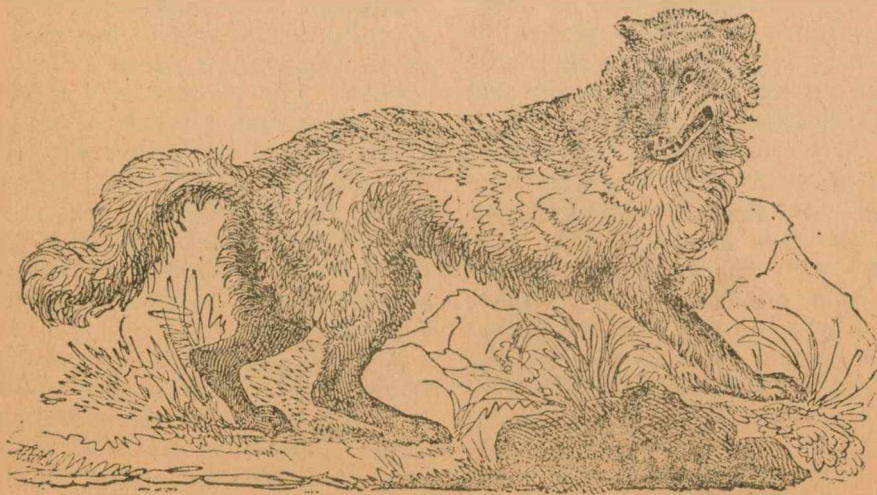
The remedy for the disorganization of city life is the restoration of social organization. Part of this is achieved by the creation of an honest and effective police force. Instead of each person observing his neighbor and looking out for his safety, we have a policeman standing on the corner and doing the job for everyone. There is no substitute for a well-trained and efficient police force.

More than this, in any city there are always well-known areas where violence is concentrated, and it usually turns out that these are areas of social disorganization of one sort or another. Neighborhoods in which large numbers of recent immigrants live, often crowded together and confined in ghettos where they cannot escape from one another, are an example. Other crime-ridden areas are the skid rows in which wandering men live without families.

Then there is the social disorganization associated with family life and not necessarily confined to any one area. Crimes are more likely to be committed by persons who have come from broken homes and neglectful parents, and in our society there is a regular developmental period of social disorganization when a person leaves his primary family and has not yet formed a new family group of his own.

The solutions to these problems of social disorganization are obvious but not easy. We need to develop honest and efficient law enforcement. We need to know our neighbors, troublesome as this is at times, so that we can cooperate with them when necessary. One answer is some sort of formal neighborhood organization for cities, such as the block system which has been attempted in certain areas of Chicago.

We need to discourage broken homes and develop competent parents. Finally, we need to provide young adult males with useful, constructive and rewarding activities which will bring them back into the social structure. That is



what the Peace Corps, and more especially the Job Corps, are attempting to do. This method for the control of violence was suggested by William James more than a generation ago. It is still as sound as it ever was and should produce widespread results when

effectively and continuously used. Such remedies will not completely control violence, nor is there any good prospect that it will ever be eliminated. They do act to reduce the rate of violence in proportion to the amount of effort expended. We need to remember that the

problem of violence cannot be solved by one-shot emergency measures such as putting the police on extra duty for a week or setting up a Youth Corps for a few years and then letting it lapse. The price of a peaceful society is continuous effort.

TEACH-INS

New Force for the Times . . . Arnold S. Kaufman

Perhaps we are witnessing the death throes of McCarthyism. The man has been dead for almost ten years, but his spirit continues to frighten people and contaminate intelligence. Now, the main custodians of human intellect and its works in a society such as ours—the scholars and the teachers—are counterattacking. The teach-in movement is part of their effort to strengthen institutions without which freedom of inquiry and integrity of commitment cannot be preserved.

To suppose that the teach-ins are no more than a specific expression of opposition to Administration foreign policy would be a fundamental error. The National Teach-In at Washington was a step—perhaps a giant step—in the attempt to build a society which is free because its citizens are thoughtful and informed. A dream, perhaps; but a dream that is not alien to the traditions of this nation. McGeorge Bundy, in the statement announcing that he could not attend the teach-in, put it as well as anyone:

The American people know that the real danger will come when we are afraid of any unpopular minority, or unwilling to reply to its voices. They understand what Communists cannot understand at all—that open discussion between our citizens and their government is the central nervous system of our free society.

But Mr. Bundy has not kept himself informed about the American people. It is precisely because too many Americans, some of them in high places, do not understand what Bundy credits them with understanding that academic communi-

ties are in motion. The main disagreement between Bundy and his critics is about the present and urgent need to repair and reinvigorate the “central nervous system” of American democracy. The basic conflict is between those who respect truth and understand the processes by which informed public policy must be pursued, and those who do not.

The issue has been joined over the Vietnamese disorder precisely because Administration spokesmen have propagated a myth. Walter Lippmann makes the point with typical precision: “The essential fact about these disorders is that they are at bottom indigenous to the countries where the social order is broken down, not originally, not essentially, conspiracies engineered from the centers of Communist power.” Lippmann concludes, “Surely it is time to grow up.” (*Newsweek*, May 24.)

Most people know that more than fifty teach-ins have occurred around the country, and that the surge of activity culminated in Washington on May 15. Few realize just how deeply the teach-ins are reaching into campus life. Trouble is brewing in the most unlikely places.

Arizona was the only state in the Union outside the Deep South that gave Goldwater a plurality. Today, both of Arizona’s state universities are in ferment, and the pronouncements being made would have been inconceivable a short time ago. Purists who insist on the distinction between protest and debate should bear in mind that when that which cannot be discussed is discussed, the debate is by its very content a protest. It is not surprising, then, that when, at the recent Arizona University teach-in, a member of the faculty remarked that the

United States might be unable to prevent Asia from going Communist, political tempers shot up like rockets. The state Senate Appropriations Committee and the State Institutions Committee summoned both university presidents and their respective governing bodies to the legislature for an accounting. The outcome is still in doubt.

And what more unlikely place for acts of political courage than the University of California branch at San Diego? Right-wing extremism flourishes in the area. When twenty-three students and teachers protested against intervention in the Dominican Republic, the *San Diego Tribune* furiously editorialized:

San Diego has a large stake in the university. It has an even larger stake in the military establishments which it also brought here, and to which it has given land, and in the atmosphere that has made service to country a high calling. If the university is to thrive in this area, it cannot be allowed to become the staging area for social and ideological resentments.

The Union made the threat explicit by announcing that if the regents do not put a stop to political shenanigans, “this newspaper will do everything possible to see that the state Legislature does.” The response? The faculty and students are organizing a teach-in; and the chancellor of the university, John S. Galbraith, has pressed the point home by reaffirming the university’s commitment “to the great traditions of free inquiry and free expression. . . .” This is heady stuff for San Diego.

Indeed, freedom is a heady business. No one understands this better than college administrators. As long as genuine freedom is celebrated by rhetoric rather than by public exercise, campuses remain

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