Hatred and Warfare:
Some thoughts and implications

"To be born, to change, to love, to win at games, is to be born to live in a time of peace. But war teaches us to lose everything and become what we are not. It all becomes a question of style." Albert Camus.

M1 Abrams Tank

Homo sapiens are the only known animal species to have had some of its kind deliberately organize themselves to hate others of its kind, and institutionally and systematically kill others of its own species, i.e., war among themselves. **Hatred** is being defined as an intense emotional dislike directed against individuals, social groups, or even objects or ideas. Hatred is often associated with feelings of anger and a disposition towards hostility directed at others. Not much "love" here. Hatred is much more than simply disliking a rival or adversary. **Warfare** is being defined as an organized and often prolonged conflict that is carried out between groups. Using armed conflict, one group attempts to subordinate another group by curtailing or eliminating its sovereignty and freedom. It is characterized by extreme violence, social disruption, human suffering, economic destruction, and the possibility of cultural assimilation or genocide. The set of techniques used by a group to carry out war is known as warfare. An absence of warfare is usually called peace. Warfare is not to be equated with ritualized combat with a rival or adversary.

Given the differences in human cultures, from Indigenous to Euro-America communities, is there any relationship or correlation with any of the particular ways of relating to each other (via religion, ecology, family and kinship) and the manner of our hating one another and warring amongst ourselves? Specifically, is deliberate hating and killing of another people a function of a healthy culture, an unhealthy culture, or a particular type of culture and world view? Consider the following seven theories, from the social sciences and the humanities, on how we as humans can articulate differing "styles."


Last Jew in the Ukraine, 1941

A. Hatred and warfare are an **expression of a healthy social organization**, e.g., a way to channeling psychological tension or developing competitive skills, or helping solidify

the social order, and is thus innate, endemic and fundamental to the human condition. Consider the following three social science theories on aggression, prejudice and war:

1. **Instinctive**. Biological-psychological basis. Society tames the beast, but not too tame, for a little for the beast is healthy. Theories of Sigmund Freud – *Thanatos* and the "hydraulic theory." And Konrad Lorenz and Robert Ardrey – "Survival of the Fittest" and the case for competition.

2. **Cathartic**. Eliminate aggression by expressing it – "blowing off steam." Society channels the beast, displacing tension. The act of some aggression reduces the need for further, more explosive forms of aggression, a form of catharsis. Channel in socially acceptable ways, such as in sports, and channel in direct aggression, such as war.

3. **Cognitive Dissonance**. A psychological basis in theory of Leon Festinger. Society escalates the beast. One act of aggression legitimizes further acts of aggression and increases negative attitudes toward the targets of the aggression. Hence, an arms race.

Ramses II, 1250 BCE

4. **Social Solidarity**. Conflict with an external society is a means to solidify social group coherence, as well as decision making and power base. Internal tensions and conflicts within a society are subsided in order to focus on "fighting" the "enemy." Consider theory of Lewis Coser. A variation on this theme revolves around maintaining a society's ecological balance. Given population growth, and/or natural resources to fuel economic growth, war is a means to reduce population and/or expand a society's natural resource base. Theories of Andrew Vayda and Marvin Harris.
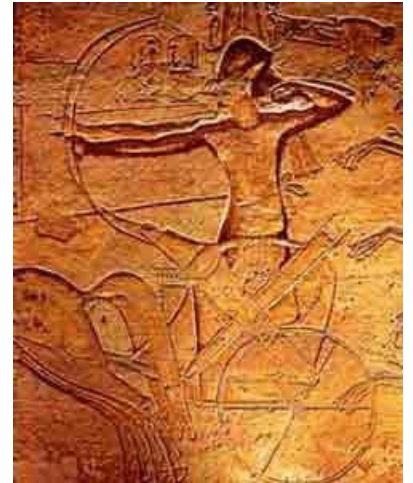
B. Hatred and warfare are the **results of the failure of social relations** and thus not an inevitable state of being human, e.g., a way of diverting and displacing dysfunctional aspects internal to a society externally onto an "enemy" and if it were a properly tuned social order, would there be war? Consider the following two social science theories:

5. **Frustration and Relative Deprivation**. When a normally well-functioning social system (its institutions of religion, family, government, economy, etc.) breaks down and the aspirations of the members of that society can no longer be met, relative deprivation results, expressed in increased frustration that can lead toward hatred of others and to war. Scapegoating can result. The breakdown can be the result of demographic

Klu Klux Klan, 1923

pressures, resource scarcity and competition, antiquated and non-adaptive institutions, corruption and abuse of power, etc.

6. **Socialization**. A culture can perpetuate aggressive and prejudicial attitudes towards others given socialization practices, personality styles such as "authoritarian personalities," and the power of charismatic personalities and the dynamics of group conformity.

 C. Hatred and warfare are more **characteristic of a particular type of social organization** and world view – a specific way of relating to other humans and life-forms all together, i.e., correlated with "exclusivity" (introduced during our seminar under B.5. Topic: Seasonal Round/Ecological).   Exclusivity has direct implications for the human capacity for "hatred" and "war," and even for the "ecological crisis."   Consider this humanities theory:

7. **Exclusivity**. Patterns of exclusivity can pervade our thinking. We can see the emergence of exclusivity at Jericho, with the walls being built that separate, and the towers being built that dominate. The "wild" dichotomized and rigorously excluded from the "domestic." Patterns of exclusivity are often manifested in dichotomized, either/or thinking such as is found in situations characterized in terms of us/them, friend/foe, good/evil, win/loose, true/false, black/white. In these situations of polar opposites, any given position or category is arbitrarily perceived as not the other and is excluded from it. However, when dichotomized thinking is taken to extremes it can stereotype, distort, limit choices and options, and is divisive, and we are as fools.

**Twin Towers of the World Trade Center
September 11, 2001**

A community that embraces the values/teachings of objectification and separation (reality is made up of objects, separate from myself – the "walls of Jericho") and gradation and dominion (I am superior and dominate over others – the "tower of Jericho") is a community that tends to,
   a. Become alienated and estranged from the world and other humans, with little or no capacity for empathy and consequently fearful of the "other."
   b. Is more assertive over and manipulative of other humans, attempting to control and subjugate the "other."

c.   And, as a result, views "other" humans as "less than" human (as extended to the natural world as well), and consequently tends to have a predisposition for hatred of the "other," and an increased capacity for conflict and warfare.
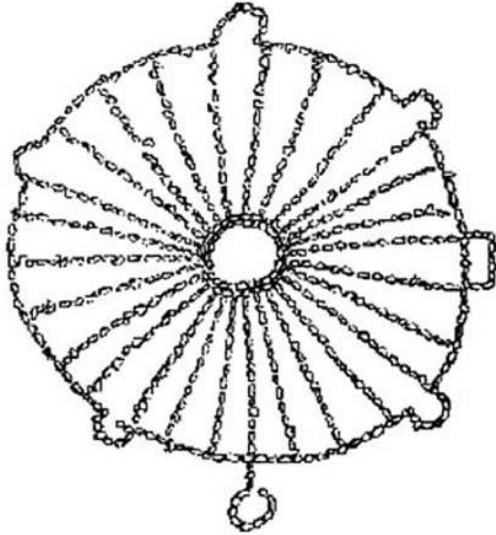
Consider the truism:

*Exclusivity and separation breeds hatred.
Inclusivity and oneness spawns empathy and compassion*.

Consider the Medicine Wheel:

Its spokes
Its hub and rim

Consider this story:

Long ago a servant was sent to the market to buy some salt and flour for his lord. "Here, bring the flour and salt to me on this plate, but don't mix the two; keep them separate," the lord says, handing the plate to his servant. So the servant heads to the market, mindful of these instructions.

At the market, the servant has a shopkeeper fill the plate with flour. But as the shopkeeper is about to measure the salt, the servant stops him. He remembers what his master had told him. So the servant turns the plate over and has the shopkeeper pour the salt on the bottom side of the plate. Careful not to spill any of his cargo, the servant proudly returns to his Lord.

"Here's what you asked me to bring you," the servant says. And he presents the lord with the plate of salt. "But where's the flour?" commands the Lord. "It's here," says the fool, turning over the plate. But nothing is there, and as soon as the plate is turned, the salt is gone as well!

So it is, in doing one thing that you think to be right, you may undo another which is equally right, and you are as a fool. (Adopted from Idries Shah, *The Way of the Sufi,* 1968.)

10 May 2013

kinship presentation notes