

## Anarchism & Violence; A Brief History

by T.M.Hoy

The greatest challenge facing humankind is the struggle against our own destructiveness and cruelty. The devastation we've wreaked on the natural world, and the danger our weapons pose to one another and other living things threaten to make the world uninhabitable. Should we fail to deal with industrial culture's propensity for violence, we risk catastrophe on a global scale.

Unfortunately, violence is deeply embedded in Western culture, and the “solutions” offered by religions, philosophies, and political ideologies have proven worse than the disease. One exception is the modern blend of humanistic individualism and non-hierarchical mutual cooperation ideology loosely termed Anarchism.

Anarchism offers a way out of the coercive torment of modern civilization, suggesting humans can live together in intentional communities, opposed to hierarchy or slavery in any form. But Anarchism's history is also problematical, lacking a clear consensus on the use of violence, its ethics, and what place violence occupies in achieving political aims. Nor has any study of Anarchist beliefs explored the new body of knowledge science has accumulated on the origins of violence and how this relates to human behavior.

This brief analysis will attempt to answer some of the vexing questions that confront anyone seeking to understand violence, and Anarchism's relation to it. These include such fundamental issues as whether or not violence is innate in humans; its origins; the sources of cruelty and destructiveness; how society's structures foster violence, and possible cures. These and similar matters are explored in the hope of reaching some conclusions about the nature of violence, understanding successful (i.e. nonviolent) societies, and the ethics of violence between individuals, and versus the state.

Many of these questions have received superb treatment in recent years. Erich Fromm's magisterial work *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* contributed much to the present essay, as has Lewis Mumford's *Myth of the Machine*. Other profound guides include Derrick Jensen, in his *A Language Older Than Words*, and with George Draffan, *Welcome to the Machine*, along with classics by writers such as Bakunin, Goldman, and Proudhon.

The heart of these questions turns on beliefs about human nature. Are people basically good, or are they evil? Value systems flow from how you answer this question. Those who believe humans are fundamentally good see violence as a product of culture, and propose systems that value life, healthy relationships, and the dignity and independence of the individual. Those who believe humans are essentially evil view viciousness as being innate, and insist this justifies systems of control and domination.

I believe that malignant aggression (roughly defined as violence that serves no purpose in aiding survival) is unnatural, agreeing with Fromm that “... destructiveness and cruelty are not part of human nature.” I believe the evidence shows that although there are many types of aggression, human violence is directly tied to the repression of sexuality, hierarchical societies, and the sicknesses arising from modern machine cultures.

In order to obtain insights into violence and anarchism, it's necessary to follow Marcus Aurelius's

advice, and focus on “first principles”, the basic elements that act as catalysts or causes of systemic problems and behaviors.

## I. Origins

To discover the origins of violence, it's useful to examine its biological ancestor – aggression. Aggression is nearly as old as life itself; behaviors shared by most living things, designed to increase an animal's chances of survival. It can be traced as an adaptation in the competition for resources, or put another way, the search for energy.

Ecology (the science of understanding how life finds and consumes energy), divides lifeforms into two groups, defined by how they obtain energy. These are 'autotrophs' (self-feeding), and 'heterotrophs' (other-feeding), that between them create food chains. If aggression is defined as the threat or use of force against another, then autotrophs and simple heterotrophs are not aggressive.

Autotrophs, broadly classed in four phyla as plants, capture energy directly from the sun, converting it into food. The earliest types were blue and green cyanobacteria some 3 billion years old. Scientists believe life evolved not long after the earth was formed 4.5 billion years ago, but the planet has been radically transformed over the eons, leaving few traces of early life on the surface. As best as can be figured, plants have had the place to themselves for 2 1/2 billion years, the only competition from other autotrophs; a peaceful and strife free world.

Trouble arrived with the emergence of more advanced heterotrophs, simple marine invertebrates that swam in the seas of the Cambrian era 600 million years ago. Invertebrates (animals without spines) today make up 95% of all species. They ate plants, and initiated the biological arms race of plants developing poisons, and animals developing ways to survive them. Aggression didn't arrive until the first vertebrates arose 500 million years ago, starting with a kind of jawless fish.

With the vertebrates, evolutionary biologists believe a crucial division between living things occurred; heterotrophs separated into two types – the so-called 'primary consumers' (plant eaters), and 'secondary consumers' – those that eat other animals. Secondary consumers are by definition aggressive, their behavior enabled by the new brain structures they possessed.

Though there are many unknowns, by the time amphibians crawled onto the land during the Devonian era some 400 million years ago, animals had evolved a recognizable hind, mid, and forebrain. Amphibians and reptiles (the first secondary consumers) consume other animals; the former eat insects, the latter other vertebrates like fish.

Paul MacLean, former chief of the Laboratory of Brain Evolution at the National Institute of Mental Health, calls this primitive brain the Reptile or R-complex. Fish possess R-complexes, as do their descendents. They form the brainstem in all vertebrates from lizards to squirrel monkeys, on up to and including humans. The R-complex is responsible for prompting aggression, combative behavior, sexual display and mating rituals, territoriality, and establishing social hierarchies. As Carl Sagan discussed in the *Dragons of Eden*, our responses show the R-complex is still very much a part of us.

This reptilian brain increased in complexity by several orders of magnitude with the addition of the limbic system some 200 million years ago. The limbic system are the brain structures that produce

emotions. Birds have limbic systems, as do all mammals. Limbic structures include the HPA-axis (the hypothalamus – pituitary – adrenal axis), which governs the response to stress, and initiates the 'fight or flight' reaction. It's also thought to be involved in building 'self-referents', the mental copies of the nervous system the brain makes and uses to distinguish 'self' from 'not-self' - the roots of self-awareness.

The R-complex and the limbic system overlap and are intertwined. Together, they regulate the 'organic drives' (formerly called 'instincts'); the drive for food, sexual satisfaction, shelter, and other functions that aid the survival of the individual and the species.

The last big innovation in brain evolution came in the Triassic, about 75 million years ago, with the addition of the neocortex, the distinguishing feature of the mammals. More advanced structures like the cerebral cortex arose with the cetaceans – whales and dolphins (perhaps as early as 60 million years ago), and the Hominidae, or human family tree, during the late Miocene or early Pliocene some 10 to 15,000,000 years ago.

It's thought that our distant relatives – *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, *Australopithecus africanus*, and *A. robustus*, among others, possessed a version of the cerebral cortex. The eminent anthropologist L.S.B. Leakey found evidence that many hominids had campfires, tools, and dwellings. The sort of cooperation needed to hunt large, dangerous mammals, as these creatures did, indicates considerable intelligence. Some scholars also argue that there was murderous competition between these ancient species, a theory designed to explain why so many early hominids were mysteriously wiped out (though there is no direct evidence to support this view).

Our understanding of neurology is too limited to pinpoint the brain structures responsible for such things as the awareness of death, altruism and love, but since mammals display at least some aspects of each, the neocortex is probably their source. Some specifics have been uncovered, such as the crucial role the amygdala plays in aggression. In several species, removing the amygdala renders an animal docile, and in monkeys, makes them fearless.

In general, though, we have trouble relating the operations of the brain with behavior. For example, how and why the social insects – who lack these brain structures, are capable of complex behaviors like waging warfare, practicing the institution of slavery, and gardening (to name but three of many), remains an enigma.

While our brain structures, neurochemistry, and origins are all shared with animals, the types of aggression we share with animals doesn't explain the full spectrum of human destructiveness. Dominance – subordination, or the primal 'pecking order', for instance, is a strategy for avoiding conflict, and social hierarchies in monkeys, to mice, to chickens, to beetles and ants, works to harmonize group relations.

Host – parasite and predator – prey relationships are types of 'niche' specializations, or as ecologist Eugene Ordum put it, are a species "profession". When they form food chains like that of snowshoe hare and lynx, or of lichen, reindeer, and reindeer herders, the kinds of aggression observed are unrelated to violence as we experience it.

The one source of aggressive response humans do share with animals – violence that erupts from overcrowding, in mice as in men, has been traced to the destruction of social bonds, and the breakdown of social structures (this research will be discussed in the next section). It's opposite – social isolation,

has also been demonstrated to produce violent aberrations in monkeys, as with the notoriously cruel experiments raising monkeys separated from their mothers in infancy. Such monkeys become “monster mothers”, that ignore, abuse, or torture their own infants. Whether crowding or isolation, it is the absence of social norms or interactions that precipitate violence, not some 'instinctual response'.

It's true that intraspecific competition occurs in most animal species, and the weak, young, and old are preyed upon or shunted aside when stronger group members compete for scarce resources. Broader conclusions can't be drawn from this, however, because just as many instances of cooperation and beneficence occur to make generalizations meaningless. Selfishness is often as dysfunctional in animals as it is in humans, and as fighting wastes precious energy, nature has gradually worked to minimize violence within species.

Our increased knowledge of brain chemistry has slowly confirmed this. A breakthrough discovery in the Netherlands in 1993 revealed a missing enzyme – monoamine oxidase A (termed M – A – O – A), a gene that damps down anger. Follow-up studies of M – A – O – A by Terrie Moffitt at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, showed that it prevented violent tendencies. When a M – A – O – A gene was absent in children who also suffered abuse, they were more prone to act out violently. By itself, absence of the gene did not equate into violent behavior. Violence, as an expression of anger, is designed to be rare.

Human behavior begins to diverge from that of animals with the differences between 'organic' and 'non-organic' drives. Organic drives are associated with instincts, whereas non-organic drives are considered character rooted passions. Both emerge from a tangled interaction of learning and heredity (in animals as in humans), but the passions are not 'programmed', and are not common to all people. Nonorganic drives include ambition, tenderness, curiosity, and (a la Fromm):”destructiveness, narcissism, sadism, masochism”. They are not a product of, nor do they serve organic needs of food, shelter, and sex.

Konrad Lorenz and Sigmund Freud (among many other prominent thinkers) puzzled over this distinction, and subscribed to instinctivist arguments. They argued that although environment plays a role, it is the organic drives that dominate behavior. Later theorists took an opposite position, like the beliefs of B.F. Skinner, who attempted to show that all behaviors were learned, a reflex response to 'conditioning', a theory termed Behaviorism. This academic debate of 'nature versus nurture', or heredity/genetics versus learning/environment, continues today but most agree it's a mixture of the two.

Robert Ardrey's thesis, put forward in *The Territorial Imperative*, suggests that human violence is a kind of evolved territoriality; warfare and aggression are supposedly instinctual defense mechanisms. Ardrey relies heavily on animal behavior studies, and despite pointing out many interesting facts and providing some valuable insights, his theory is no longer considered valid. Humans have definitively been shown to lack instinctive territoriality (as scientists understand the term), and on closer examination, his ethological analogies have proven untenable.

Similarly, Desmond Morris's ethological attempt in *The Naked Ape*, to show that humans are innately aggressive and predatory has been proven inaccurate. Humans, and Old World primates, generally, are not phylogenetically categorized as predators. Humanity's original diet was that of a gatherer/scavenger, as are other omnivores (like pigs), over 75% vegetarian, somewhat less than a quarter meat. This is in stark contrast to true predators, whose diet consists entirely of meat, or other prey animals.

Character versus instinctual drives are also the point of departure from ethological studies(i.e.

inferences drawn from animal behavior). Attempts to use ethology to justify various theories of human aggression fail to provide answers that survive rigorous scientific scrutiny.

How then do we explain the prevalence of violence in modern societies? I believe answers to that question must be sought in a fuller understanding of human social relationships.

## II. Sources & Causes

A great deal of scholarly attention has been paid to how violent ancient societies were, and nonviolence within primitive (that is, pre-technical) cultures. These studies frequently identify the characteristics that mark violent versus nonviolent groups, and their findings have been roughly consistent. There are many complex factors involved, however, and isolating the critical ones from irrelevant details is a difficult task.

The amount of violence in early societies remains a matter of intense debate in scholarly circles and in academia. The archaeological record of prehistoric sites is ambivalent, and thin, as artifacts seldom reveal much about the social arrangements of the groups that produced them. Agreement is even lacking on when truly human awareness and social habits emerged. Scientific consensus on prehistory is rare, but most agree a recognizably human consciousness had arisen by the Pleistocene era (the last few Ice Ages), some 40,000 years ago, with numerous relics of art, jewelry, and grave goods placed with the dead.

There is archaeological evidence of cannibalism, and – more rarely, of human sacrifice. A piece of Aurignacian cave art (circa 20,000 B.C.E.) at Cogul in northeastern Spain depicts nine women, thought to represent the three triads of the phases of the moon (three maidens, three mature women, and three crones), preparing to devour a Dionysus-figure, a young man with an enormous erect phallus. Primal myths of blood sacrifice and hints of cannibalism are common in mythologies around the world, and evidence of priestesses emulating earth or moon goddesses eating male children in orgiastic frenzies are found in many cultures.

The idea that blood is the life force, and is the most valuable thing one can offer to the spirits was strengthened when humans began domesticating animals approximately 15,000 years ago. Dogs, goat, sheep, pigs, and other domestic animals menstruate, and the association between the creation of new life with the cessation of bleeding during the menses was equated as a need for blood. This blended with a much older realization that blood and flesh can fertilize plant growth brought blood and human fluids into regular use in magico– religious rituals.

Cannibalism has similar magical origins; the flesh of the victim being thought to contain personal characteristics, and the divine spark. To eat a valiant enemy was to capture his essence for oneself, a belief still current in some primitive cultures (such as the Yanomami and the Jivaro in the Amazon, and many tribes in Papua New Guinea).

Just how widespread ritual cannibalism was, and how frequently blood sacrifices were offered is debatable. Many prehistoric sites in the Near East, Europe, and Asia have provided evidence of animal and human sacrifices, but it's not a universal practice, and there are as least as many sites without

evidence of ritual violence than there are with it. Thus, the record is equivocal.

So, too, with regard to the first cities, founded about 10,000 years ago in the Near East. Jericho, in the Jordan River Valley, is the earliest known city, and shows signs of having been sacked several times. Great efforts were made by its inhabitants to enlarge and strengthen its stone fortifications. By comparison, it's near contemporary – Catal Huyuk in Turkey, established about 9,500 years ago was occupied continuously for 800 years without any sign of conflict, and the city was never sacked or burned. It's religion was peaceful; no blood sacrifices were offered to the mother goddess and her horned consort they worshiped, and its citizens all died of natural causes, buried inside their homes in clay couches.

What archaeological and anthropological evidence both support is the fact that violence grew exponentially with the development of civilization, the invention of warfare, and the division of labor that made these innovations possible. Quincy Wright's epic *Study of War*, made a cross-cultural comparison of 653 primitive peoples, and found that the sharper the division of labor in a society, the more warlike it is. Those societies with strict class distinctions are the most violent and warlike of all.

Wright's work fits in neatly with neurobiologist James Prescott's study in *Body Pleasure & the Origins of Violence*, comparing over 400 preindustrial societies. Prescott found regular signature characteristics of violent and nonviolent peoples. Nonviolent cultures encourage physical affection, are tolerant, have little hierarchy, and aren't too concerned with wealth and property. There is little theft, low levels of conflict, and sexual freedom. Violent societies are much more rigid and controlling in character. They regard women as inferior, practice torture, mutilation, and slavery, have wide inequalities in wealth, and an emphasis on hierarchy and power. Sex is also tightly controlled.

Prescott concluded the critical differences lay in sex. During the two vital phases of sexual exploration and self discovery – infancy and adolescence, when sexual expression isn't suppressed, societies tend to be loving and nonviolent. When sex is forbidden and physical affection is rare or taboo, adults are prone to violence, and cultures are warlike.

This dovetails with Erich Fromm's thesis in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, that cruelty and violence arise when individuals are unable to form healthy relationships. Those that are deprived of affection as children, and who fail to develop loving relationships as adolescents are far more likely to be violent than others able to satisfy their needs for love and acceptance. Fromm sees sadism, necrophilia, and other kinds of 'malignant aggression' (his term), as a reaction to powerlessness and an inability to gain love. The urge to control others is thus a displaced demand for love. If love can't be obtained normally, perversions and dysfunctional relationships with others are the result.

Other scientists have obtained similar results. Anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday studied over 100 cultures for the prevalence of rape, and found the highest incidence among militaristic and sex segregated societies. Sanday's work focused on trauma, observing that the worst sexual violence occurred in groups that had suffered recent traumatic experiences, such as famines, forced migrations, and wars. The shutting down of feelings, lack of emotion, and loss of autonomy contribute to increased violence.

Ruth Benedict's studies divided preindustrial societies into those that were 'life affirming', like the Zuni Pueblos, the Semangs, and the Mbutus, versus those that were destructive and surly, like the Dobus, the Kwakiutl, and the Aztecs. Benedict tied the frequency and severity of violence to how groups handled wealth. Nonaggressive societies tend to reinforce behavior that benefits the group as a whole, whereas

aggressive cultures reward individual gains at the expense of others, and promote harming others for the purpose of advancement.

Sex is closely correlated with wealth as a causative factor in violence thanks to the matter of inheritances. In societies where property is more important than people, sex must be controlled in order for legitimacy to be established, so the rightful heirs inherit. When wealth is inherited according to hierarchical rules, tracing one's lineage and 'legitimate' birth become important. Where sexual freedom is the norm, inheritance of property must necessarily be a more casual affair, and property is considered insignificant compared to loving and healthy relationships.

Of course, there are many other factors that have an impact on the levels of violence within a culture. One of the most ancient and widespread of these is the attitude of a group toward 'outsiders'. Many (if not most) cultures trace their group's name to a word meaning 'people', or 'persons'. It implies that group members are human, and nonmembers are something less than that, closer to animals. This is a nearly universal phenomenon. For example, in Africa, the Bantu languages encompass a vast geographical area, with over 400 dialects, and thousands of subgroups. Bantu derives from the word 'ntu' = person, and 'ba' = the plural prefix. Similarly, the word 'Han', the name of the Chinese for their own ethnic group, is derived from the word for human. The Navajo tribe of the American Southwest call themselves the 'Dine', meaning the people. Examples like these could be expanded upon indefinitely. Almost every language on earth has similar prejudicial or exclusivist terms for who is a person, based on their membership in a particular racial or cultural group.

As history has repeatedly demonstrated, portraying outsiders as inhuman is at the root of every sort of atrocity. Demonizing or dehumanizing others allows a group to use violence against them with fewer objections, and is the basis for justifications for wars and pogroms. Here also are the wellsprings for caste systems, slavery, and genocide – the belief that some people are 'better' than others, and only members of the 'in' group are really people at all. Enemies are labeled as inferior, or subhuman, and this has been a source of conflict possibly as long as human societies have existed.

Another very ancient cause of violent social relations are the value and belief systems associated with money. Money, in its simplest form, is an artificial symbol of value, which people will accept in exchange for goods and services. The profound, incredibly damaging consequences of money have subtle beginnings, and are ignored or hidden by sociologists, economists, and all those that have a stake in supporting the status quo.

Prior to the invention of the first coins in western Turkey in 640 B.C.E.(made from electrum, a natural combination of gold and silver found in the Black Sea region) people regarded nature as a sacred, living being with whom humans had deep, binding, and reciprocal relationships. Animals, plants, rocks, trees, rivers, were considered as a 'thou', individuals with a sacred character that humans had to respect. Money rejects that worldview, treating everything in nature as a commodity with a price. The land and its living inhabitants are reduced from 'thou' to 'it'. The messages similar to the 'in' versus 'out' group attitudes: “you are not my kind, and since I have no obligation to you, I can harm or abuse you as I wish”.

As was mentioned earlier, social attitudes to wealth relate directly to how violent a group is. This is seen today, as statistics show the greater the income inequality in any given country, the more violent and crime ridden it is. The basic belief underlying money is that human needs and desires are the only important ones. This belief sets up a social paradigm of violent conflict, as people race each other to despoil nature, and others of whatever a society considers valuable (i.e. what can be traded for

currency, the ultimate valuable). It's a belief system that condemns the majority of people and the entirety of the natural world to a vicious cycle of abuse and misery, where a man-made symbol replaces meaningful relationships as the source of what is desirable and valuable.

This idea structure forms the foundation of the modern industrial world. 'Capital' is simply money used to purchase labor, or machinery that duplicates labor. This replaces relationships where labor is given as a gift, is exchanged directly for people's produce and handicrafts(barter), or communal efforts to achieve a goal, among other human exchanges based on fellow feeling.

In the value system of money commodities are interchangeable; property is valuable, not people; nothing is sacred (except property), and there are no true communities – since one piece of land is as good as another, with some variation as to physical beauty or the 'resources' (oil, ores, etc.) associated with the 'real property' in question.

Violence flows directly from this system. People that are uprooted and have no ties to their community are frightened, feel threatened, and are easily provoked into violence. Communities are tied in many ways to the landscape, and social bonds are responses to the life of the community as it exists in a particular time and place. Social bonds, in turn, are vital in maintaining harmonious relations among members. This is graphically shown in laboratory studies of overcrowding with mice. Crowding and rapid turnover of populations leads to the destruction of social accords and norms. These studies, in effect, duplicated slum conditions, and the results were shocking; infanticide, murder, rape, and robbery became frequent occurrences when animals were 'strangers' to one another. This is also tied to social isolation, and the disintegration of healthy relationships between individuals within a larger group. It applies to humans as much as it does to animals.

Perhaps the most insidious, and least acknowledged, causative factor behind modern violence is the constant, unrelenting coercion experienced by anyone living in industrial societies. Derrick Jensen in *A Language Older Than Words*, deftly points out: "if coercion is our habitat, then trauma is the food we daily take into our bodies." Coercion is the essence of the state, and "it engulfs, forms, and deforms us, to where we no longer perceive it as an aberration."(Jensen).

We are forced to follow an endless, repressive set of arbitrary rules, designed solely to make us obedient to authority. As children, we are forced to suppress the urge to explore nature and one another, and instead must memorize boring facts empty of meaning, required for years to master routines and lists by rote. Failure to obey is punished by a sliding scale of severity starting with humiliation in front of one's peers, on to intimidation and physical punishments, then on to medication, and for those who simply refuse to comply, with imprisonment in juvenile dungeons. As adults, the number of rules to be followed lengthens exponentially. We must dress the 'right' way, speak the 'right' way, think the 'right' way, work at a job the vast majority (over 65% in the US) of workers hate; accept a mediocre, boring life, pursuing materialistic goals few want or need. Those who refuse are ostracized, mocked, harassed, and for those who are actively disruptive, put in prisons where they are physically and psychologically tortured. Those outside of the 'privileged' mainstream – i.e. the poor, can be and are murdered by the state at will.

Consider a a brief list of Western forms of coercion and abuse which are daily occurrences, that pass without more than a meaningless expression of regret, if they receive any notice at all. This wretched list must include homelessness; widespread rape and domestic violence; child abuse; police brutality and extrajudicial killings; government trained death squads; 'preemptive' wars and state-sponsored terror; torture and indefinite detention of people without legal evidence or hearings; the list could go on

for many pages. The intense trauma this causes cannot help but deform us, and drive many to respond with violent defiance.

Fromm goes to great lengths to make clear the connection between feelings of helplessness and humiliation, and a desire to degrade and oppress others. This perversion of human needs translates into compensation for what is lacking, a sad vicious cycle of abuse and trauma. To be powerless and weak is tantamount to being victimized, and is perceived as being shameful. Shame is peer pressure writ large; society's psychological whip to keep the underclass in line. As social activist and politician Tom Hayden put it "... The trigger for violence is shame. Poverty is shameful in this country, and it's the shame and humiliation some poor people feel that makes them violent... They live their whole lives in a context of traumatic shame."

Thus a picture emerges of how and why violence becomes common in human cultures. It is not a 'natural' component of human nature, or some innate response to an environment, but is a product of social structures (or their lack), and social dysfunction.

A society that's hierarchical, sharply divides labor, controls sex and affection, debases love and relationships in favor of wealth and property, is by nature coercive. When such a society alienates and uproots its members, traumatizing them with shame, humiliation, and physical threats and brutality, will produce intense levels of violence and behave in a warlike manner.

When our society is compared with those known to be virtually free of violence and crime, the contrasts are stark. There are two separate tribes, both native to the Malay Peninsula, that are known to be nonviolent and crime free. These are the Temiar Senoi, and the Semay.

The Temiar Senoi are called the "Happy People" by their neighbors, and were studied intensively by anthropologist Pat Noonan in the 1930s, before their exposure to Western culture. They live communally in large huts, share food and belongings, and have little hierarchy or formality. One of the unique aspects of the Temiar Senoi is their custom of sharing their dreams daily. During breakfast, the members of each lodge house (where extended families live together), share their previous night's dreams. Nightmares are 'cured' by gently urging the dreamer to confront and befriend the monster or threat in the dream.

This seems to function as a very efficient and nonthreatening format for conflict resolution. It also incorporates aspects of Jungian 'shadow-work', where the 'dark side' of the personality is recognized, accepted, and integrated so that its power to harm is diffused.

Among the Semay, similar living conditions and social strictures prevail. In particular, no coercion is used in social interactions. Children learn by example, play-acting and mimicking adults. If a child doesn't want to do something, they need only say the word "bood" (roughly equivalent to "I don't feel like it"), and the subject is considered closed. The same respect for the wishes of others is raised to the status of social imperative among adults, and in this climate of tolerance and consensus, violence is unknown.

The sources and causes of violence, while complex, are not mysterious. Vicious behavior is a cultural artifact. Cultures that value relationships are less violence prone than those that worship control and power. Affectionate, sexually free cultures are less cruel and dangerous than those that are rigid, unfeeling, and repressive. The essential difference lies in that some cultures respect their members, versus those that coerce and traumatize them.

The choices we as individuals make decide what a society will be. We faced momentous decisions, and formidable opponents if we decide to challenge the status quo. To work toward change is to challenge those in power, specifically the state, which are the armed forces protecting the property and prerogatives of the elite. Here is where Anarchism as a philosophy addresses human concerns, and suggests answers to our most vexing questions.

### III. The Search for Solutions

As it presently exists, our society is oppressive, coercive, and intolerant of dissent; a breeding ground for violence and despair. The majority of people would disagree with this view, as they are fed a steady diet of media hype and propaganda about how “free” they are, and how wretched other peoples are by comparison. The soul-crushing nature of our society is further disguised because people have so thoroughly internalized the vast list of do's and don'ts that they no longer consciously perceive them.

This becomes obvious when modern life is compared to life as it's experienced on a South Pacific island; lacking clothes and clocks, modern conveniences and distractions, and the entire apparatus of regimentation and control. Such vacations to free societies aren't perceived as revealing how tortured our lives have become, and instead are treated as a reward for 'good behavior', not as a model for transforming our day-to-day lives.

The only time people really become aware of the pressure they live under is when something crucial malfunctions. When blockages or breakdowns occur in the flow of socio-industrial activities, frustration quickly boils over into rage and destructive behavior. Traffic jams, for example, are an everyday occurrence, yet they provoke intense anger, frustration, and cause heart attacks, fistfights, even killings with their own name – 'road rage', not to mention the longer-term effects of years of stress, over exposure to pollution, and related ills. A simple delay in travel is enough to push many over the edge from being 'responsible citizens' to becoming homicidal maniacs.

Entire populations panic and run rampant when more serious disruptions occur. Electrical outages, temporary delays in delivery of food and fuel supplies, and the like witness urban areas erupting into violent mayhem, with riots, looting, hoarding, and antisocial behavior become common. This isn't out of any real need, but is the result of fear, and the opportunity to lash out at the hated system.

Unfortunately these brief moments of awareness of just how tormented postindustrial life is, and of the fragility of our social structures, seldom lingers once the crisis is past. Our social definition of 'normal' has come to mean anesthetized and sedated into numbness, either with mind-deadening 'entertainment' like TV, video games, and Internet surfing, or with psychotropic medicines, now estimated to be used by an astounding 40% of the adult US population, when one includes antidepressants, heavy pain medication, and mood 'alteration and enhancement' drugs. Illicit drug use probably makes the percentage much larger.

Government, industry, media, and the corporate elite work in concert to maintain the illusion that their overarching control of the populace is 'normal', and even desirable. They work feverishly to control public perception of crises, making certain the underlying power dynamics aren't openly questioned,

steering public attention away from natural needs and inclinations, and instead focusing on materialistic goals.

The average person wants peace, but is mind-fucked into supporting war. The vast majority are concerned with their health, and that of their children. This natural concern is constantly subverted by advertising and marketing tricks into promoting behavior that destroys health; eating junk food, sedentary lifestyles, and forced attendance at boring schools and stressful, meaningless jobs. In every area of human endeavor – the arts, literature, education, recreation, etc., our natural impulses are manipulated and twisted into supporting interests detrimental to our real needs and wants. The elite foster a culture of control that's at war with natural human tendencies, which are free and require little material to satisfy. The sensual pleasures of the body, the intellectual life of the mind, the contentment of healthy relationships, and the fulfillment of community sharing and aid. These impulses are perverted, repressed, and altered by capitalist societies so as to convince people that expensive artificial materials and/or equipment are 'required', and rules are imposed requiring people to obtain 'approval' for activities from some self-appointed authority.

In short, as Emma Goldman knowingly described it, modern life has become: "a degrading race for possession, prestige, and supremacy", equivalent to slavery. As previously discussed, violence is the expression of emotions generated by trauma, the result of repressing sexuality, of inequalities in wealth, and of unequal power dynamics in which 'high' status people display disrespect and contempt for those of 'low' status (not to mention the elite's victimization and oppression of the poor).

The problems are manifest everywhere, and are almost overwhelming in their intensity, scope, and horror. Terrorism, especially of the state-sponsored variety called war, suicide bombings, mass murder, genocide, ecocide, and far too many other atrocities from which we avert our gaze with shame and disgust.

What solutions are on offer? What has been tried or is suggested as a curative? Philosophies, both of the religious and secular types, are legion, but offer few real alternatives to the status quo. Indeed, most tend to support it.

The mystics that frequently found religions may initially promote an anti-establishment view, rejecting wealth and power, and demanding social justice. Once the founders are gone, however, their followers quickly build power-hungry organizations. Religious hierarchies are easily co-opted by elites, and join the forces of oppression in exchange for positions of privilege. They then use their spiritual authority to keep the masses subservient and complacent. This has been true of every major religion, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam.

Secular philosophies with political implications have not fared much better.

Those ideologies that trace their ancestry back to Enlightenment thinkers like Hume, Locke, and Kant have morphed into justifications for different flavors of 'liberal' democracies. Democracy, of course, is a loaded term, as Winston Churchill wryly noted, "it's the worst form of government ever devised by man, except for all the others."

No major Western philosopher, save Rousseau, challenged the fundamental assumptions of Western civilization, and Rousseau's vision – typified by the concept of the 'noble savage', failed to do much more than create a romantic stereotype. Liberalism and its cousin Humanism never question the existence of elites, classes, the state's usurpation of power, and related dynamics. So long as the

government operates by the consent of the governed (and when has the state ever refrained from making such a fatuous claim?) and supposedly acts for the 'greatest good of the greatest number' (another very convenient fig leaf for using state power to exploit populations, being so subjective a measure), liberals claim all is well.

Violence within a society is a right reserved for the state, and its agents use it without hesitation to enforce its interests. When the state is confiscating property – as taxes, or via the use of 'eminent domain' or for some 'crime', the threat of violence is always present; obey, or you'll be imprisoned or killed resisting. Similarly, the state uses violence and the threat of force in applying 'law enforcement', and in the methods police use – kidnapping people, breaking into their homes, arresting them, torturing them, and often killing them when they fight back. This is only to be expected, as the police are recruited from ex-military personnel, who have been trained as killers, to do the dirtiest work of the state – the terrorism known as war. War is the ultimate expression of state power and violence.

Liberal philosophers like John Stuart Mills explained war as a result of autocratic governments interfering with economic cooperation between democratic states. According to this belief once all governments are democratic, wars will cease. The patent falsity of this philosophy needs no further discussion.

The failure of liberalism to provide relief from violence (both between members of society, and between members and the state) is echoed in the failure of Socialism to do so. Socialism was another 'answer' to problematic social relations, developed in the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe. It viewed class structures as the root of the problems of the status quo, particularly the variant created by Karl Marx. The Socialists failed to address the fact that the state is the principal organ of oppression, and that Communism (the offspring of Marxist ideology) merely replaced one repressive government with another. Under both liberal and socialist systems, elites control the power, wealth, and dominate everyone else.

The sciences have weighed in on the debate, affecting philosophical discourse. Sociology is the most frequently cited science in this arena, and the sociological argument places the blame for war on special interest groups. Ordinary people prefer peace, but those in charge of government have selfish interests that favor wars. Sociological studies also put an onus on Nationalism, recognizing that nation states create ideologies of paranoia to maintain power (the old 'us versus them', 'in versus out' group propaganda ), and selfishness and greed run rampant in nationalist hierarchies.

The 20th century is a graveyard of vicious, failed belief systems – communism, fascism, socialism, capitalism (unfortunately, an unfettered version of the latter has yet to die), responsible for the pointless deaths of hundreds of millions of innocent people.

One 'ism' rejecting the foundations of our society emerged during the same period in Europe, but was only sporadically tested, and failed to gain traction – Anarchism. Early anarchistic philosophers like Max Stirner rejected all social structures, insisting that the self is supreme, and should be the sole basis for decisions with the ego acting as the only reliable moral compass (a belief termed Egoism). Less radical, but equally opposed to Western mores and norms were philosophers like Proudhon, who felt the complete absence of rules and authority was necessary, and only when cooperation for mutual benefit was purely voluntary was it consistent with humans enjoying freedom and dignity.

The problem, of course, is how to achieve this ideal; how to build a utopia in the face of the murderous opposition of the state? The leaders of the American and French revolutions (and their historical

imitators) asserted the right of 'the People' to overthrow tyrannical regimes. Anarchist revolutionaries like Mikhail Bakunin expanded this belief by claiming all governments are inherently tyrannical, and require violent overthrow. Modern intellectuals with anarchist leanings, such as Noam Chomsky, have also come to advocate (privately) violence against the state as justifiable.

Anarchism has had a troubled relationship with violence, with different factions advocating different positions. Most accept the idea that violence against state repression is justified. Others believe that violence against forms of property and injustice is necessary. Then there are those who insist nonviolence is the proper path, emphasizing economic sabotage and noncooperation are the only morally acceptable methods to bring change.

Though still very much in flux, it seems the broader anarchist membership is turning in favor of the limited use of violence to achieve anarchist ideals. Anarchist activist and organizer Peter Gelderloos, in *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (2207, South End Press), makes the case that governments are immune to appeals to conscience, only agreeing to serious negotiations when the movement is a threat to the power structure. Gelderloos's reading of the history of nonviolent protest is insightful, instructive, and worthy of study.

The three most frequently cited instances of “successful” nonviolent resistance (in Western media), are Gandhi's work to end British rule in India; the Civil Rights movement in the US, and the protests against the Vietnam War. Gelderloos debunks the myths of nonviolent protest, showing that in each case “success” was either token or entirely illusory, and that significant change didn't occur until violence erupted. These are very relevant issues, and deserve a brief review here.

In the case of India, Gelderloos probes deeply into history, and finds that while Gandhi's nonviolent protests were useful, they were far from the major factor that beat the British. The British Empire, weakened by World Wars I & II, was faced with bombings and armed struggles on many fronts throughout the subcontinent. Bhagat Singh committed selective assassinations in the Punjab, and Chandrasekhar Azad led hard fighting in the East. The militant candidate Subhas Chandra Bose was twice elected president of the Indian National Congress (in 1938 and '39), which clearly preferred Bose's tactics to those of Gandhi.

The “terrorist” attacks of the Jews against British targets in Palestine in 1945 – 48 further weakened the resolve of the Imperial bureaucrats, and when it became evident that Indian revolt might make India ungovernable, the British decided to negotiate an exit with the lesser of evils – Gandhi's nonviolent, conciliatory faction. By negotiating with the pacifists, the British managed to transfer India to neocolonial rule, and use India's elite to maintain a powerful hold on that nation. They kept India weak and divided, dependent on the West; handicaps the country has yet to fully overcome. It's a whitewash to say Gandhi's efforts and nonviolence ejected the British and freed India. It's more accurate to say that freedom fighters (nowadays labeled terrorists) threatened to make India impossible to rule, speeding the British exit.

A similar story emerges regarding the Civil Rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolent protest in the South gained media prominence, but earned no significant change after many years of effort. Kennedy and Congress stalled on the Civil Rights Act, playing for time, until – out of patience and enraged at repeated provocations, 3,000 blacks rioted in Birmingham, Alabama, stoning the police. When the elite saw that black communities wouldn't remain nonviolent forever, they grudgingly agreed to change. As always, however, the powers that be negotiated with the weakest, least objectionable group, the pacifists. King's faction ended up accepting minimalist reforms, ending only *de jure*

segregation, not the de facto sorts, and as a sop, the number of blacks admitted to the bourgeoisie expanded. It was far short of equality, and blacks remain marginalized and virtual outcasts in today's society.

Nonviolent protest was also a failure in regard to the Vietnam War. Thousands of officers were “fragged” (attacked by their own men with grenades); troop morale had almost collapsed, but it still took a near mutiny in the Army before Nixon agreed to withdraw. The crowds of protesters, while good sport for the media, changed nothing – as the present multimillion person rallies against the Iraq war demonstrate. Citizens of democracies are powerless, and nonviolent tactics win at best token reform. The state plows over disobedience and noncooperation, rendering passive resistance ineffective.

It's true that carefully organized economic sabotage can have great impact (and recent laws in the US making the targeting of corporations a form of terrorism, as in the animal rights/Huntington life sciences case have shown, reveal the rage felt by elites at this sort of effective strategy). Boycotting specific companies over negative activities can force quick changes of heart, as companies are at the mercy of consumers. Likewise, monkeywrenching and the sabotage of vulnerable bottlenecks in production and distribution channels, like attacking factories, bridges, power plants, etc., can cripple regional economies.

But when faced with an enemy that refuses to slow or stop their destructive actions peacefully, violence may be required to stop them. To paraphrase Derek Jensen, there cannot be peace with someone who has declared war on you; only capitulation and even that doesn't lead to peace, but only to further degradation and exploitation. Advocating violence against the state, though, is a slippery slope, as revolution after revolution has shown. Foul means guarantee that the ends achieved will be horrible.

So how to untangle this Gordian knot? Malignant aggression is a product of warped societies; we wish to eliminate aggression and the forces of oppression, but to do so requires violence. Fortunately, some guidance is available from ethical philosophers. One of the most accessible is Prof. Tom Regan, a philosopher and animal rights advocate, who sets out to examine moral rights in his work *Empty Cages*.

Regan agrees there are justifications for violence, with certain provisos (he defines violence as the use of physical force for purposes of harming, or abusing other things). To begin with, Regan takes the position that all sentient beings - including animals, have a basic right to their lives, bodies, and liberty. This includes the right against physical trespass, that is – that others are not free to harm us, use us against our will, or take our lives. Others are not free to interfere with our choices, so long as we don't impinge or injure others.

When others violate these rights, we are within our rights to fight back, even if it's seriously harms the aggressor. Regan puts forth a few simple rules for justifiable violence: A). Excessive violence must never be used (only the violence needed to stop the wrong); B). Violence may only be used when necessary to rescue or protect others and oneself from terrible harm; and C). Violence may only be used after nonviolent alternatives have been exhausted. In these cases, violence is justified. Regan's rules possess restraint and embody eminent good sense, condoning the sort of violence such as when you shoot the man who is machine-gunning children.

To prevent torture and executions, violence is justifiable, but by its very nature aggression threatens humanistic visions. Adding to the complexity of these problems is the fact that violence is self-perpetuating; is deeply embedded in our culture, and is seen as a solution to difficult problems. Worse

still, violence can be intoxicating, particularly for the powerless.

Novelist Martin Amis brought powerful insight to this issue with regard to the phenomenon of suicide bombers. Amis noted in an interview with Bill Moyers, on the PBS series Faith & Reason, that it's no longer a secret that there's a joy to be had in killing, and that murdering others can be empowering. For the oppressed, a life of failure is given meaning and is rectified by killing others in a bomb blast or a mass shooting. An orgy of violence transforms a social loser into his opposite – the wielder of terrible power. As Amis said, in the post-9/11 era, the world (or at least the US) has entered the moral and spiritual equivalent of the Great Depression.

There is a general tendency towards violence and inhumanity, and people feel isolated and helpless. However, anarchists and people of conscience agree on a few simple principles for change. These include the premise that violence is a dysfunctional response to social relationships, and since the maximum freedom for individuals is incompatible with aggression, people must seek to reduce violence in interpersonal relationships and with society as a whole. Further, our goal must be the reduction of suffering and oppression around the globe.

Western civilization is based on a culture of coercion, control, and trauma, with a value system that doesn't value life or nature, destroying and poisoning everything in its path. It is a sick culture. And the only way to heal, to reach a state of wellness, is to offer a real alternative; to build a culture that values life and living.

Anarchism offers a political framework for such a culture; that of the self managed society, where intentional communities of people sensitive to each other and to the land relearn what makes life worth living – healthy, loving relationships. We create what we value, and in order to become well, we must reacquaint ourselves “with the language of the earth, of our bodies, and of dreams” (Jensen). All we want is to be accepted, to love and be loved. Our recovery depends on creating a new society that understands this, and a willingness to defend it against the state. Only then can human beings have a chance to return to equilibrium, and in violence within our communities and in the world.