

dimension that itself lies beyond the reach of scientific understanding. This is indeed a revelation that there is 'something more' than our culture is accustomed to allow. But it does not give us any insight into the nature or the significance of that 'something more'. And, of course, it does not provide us with an answer to the human predicament. It does, however, have a certain significance in this regard. As we have seen, the project of bringing about human community seemed to be beyond our human powers to fulfil. It appeared to require the influence of one whose capacity for love did not depend on being loved, and who in that respect transcended human nature. We now have a reason to believe that a transcendent cause of human nature actually exists. It is thus not inconceivable that the necessary conditions for bringing about human community also subsist in this transcendent being.

Of course, there still remains the question whether the (real) creator of freedom is capable of being the (desired) creator of true human community, of whether our Creator can also be our Saviour. I think there are good reasons for believing that our Creator can. But that would require another article.

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Arms and the Man

Nicholas Humphrey

An address given at the festival 'A World in Peril', organized by Professions for World Disarmament and held in London, at Southwark Cathedral, on 25 October 1986.

Some years ago there was a competition in the *New Statesman* magazine to produce the most startling newspaper headline anyone could think of. Among the winning entries, as I remember, was this: 'ARCHDUKE FERDINAND STILL ALIVE. FIRST WORLD WAR A MISTAKE'.

A *mistake*, a war in which 20 million people died? It seems of course preposterous: a bad—if clever—joke. And yet historians now almost universally agree that the First World War *was* a mistake. Not in the sense implied by that headline, that it was fought for the *wrong reasons*. No, a mistake in the sense—perhaps even more depressing—that there were *no* reasons for war at all: *except, that is, for the drive to war itself.*

The great powers had got themselves into a fierce arms race, Germany was being made to feel increasingly encircled; yet rather than seeking obvious remedies—reversing the arms race, or resorting to more positive diplomacy—the generals and the statesmen pushed on towards the cataclysm as if they were no longer masters of their fate.

Today, as we know, there are disturbing parallels. Once again, the great civilisations of the world—the very nations that gave us our literature, music, painting, our ideas of peace and of democracy—are locked into a unending cycle of hostility. Once again there is a grim competition for superiority in arms, in trade, in attitudes, in righteousness. We call it a Cold War—no one is being killed. But let us not doubt that it is war. Year by year more money is being spent on armaments than at any time during the hot wars of the past. As a direct consequence of this misuse of resources, thousands of people daily starve and want.

There are, it is true, lulls in the hostility. Moments of hope. Moments when, against the odds, it seems that world leaders may be coming to their senses. But soon enough they take up where they left, as if hurrying to join step in the long march to oblivion.

In *Mother Courage*, Bertolt Brecht wrote of the seemingly unstoppable energy of war. Says Mother Courage:

Well, there've always been people going around saying the war will end. I say, you can't be sure the war will *ever* end. Of course it may have to pause occasionally—for breath, as it were—it can even meet with an accident—nothing on this earth is perfect. A little oversight, and the war's in the hole, and someone's got to pull it out again! That someone is the Emperor or the King or the Pope. They're such friends in need, the war has really nothing to worry about, it can look forward to a prosperous future.

Brecht wrote of war as if it were a kind of monstrous living force. And indeed to many others writing in this century, it has seemed that war *is* a kind of autonomous, self-perpetuating and self-serving agency.

Do we need reminding, then, that wars are made by human beings? And that there is nothing outside, over and above *ourselves*, that gives life to the forces of destruction?

I hope you will forgive me if, at the end of a long evening of fine words and music, I come back to science and talk a bit about matters of psychology. Professional psychologists have, it is true, not always had anything sensible or relevant to say about what is so obviously the greatest issue of our time. But in recent years there have been new ideas. And, surprisingly enough, one of the most fertile areas has been 'Games Theory'.

Games Theory, as von Neumann originally conceived it, was the

theory of how rational people should behave in any game where the interests of the players are conflicting. But while Games Theory deals essentially with rationality, one of the startling results has been to show just how *irrational* rational behaviour may become. For there are situations where, because of factors inherent in the situation itself, sensible players pursuing apparently sensible short-term goals, always end up with exactly the opposite result of that which they intended. In psychology, this has led to the notion of what's called a 'social trap'.

Let us take an artificial situation to illustrate the kind of thing I mean. There is a notorious game called the 'pound auction'. Suppose that someone says he is going to sell a pound note—a pound coin, I should say—to the highest bidder. And he starts by asking for bids of 10p. It sounds good value, and no doubt most of us would come in with a bid. But there is a snag. For the auctioneer announces that he is going to take the money not just from the highest bidder but from the next highest as well. Well, that's a shame ... still, we'll put up with it ... So we bid 10p. Someone on the other side comes in with a bid of 20p. Now what are we going to do? If we leave it there we will have lost out. Not only will we not get the pound, we will lose our 10p all for nothing. So we bid 30p. A pound for 30p—still, not a bad deal if we can get it. But now the other contestant is in exactly the position we were—he's going to lose out unless he continues. So he ups his bid to 40p. So we up ours again, so he ups his. You might think the auction is bound to stop when either we or the other bidder reaches a full pound. But not at all. For suppose the auction has reached a point where the other chap has bid 90p and we have bid a pound. Unless he now goes *over* a pound, he is going to lose everything, while he can at least cut his losses by bidding £1.10. So we bid £1.20. And so on, onwards and upwards—while both of us get deeper into debt... The fact is that from the moment we entered this game, both sides were trapped.

Now the problem, as you will see, arises precisely because it is built into the situation that our gain is his loss, and vice versa. And the parallel to an arms race between nations is all too obvious. The very weapons which give one side a sense of security threaten the other—and naturally, and even rationally, the other side retaliates in kind.

Yet, surely, you might think, what goes up can come down, and a vicious spiral can in principle become a virtuous one. Why is it then that these traps are so hard to get out of—why cannot the whole thing just be stopped or even put into reverse?

All the evidence suggests that stopping, let alone reversing, is in fact very difficult. The reason is quite simple, namely, that it requires cooperation between two sides who are defined by the very situation as antagonists. If we take the pound auction, it's obvious that if at a stage where one side had bid 10p, the other 20p, both were to stop *and agree to*

split the profits, both would be better off. But the problem is exactly that. It requires *agreement* between two participants who by the very nature of the game are in an unbalanced relationship. Someone is always in front: someone always thinks he stands to gain more by winning the race than pulling out of it; what's more, each side can of course blame the other for the costs incurred so far... Just now, for example, the US is ahead with Star Wars; no matter that the USSR has the capacity to match it; for the time being, the US sees only the prospect of the short-term gain over a stubborn enemy—and no one, it seems, looks forward to the inevitable conclusion.

Cooperation requires trust and generosity. Many people assume that the chief obstacle to cooperation is hatred of the enemy. But surprisingly, a peculiar feature of the games-playing approach to human conflict is that it does not place any great emphasis on *hatred*. Hatred can, of course, make a conflict less easy to resolve. But hatred is in no way a *necessary* feature of an arms race. Indeed, it is important to realise just how fast and far a conflict can proceed without, as it were, ever an angry word being spoken.

Before the First World War, for example, the Germans did not hate the British, nor the British the Germans—far from it, they were in most respects firm friends: and the hatred that emerged was secondary, a consequence of the war rather than its cause. Similarly today, *at least at the level of professional war-planners*, there is as a matter of fact very little outright enmity. Why should there be? For in a curious sense the American and Soviet war-planners, in spite of being formal adversaries, are in fact allies with a common interest in the theory of deterrence and the problem of how to win a no-win game. The 'toys' they play with are only incidentally weapons designed to *hurt* other human beings—as if that too was some kind of unfortunate mistake. 'Hatred', as the American games-theorist Anatol Rappoport has put it, 'needs to play no role in the war-planners' involvement with the wherewithal of omnicide because it is no longer necessary to hate anyone in order to kill every one.'

Yet while 'hatred of the enemy' may not be a necessary feature of the drive to war, it is surely a facilitating factor, providing if nothing else a social context in which the war-planners can pursue their deadly games. Hatred, moreover, is a distorting emotion which when present is bound to block any rational analysis of how to achieve genuine security. It is in this area that I believe psychology still has to make its greatest contribution.

Why do people *dislike* other people? The obvious answer, you might think, is that we dislike others who either have or might cause *us* harm. But recently a surprisingly different answer has been coming forward. We dislike people not because of anything *they* have done to us but

because of the things *we* have done to them. In other words, hostility and hatred are self-fulfilling: we develop our hostile attitudes as a consequence of our own actions, *we learn by doing*.

If I hurt someone else, you might think that it would make me feel tenderly disposed to him. But research, especially on children, shows quite the opposite. A child who hurts another, even by accident, is more likely than not to think the worse of the victim—to invent reasons, in short, for why it served him right. And while adults generally have more sophisticated feelings, the same holds true. It is as though people need to rationalise their own actions after the event, and the only way to explain how we have caused harm to someone else is to persuade ourselves that in some way or another they deserved it.

We see it in a burglar who despises the householders he steals from. We saw it frighteningly in Vietnam, where American soldiers developed ever greater hatred for the peasants the more they killed and maimed them. And so all the way through to the behaviour of whole nations. The Nazis loathing the Jews *because* the Jews suffered at their hands, the Israelis hating the Palestinians because they are weak and poor.

More disturbing still, the acts of antagonism that lead to hatred do not even have to be real acts: they can be purely imaginary. If, say, I merely plan to hurt someone else, the very idea of the pain that I might cause him may lead me to devalue him. What, then, if the hurt I am planning is an act of ultimate destruction—nuclear obliteration? No wonder perhaps that Reagan sees the Russians as the ‘focus of evil in the modern world’, when every day he—Reagan—must live with the idea of *turning* Russia into Hell.

Let us note here one of the many paradoxes of nuclear weapons. No one can doubt any longer that their use would be an act of suicide. When Reagan imagines killing Russians he must imagine too killing his own countrymen and killing his own self. But if to kill someone even in imagination *leads* to hatred, the man with his finger on the button must slowly grow deep down to hate himself.

But there is another side to it, another side to this ‘learning by doing’. What psychologists have found is that just as hostility can be self-fulfilling, so can friendship be, so can love be. In fact perhaps it is not surprising that just as we need to find reasons to explain our own hostile actions, so we need reasons to explain our acts of generosity.

And so it happens that someone who is persuaded, even tricked, into being kind to someone else actually comes, as a result of his own actions, to value that other person more. A child, for example, who is encouraged by his teacher to make toys for poor children in hospital begins to reckon that the recipients deserve his help. The millions of people who have recently been giving money for Ethiopia almost certainly have come to care about its people more as human beings. Does the same principle

carry through right up to the behaviour of whole nations? The fact is, we do not know. Why not? *We do not know because it never has been tried.*

I was talking a few months ago to Ervin Staub, a Hungarian psychologist who has been responsible as much as anyone for this idea of 'learning by doing'. I asked him: just suppose that the United States were to find itself, by accident as it were, being generous to the Russians. Suppose the disaster at Chernobyl had been so overwhelming that the Russians had required the kind of aid that only the United States could give. Is it possible that such an unthought-out act of charity by the United States would have marked the end of the Cold War? Professor Staub's answer was that he had indeed hoped that it would happen: that out of darkness might have come an unexpected light. It did not happen. Must we wait now for an even bigger international disaster? Or might, just might, one side or the other have the spirit to extend the arm of friendship without prompting?

I do not often speak in churches. But when I do I will confess that the echo of the place gets to me, and I find myself wanting to quote passages of scripture. So let me end with that ambiguous and somewhat frightening injunction from St Matthew's Gospel:

Unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

I never understood it. But now I think I do. For in that parable of the talents, Jesus was perhaps talking first and foremost about human love: 'Unto everyone that hath love shall be given the power to love; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even the power which he hath.'

Consider the story in this light:

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them another five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained another two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth and hid his lord's money... 'I was afraid,' said the wicked servant, 'and went and hid thy talent in the earth'.

If the world is in peril—the title of our meeting—it may well be because we have hidden our talent for loving one another in the earth.