

X12 – EXchanging Worldviews, 12: EXploring Prospects for Peace & Prosperity, 4: EXposing Violence

Dear: In this chapter, toward my goal of exploring prospects for peace and prosperity, I want to examine the subject of violence. Be forewarned, however, that the subject is huge while my knowledge of it is meager. Consequently, I plan to stick to some “simple stuff” and to emphasize topics associated with my “assignment” – which, in case you’ve forgotten, was to try to answer a certain troublesome grandchild’s question about why I don’t believe in god.

In particular (as a continuation of my response “**Belief in god is bad science and even worse policy**” and specifically as a continuation of the “policy considerations” in the **P**-chapters), in this chapter I want to explore some aspects of the fact that belief in god has led to some horrible cases of religious and political leaders exploiting violence to try to gain and maintain power. The 9/11 terrorist attack was a particularly vivid example, but worse has occurred in the past and may occur in the future.

At that outset, let me admit (as I did in the **P**-chapters) that, just as there are many causes of serious problems for individuals, families, and larger groups besides those derived from religions, so also, there are many impediments to peace and prosperity besides difference in opinions about religions (e.g., resource depletion, poverty, starvation, poor education systems, atrocious social structures, ethnic hatreds, dictatorships...). If you would like to investigate some of the causes of war, you may want to begin by reading some of the lectures given by Nobel Peace-Prize laureates¹ and by reading some of the many thought-provoking articles at the website of one of the organizations that shared a Nobel Peace Prize, namely, the Pugwash site.² There you can find data and arguments supporting the idea that, especially during the past few hundred years, economic problems have been a far more common cause of war than religious differences.

¹ At <http://nobelprize.org/peace/laureates/>.

² <http://www.pugwash.org/index.htm>; in particular, see <http://www.pugwash.org/reports/pac/pacelist.htm>.

A similar argument is made in an article entitled *War and Religion: Is Religion to Blame?* in which Major John P. Conway states:³

Stanton A. Coblenz writes, “The greed of gain has been the incentive of fighting among peoples who are not warlike by nature and do not love war for it’s own sake.” By extension, if one side is fighting for gain, then another is fighting to prevent loss: self-preservation. The concept of ‘gain’ implicitly denotes a measure of economics that may be translated to property, wealth, trade, influence, or power. Religion most probably fits into the ‘influence’ category. This is an important distinction regarding religion as the causal factor for war.

Although the above comments by Conway may seem rather “neat and tidy”, wars are rarely so confined. Thus, I expect that the role of religion in war depends both on the war and which side one is on. For example, although Conway might argue that the ~1,400 years of wars initiated by Muhammad and his followers were to expand the “influence” of Islamic empires and that this “influence” was in large part dictated by economics, I suspect that, when threatened people received the ultimatum (similar to the ultimatum that the Old Testament claims the Israelites used) either to “**surrender to Allah**” (i.e., convert to Islam) or be slaughtered, then they were fairly well convinced that the prime driving force for the war was religion.

Further, even when religion is not an obvious prime cause of recent wars, yet in many cases, impediments to more peace and prosperity are derived from religious ignorance, e.g., pretending that some land was given to religious followers by their god, pretending that some racism was dictated by their god, or using religion to promote economic disparity, treating women as inferior to men, refusing to commit to realistic birth-control policies, etc. In addition, even when religious ignorance isn’t the obvious prime cause of either violence or deprivation, religion is commonly used by political leaders to “manipulate the masses”, trying to convince them that “God is on our side” in war or that “God ordains” some atrocious social structure (such as slavery or other “caste system”). As Gandhi said, “**Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is**”, and as explained more fully in a statement commonly attributed to the Roman philosopher Seneca the Younger (4 BCE – 65 CE), but as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, seems to have been a summary statement by Edward Gibbon: “**Religion is what the common people see as true, the wise people see as false, and the rulers see as useful.**”

³ http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume1/december_2003/12_03_2.html.

Political and religious leaders have frequently used religion to stimulate what can be a particularly dangerous “dynamic” of almost any group (families, gangs, religious and political organizations, nations). This dynamic is derived from the propensity of most people within most groups to find some (and in some cases, most) of their own identity within the group – and the more insecure and immature the individual, usually the more the individual finds his or her identity within the group.

For example, most family members, gang members, members of a particular religion, and citizens of any nation not only identify themselves as members of the group but also commonly feel that other members of the group represent them, i.e., they feel that accomplishments and tribulations (as well as compliments and criticism, etc.) of members of the group also reflect on them (witness the Mormons, Muslims, Catholics, etc.). Consequently, if any member of the group is criticized, insulted, deprived, dishonored... then it’s commonly taken also as personal attack – and other members commonly come to the member’s defense (especially if the leaders of the group manipulate the members with various types of “patriotic” propaganda). Thereby, the result can be “family feuds”, “gang violence”, “religious wars”, and wars between nations and “religious empires” (such as Islam).

But rather than my examining “expert opinions” about causes of war and deprivation (i.e., in general, about causes of various types of violence and power grabs) and about complications from religions, let me restart this chapter with some simpler stuff, more appropriate for people (such as you and me) whose knowledge about violence and power grabs has been derived mostly from personal experiences and observations. From yours, surely you agree that violence occurs in many forms and in a variety of dimensions.

SOME DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIOLENCE

For example, physical violence against individuals ranges from “a slap on the wrist” to torture, and physical violence against groups ranges from spraying them with fire hoses to exterminating them in gas chambers. In addition, there’s verbal violence against individuals and groups (calling people names, ostracizing them, etc.), which in turn is one form of emotional or psychological violence. Further, there’s sexual violence (a combination of physical and emotional violence), economic violence, cultural violence, and so on.

As for the relative significance of different types of violence, the other day I heard a teenage girl on TV express some folk wisdom well:

If someone hits you, the bruise heals in a week or so,
but people say things that just keep hurting.

And let me add my observation that females seem more prone to use psychological violence than do males, who seem more prone to physical violence. I suspect that the reasons are the obvious ones: women are usually more competent with words than men (and therefore capitalize on their advantages), while men are usually more physical (and commonly capitalize on their advantage).

It's obvious, also, that there are many different causes and consequences of violence (or reasons for and repercussions from violence). In some cases (on which I won't dwell), some very sick people seem to want others to suffer, perhaps wanting other to appreciate the pain that they've experienced or are experiencing. In more cases (I suspect), people resort to violence in an attempt to gain some power or maintain some "right" or "authority" (which they feel they "own"). In still other cases, people resort to physical violence in response to being subjected to other types of violence. For example, using psychological violence, "jocks" at school tease "nerds" who, "seeking justice", return to school with firearms and kill classmates, as recently seems to have occurred at Columbine High School in Colorado.⁴

Thereby, Dear, I trust you agree that a black-and-white view of violence (violence vs. nonviolence) is unrealistic. Not only are there many different types of violence and many gradations in each type but also there are a host of potential ramifications of each grade and type. For example:

- A lioness will use physical violence to curb a cub's undesirable activity,
- A mother will slap a child's hand (physical violence) that's reaching for the element of a hot stove,
- A child will tease another child (emotional violence) apparently for any of a huge number of reasons,

⁴ Actually, as far as I can discern, the cause of Columbine massacre is unknown – if there was a single cause. Speculative causes (many of which were apparently promoted to further the speculators' agendas) are quoted at http://www.religioustolerance.org/sch_viol.htm.

- A woman with a sharp tongue will insult a man (psychological violence) who may respond in a manner in which he has an advantage (physical violence),
- A grandfather will slap a grandchild (physical violence) to curb a grandchild's attempt to spit up food on the kitchen table (psychological and cultural violence),
- A mother will use emotional violence to get her child to believe in her religion, and
- What I'm now doing with this book is attempting intellectual violence against the ideas in which you have been indoctrinated!

In association with such examples, I'm tempted to comment on the morality of violence. To begin, I would ask the following: if 'morality' has meaning only with respect to some objective, if the only "absolute morality" is always to use your brain as best you can and if that "personal moral code" leads to an interpersonal moral code such as "everyone has an equal right to claim one's own existence", if in the cases under consideration and toward pursuit of one's dual survival goals, the objective is to influence (or gain power over) others, then what is the morality of using violence in such cases?

As you might imagine, answers to that question become quite involved, depending on the morality of attempting to influence which 'others' and on the perceived "best method" to attempt to influence them, i.e., what type of violence and how much. Consequently, I'll set aside such complications until near the end of this chapter, and instead (and toward the subject of prospects for peace), let me turn to additional "simple stuff", starting with those cases of physical violence that originate from differences in opinions.

CHOOSING TO RESOLVE DIFFERENT OPINIONS *via* VIOLENCE

From my observations of the behavior of certain grandchildren, three progressive (or better, "regressive") steps seem to lead to physical violence:

- 1) A difference in opinion arises that degenerates into an argument,
- 2) One side in the disagreement concludes that the argument can be settled by resorting to physical violence, and
- 3) Decisions by both sides that their side can win the argument *via* violence.

The initial difference in opinions (between grandkids, groups, or nations) can be derived from a huge range of topics: from who owns a particular toy,

to who owns particular watering-rights or who owns particular land; and from the meaning of some word, to some inferred insult or to how to placate some imagined giant Jabberwock (or magic man) in the sky.

To illustrate (although it would be more revealing if I could show you a video), how about if I just transcribe a recording:

That's mine.
'Tis not.
Gimme it.
Get away.
Why you.
Ouch... MOMMY!...

But, Dear, notice that in such a case – in contrast to the current situation in the world – some authority (some “governing body”) was available (“Mommy”) through whom justice could be sought and peace could be restored (at least temporarily). In later X-chapters, I’ll comment on the possibility for some authority (with its idea of justice) to similarly curb violence in the world by dictating peace. First, though, I want to comment on some alternatives for settling arguments. Some alternatives that are available, at least theoretically, include the following.

1. Eliminating the cause of the original difference in opinions *via* data

For this alternative to be successful, it’s essential that both sides agree to accept unequivocal data. For example, if I can show you that the toy has your adversary’s name on it, and not only that, but that your similar toy is where you left it, then those demonstrations should settle the argument – and lead to your apologizing. But when people form opinions based on zero data (such as the existence of some giant Jabberwock in the sky, or that their “holy book” is “true”, or that their religious leader is “infallible”, or that their god gave some land to them, or that, once conquered by their ancestors, some land is always theirs), then potentials are remote for eliminating the cause of the original difference in opinions.

The requirement that people agree to base their opinions on data is critical, but unfortunately, it’s commonly elusive. Thus, defenders of speculations about various gods commonly respond with idiotic statements such as: “There’s no proof that God doesn’t exist” – I suppose without realizing that the same can be said about invisible flying pink elephants and little green men from Mars. Thus, Dear, as I tried to show you in the first chapter

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dealing with “Truth” (T1), a premiss can’t be demonstrated to be false if no data support its presumption. As someone else said (something close to):

It’s unnecessary to disprove an assumption [e.g., about the existence of any god] that has no data to support it.

Yet based on such data-less premisses, millions of people have proceeded to murder other millions of people, “knowing” that “God is on our side”.

2. Resolution of the argument *via* dialogue

With this option, opinions may continue to differ, but through discussion, methods are found to learn to tolerate, accommodate, and maybe even to appreciate differences in opinion. Of course this method is promoted in our “politically correct” society, but in reality, the method has limited applicability. You may want chocolate ice cream and he may want strawberry, and a wise and wealthy grandfather may be able to purchase both, but wise and wealthy grandfathers aren’t always available!

More significantly, when the argument is derived not from differences in “tastes” (of ice cream or clothes or other customs) but from differences in worldviews and therefore in goals and therefore in values, then resolution through dialogue is usually impossible. In our society, illustrative are arguments about abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, pornography, etc. In the case of arguments between “modern” (humanistic) and “traditional” (religious) societies, illustrative are opinions about individual freedom *versus* “family honor”, the roles of women in society, and appropriate roles of clerics in society – besides cleaning toilets!

Thus (and to reveal my position in such arguments – just in case you didn’t know!), if one side in the argument clings to the worldview concocted by prehistoric savages that, if only the clerics’ rules are obeyed, then some giant Jabberwock in the sky will provide followers, for all eternity, with chocolate ice cream (or seventy virgins or whatever), while the other side commits itself only to principles established by the scientific method, then arguments are usually intractable and “interminable” (i.e., “so long and frustrating as to seem endless”). Both sides say: “There’s no point in arguing, their minds are made up.” In such situations, before initiating violence, the religious commonly resort to name-calling (“materialists”, “atheists”, “heavens”, “infidels”...); Humanists might respond with “fools”, “brain washed”, and

“brain dead”. If violence does erupt, both sides can view the total elimination of the other side as desirable – that is, a war of extermination.

3. Third Party Resolution

In some cases, before an argument escalates to violence, a resolution might be found that’s brokered by some third party (mother, grandfather, a social worker, some arbitrator, a judge, a nation’s legal system, an international tribunal). If both parties agree to abide by the arbitration or are forced to [by some police system, e.g., a father, a grandmother (!), a nation’s police, an international “police force”], then violence can usually be avoided – except for any violence that “the police” may initiate.

More important than agreeing to arbitration, however, is that the disputants agree to rely on data rather than dogma. If one side “knows” (or both sides “know”) that some giant Jabberwock in the sky is on their side, then arbitration in any form will lead, at most, to a temporary truce, not a resolution. Thus, one grandchild will begin to plan how to “get even”, the anti-abortionists will begin to try to change the law, and Islamic fundamentalists will begin to develop ICBMs to deliver their nuclear and biological weapons.

4. Appeasement, Capitulations, Pacifism

When physical violence becomes likely, one side in the dispute may agree to accommodate any demand from the other side and refuse to participate in such violence. Illustrative of such idiocy is “The Sermon on the Mount” as given in *Matthew* and *Luke* in the New Testament (but not contained in the earlier “gospels”, *Mark* or *John*, not contained in the Gnostic gospels, almost certainly never stated by any historic Jesus, but just written by some cowardly clerics):

Do not set yourself against the man who wrongs you. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him your left. If a man wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well.

The method doesn’t work, because (as, for example, Chamberlain found when he attempted to appease Hitler) a bully is emboldened through his dealings with cowards. As a result, cowards cause still greater sufferings for the bully’s subsequent victims.

5. Nonviolent Resistance

This procedure requires great courage and is successful only under special circumstances. Nonviolent resistance isn't appeasement or capitulation; it's resistance without reciprocating or resorting to physical violence.

Nonviolent resistance or protest was successfully applied in the US during the 1960s by Martin Luther King, who almost certainly was strongly influenced by its earlier and successful application in South Africa and India by Mahatma Gandhi. In turn, Gandhi was strongly influenced by precedents set by Ancient Hindus (and by the Buddha), by the successful application of nonviolent resistance in many western countries during the 19th and early 20th Centuries by the many women who led the Women's Suffrage Movement (seeking women's right to vote), and by the writings of Tolstoy, who in turn was influenced by the writings of Thoreau (who was also influenced by ancient Hindu and Buddhist texts).⁵

The method of nonviolent protest requires great courage, because continued violence of the other side is almost guaranteed. The "special circumstances" in which the method can be successful requires that a majority of people in the relevant society (who were originally uninvolved in the dispute) not only agrees with the position taken by the nonviolent side of the dispute but also shows willingness to support that side. That is, the nonviolent faction must be able to tap into "people power", feared by all political-leaders.

A case where the method failed, horribly, is the attempt by Chinese students to gain more freedom: for whatever reason, they were unable to stimulate enough "people power" to intimidate the Communist leaders. The result was the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre – for which the guilty Chinese Communists should never be forgiven. Similar failures and atrocities occurred in the US, e.g., in beatings and massacres of those who tried to organize unions and abolish slavery and, more recently, in the National Guard's shooting of 1960s students at Kent State University (wounding 13 and killing 4) who were opposed to the Vietnam War. Thus, there's no guarantee that arguments can be settled *via* nonviolent resistance.

⁵ Dear: I would encourage you to read Thoreau's essay *On Civil Disobedience* (which is available on the internet). Also, to begin to investigate the mentioned linkages among Gandhi, Tolstoy, Thoreau and others, see the article at <http://www.tamilnation.org/ideology/nonviolence.htm> by Hugh Tinker entitled *The Strength of an Idea*.

6. Temporary Capitulation

If either side in the original argument concludes that it can't win by violence, then commonly it capitulates – not usually with plans to adopt nonviolent techniques, but to regroup (usually with substantial animosity) until it regains some advantage.

In some cases it's astounding how long a group can sustain its animosity, waiting to strike back. A horrible example has occurred in the Balkans, where animosity was held in check for hundreds of years (from the time when the expansion of Islamic Ottoman Empire was forcefully stopped), and then broke out during the 1990s. Similar occurred in Ireland, with hundreds of years of animosity against the English. Another horrible example is behind the current “War on Terror” (or more accurately, the current war against Muslim supremacists), which I'll address in later paragraphs and chapters: in this case, animosities can be traced back more than 1,000 years.

7. Stalemate

If both sides conclude that they can't win by physical violence, then another alternative is for a stalemate to ensue. A stalemate is different from a temporary capitulation, in that both sides can continue to be bellicose and belligerent, e.g., during the nuclear stalemate of the Cold War.

Such stalemates continue until one side changes its opinion, capitulates, or initiates violence. In particular, the Cold War (which continued throughout most of my lifetime) ended when Mikael (or Mikkel) Gorbachev (the leader of the Soviet Union) changed his opinion, concluding that representative democracy was better than totalitarianism and committing himself and his nation to openness (Russian, *glasnost*) and restructuring (*perestroika*). Thereby, it's incorrect to say, “the West won the Cold War”; instead, to his unending credit, Gorbachev renounced and abandoned it.

8. The Choice of Physical Violence

But to move on (and then continue for the rest of this chapter), I'll now turn to the unfortunately common choice for “settling” arguments, namely, physical violence. Even Gandhi said:

I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence [italics added]... I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honor than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonor.

Yet, as Gandhi concluded, the choice of physical violence to settle an argument is almost invariably a bad one (albeit, maybe the lesser in a choice of evils), because almost invariably, physical violence begets more physical violence in the future. As he said: “[Life itself involves some kind of violence, and we have to choose the path of least violence.](#)”

Later in this chapter I’ll return to Gandhi’s idea (“[to choose the path of least violence](#)”). Generally it’s wise – but not always. For example, if someone threatens your life (psychological violence), if you’re convinced that the threat is real (e.g., he has a tire iron in his hand), if you can see no other immediate option (e.g., police protection), then “up the ante”: use your pepper spray on him or even shoot him.

Generally, however, civilized people agree that physical violence shouldn’t be used to try to settle arguments – almost by definition of ‘civilized’! As David Freidman said: “[The direct use of force is such a poor solution to any problem, it is generally employed only by small children and large nations.](#)” When at least one side chooses physical violence, then that decision carries with it the commitment to the law of the jungle: might makes right. In fact, in essentially all cases, the law of the jungle prevails – not only between the quarrelling parties but also between the combatants and whatever “peace maker” might be available. Thus, if “Mommy” couldn’t threaten violence against arguing kids (not necessarily physical violence, but violence against some “children’s rights” that she had granted or they had expropriated, such as being loved, having dinner, or watching TV), then she would almost never be able to bring peace between her quarreling children.

Similar occurs in all societies: if individuals or groups in any society attempt to settle arguments *via* physical violence (thereby agreeing that might makes right), then the police normally become involved – to demonstrate that, in fact, it is they (the police) who have the greatest might (temporarily and conditionally granted to them either by the ruler of a dictatorship or by the people of a democracy). Even for the case of nonviolent protests, their success depends on leaders’ fear of an aroused public’s might – not necessarily fear of mob violence, but that an aroused public may strip the country’s leaders of their powers. Thereby, one sees not only Heraclitus’ strife tugging at essentially all aspects of every society, but that various types and degrees of violence are at each end of the rope in every such “tug of war”.

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PHYSICAL VIOLENCE WITHIN NATIONS

Within every society, its government has essentially a monopoly on physical violence (*via* its police and armed forces), with this monopoly challenged only by “violent criminals”. In fact, one definition of a “violent criminal” (stripped of what’s superfluous) could be: someone who challenges the government’s monopoly on physical violence! Further, if you think about it for a bit, I expect you’ll see that, whenever a law is promulgated, violence of some sort (psychological, economic...) is done against some faction.

That each government, no matter the type, essentially monopolizes violence is acknowledged even in its definition. Thus, whether the government is a democracy [“the people rule”], a theocracy [“the god (or, more accurately, the clerics) rule”], an aristocracy [“aristocrats rule”], a plutocracy [“the wealthy rule”], a technocracy [“technocrats rule”], an oligarchy [“a small group of people rule”], or an autocracy (such as a monarchy) [“one person (e.g., a dictator) rules”], the common suffix in each of these words is derived from the Greek word *cratein* or *kratein*, which means “to rule” and which, in turn, essentially means “a monopoly on violence”.

Within every nation, whatever its type of government, there is then *relative* peace – in the sense that the state essentially monopolizes violence. It certainly doesn’t follow, however, that people will be satisfied with such peace. In the fundamental “society” (i.e., families) peace is normally maintained by the existing dictatorship, whether by a patriarch (father rules), a matriarch (mother rules), or some joint dictatorship – which probably explains a large part of the worldwide desire of teenagers to set out on their own, as soon as possible, free of dictatorships!

In larger nondemocratic nations, whether totalitarian (such as Communist China, Cuba, and North Korea) or authoritarian (such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria), dictators make the laws and enforce them through the state’s police – thereby ensuring relative peace. Under such peace, claiming the need for “law and order”, the Communist Chinese gunned down the students in Tiananmen Square, the dictator Saddam Hussein gassed thousands of Kurds, and so on.

In fact, R.J. Rummel has uncovered the absolutely astounding (and horrible) fact that 174 million unarmed or disarmed people were murdered by their

governments during the 20th Century.⁶ That is, approximately five times more people were murdered by their governments than the number of armed combatants killed in all 20th Century wars (the world's worst century of warfare). As Rummel states:

The most absolute power, that is, the communist USSR, China and preceding Mao guerrillas, Khmer Rouge Cambodia, Vietnam, and Yugoslavia, as well as fascist Nazi Germany, account for nearly 128,000,000 of [the total number of unarmed people murdered by governments]...

It's then no wonder that most people seek to escape dictatorships. Not all people in dictatorships, however, desire to escape, for any of a number of reasons:

- The rulers profit from their power,
- Some of the people (and in some cases, the majority of the people) profit from the totalitarian scheme (e.g., in communist dictatorships, the nonproducers – the majority in most societies! – profit from the state's control over the producers), and
- In essentially all dictatorships (including most families!), the dictators control the people's education and the press, thereby permitting those in power to indoctrinate the people about the advantages of their dictatorship and about enemies abroad.

In democracies, in contrast, the press is free; thereby, people are free to learn about the opinions of others. As Jefferson brilliantly wrote in a 1787 letter:

The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.

In that regard, maybe a dominant reason why democracy has been rapidly spreading throughout the world during that past 50-or-so years is the technological advances in communication, first *via* radio and satellite TV, and more recently *via* the wonderful internet – which is undoubtedly why remaining dictatorships (in China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria...) constrain access to the internet.

Also in contrast to the case of dictatorships, in democratic countries the laws are promulgated and their enforcements are controlled by representatives of

⁶ See, e.g., <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/VIS.TEARS.HTM>.

the majority of the people. Thereby, the people's opinions prevail – albeit sometimes in a manner tortured and twisted by political machinations. As a consequence, it's usually only repressed minorities (those unable to expropriate some particular “rights”) who try to escape “the tyranny of the majority”.

Normally, however, even minorities usually profit when the majority rules, not only because it's usually so difficult to get a majority of the people to agree on anything (including any law) but also because of the general “common sense” of most people. That is, courtesy Mother Nature, everyone has a fairly reliable concept of social justice (e.g., that generally you should get what you deserve and not get what you don't deserve). Also, most people recognize that almost everyone is a member of a minority in some respect (in this country, for example, a minority of the people goes jogging daily, a minority attends baseball games, a minority is Mormon, Muslim, Catholic, Humanist, and so on). Consequently, people (especially in heterogeneous societies such as ours) are generally reluctant to pass laws that discriminate against some minority, realizing that they could be among the next minority targeted by the majority.

Of course, horrible exceptions have occurred – and continue to occur – especially in more homogeneous societies (such as essentially all Muslim countries) and even in heterogeneous societies, in cases when oppressed minorities are easy to identify and the majority has some fear of the minority (e.g., during different periods in this country, Native-Americans, African-Americans, and Japanese-Americans). Through passing laws discriminating against minorities, the majority of people demonstrate their commitment both to “might makes right” and to “human rights be damned”. Thereby, “tyranny of the majority” in a democracy can be quite foul – but usually it's not so foul as tyranny in Muslim societies (where, e.g., apostates from Islam are executed) and in dictatorships (recall the data from Rummel that 174 million unarmed people were murdered during the 20th Century by their governments, almost all of which were dictatorships, not democracies).

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BETWEEN & AMONG NATIONS

Rummel has uncovered another critically important fact about democracies, namely, that they don't initiate wars against other democracies. I encourage you to explore his website to find additional details; here, I'll just quote a

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summary of his findings.⁷ Specific data that Rummel analyzed,⁸ which led to his finding that democratic (or, more accurately, “libertarian”) societies don’t attempt to settle their differences *via* war, are summarized as follows:

...if one defines an international war as any military engagement in which 1,000 or more were killed, then 353 pairs of nations engaged in such wars between 1816 and 1991. *None were between two democracies* while 155 pairs involved a democracy and a non-democracy and 198 involved two non-democracies fighting each other... The odds of this absence of war between two democracies being by chance is virtually 100 to 1.

As Rummel points out, the essence of this result was predicted by Immanuel Kant in his 1785 book *Perpetual Peace*. No doubt with consideration of the American Constitution, Kant (the philosopher who defined the “categorical imperative”: “Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”) wrote:

The republican constitution... gives a favorable prospect for the desired consequence, i.e., perpetual peace. The reason is this: if the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared (and in this constitution it cannot but be the case), nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war. Among the latter would be: having to fight, having to pay the costs of wars from their own resources, having painfully to repair the devastation war leaves behind, and, to fill up the measure of evils, load themselves with a heavy national debt that would embitter peace itself and that can never be liquidated on account of constant wars in the future.

But, on the other hand, in a constitution which is not republican, and under which the subjects are not citizens, a declaration of war is the easiest thing in the world to decide upon, because war does not require of the ruler, who is the proprietor and not a member of the state, the least sacrifice of the pleasures of his table, the chase, his country houses, his court functions, and the like. He may, therefore, resolve on war as on a pleasure party for the most trivial reasons, and with perfect indifference leave the justification which decency requires to the diplomatic corps who are ever ready to provide it.

⁷ R.J. Rummel is now Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Hawaii; his tremendous website (at <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/welcome.html>) contains at least 16 of his books and more than three dozen of his speeches and articles. For more details related to this quotation, see <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/MTF.CHAP1.HTM>.

⁸ Incidentally, Dear, Rummel’s statistical analysis of the data was similar to the Analysis of Variance (or ANOVA) method that I suggested could be used to determine why people are religious.

Rummel suggests additional details about why societies of free people don't make war on other societies of free people (see his article, posted on his website, entitled "The Democratic Peace: A New Idea?"), but rather than my reviewing his assessment, I'll just make a couple of obvious points. One of the most obvious points is that most people, when they were children, learned that physical violence is generally a poor way to try to settle arguments and that having friends is better than having enemies. Consequently, in spite of bullies, criminals, psychopaths, and bad influences from various aspects of "the culture of violence" (in everything from cartoons to glorifying war heroes rather than peace leaders), most people in most societies try to avoid violence: in fights, people can be hurt; in war, people can be killed; normally, neither promotes one's dual survival goals (survival of oneself and one's family).

Exceptions, however, do occur: some pathological people (e.g., serial killers) apparently relish violence; some religious fanatics willingly (even eagerly) accept "martyrdom" in their "holy war" to promote their cause (and to get into their assumed paradise); some megalomaniacal leaders [e.g., the probably fictional character Moses, Alexander of Macedonia, Julius Caesar, Muhammad, "Genghis Khan" (i.e., the "supreme leader" Temujin), Hitler, Stalin, Mao...] apparently have no qualms about sending their subjects to war. Thus, dictators do attack other dictatorships as well as democracies – and if their nations are attacked, most people in democracies are willing to fight back, to protect themselves.

Further, if to the general desire of most people to avoid physical violence is added two features of democracies, then one can begin to see why democracies don't usually initiate war against other democracies. One of these features is that, in democracies, the majority can usually steer public policies in the desired direction; consequently, whereas the majority prefer to avoid war, then such will be government policy. As President Eisenhower said:

I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than our governments. Indeed, I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it.

And the second feature of democracies that promotes peace is related to communications: in democracies, communications are generally unconstrained; consequently, although cases certainly arise where

differences in opinions between majorities of two democracies can become argumentative, communications remain sufficiently open that both sides can learn the bases of the other side's opinion; thereby, the obstinacy that's a common prelude to war can usually be averted.

In the case of a dictatorship, in contrast, communications are controlled and used to manipulate public opinion. Thus, as the Nazi's Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering (or Göring) claimed:

Naturally, the common people don't want war... but after all, it is the leaders of a country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country.

Notice that Goering claimed both that “the leaders of a country... determine policy” and that propaganda could be used to manipulate the majority even in a democracy, but Rummel's data (showing that democracies don't wage war on other democracies) suggest that, as was common with Goering, his claim exceeded what could be supported by data.

Recent events suggest, however, that leaders of democracies aren't above manipulating the masses (by manipulating data) to initiate war on nondemocratic countries. A case in point is the invasion of Saddam Hussein's Iraq mainly by the US and the UK (led by Bush and Blair). In a 1 May 2005 Reuters report entitled “Blair: Britain Discussed Early Plan to Topple Saddam”, dealing with a leaked memo whose contents Blair essentially verified, the following statement appears:

Britain's spy chief, Sir Richard Dearlove, fresh from a trip to Washington, had concluded that war was “inevitable” because “Bush wanted to remove Saddam through military action”, and “intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy”.

This was eight months before the US and the UK invaded Iraq. It'll be sad if both Bush and Blair aren't at least impeached for such violations of the public's trust.

But more generally, it's important to realize that war is more than physical violence: it's organized physical violence. In any war, therefore, the first,

most important, and continuing battle is for leaders to convince their followers that their side is right and the other side is wrong; that their side is good and the other, evil. As the dictator Napoleon said: “[In war, the moral element and public opinion are half the battle.](#)”

Thereby, religion commonly enters (and both Bush and Blair displayed substantial “religiosity”): since the principal purpose of religion is to lead its followers to “righteousness”, religion is commonly used to stimulate people to be willing to “do battle” against “evil”. Yet, religion isn’t essential. As the Communists demonstrated, it isn’t necessary to convince “the rabble” that God is on their side – but it does seem necessary to convince the majority that their side is “good” and the enemy is “evil”; to stimulate them to love their country and their comrades – and to hate the enemy.

During the past 20-or-so years, with the disintegration of the communist USSR, the subsequent formation of many new democracies, and the continuing improvements in communications (e.g., *via* the internet), Rummel’s discovery that democracies don’t initiate wars against other democracies provides a glimmer of hope for worldwide peace. Yet essentially simultaneously with democracy’s progress, much of the world has plunged into a worldwide “War on Terror”, causing the glimmer of hope to flicker and fade. As Michiko Katutani wrote in his 18 April 2005 *New York Times* book review of *The Battle for Peace* by General Tony Zinni [“former commander in chief of United States Central Command (Centcom) and Mr. Bush’s former envoy to the Middle East”]:

The Battle for Peace feels, in the end, less like a full-scale analysis than a warning, a warning that deserves serious consideration, given General Zinni’s Cassandra-like foresight on matters like Iraq.

With the end of the cold war, “violence may hit us – as it hit London in 2005, and as it hit us in 2001,” he writes. “But the violence will not be a World War III knockout blow.” Instead, there will be “hundreds of little” blows (ranging from terrorist attacks and global health epidemics to job losses and oil shortages), fueled by the growing instabilities of the world.

“We’re now [with the end of the cold war] in the position of the man who slept with a cobra,” he argues. “The cobra is gone. Now the room is full of bees. Could those bees kill him? Possibly. Possibly not.” But they present the specter of a “death of a thousand stings.”

Yet, I expect that most people are most concerned that “Islamic terrorists” (or “Muslim supremacists”) might obtain “weapons of mass destruction” (nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons), because based on the terrorists’ record, there’s little doubt that they’d try to use such weapons to murder millions of civilians living in democracies – which then returns me to the topic of the morality of violence, which I had set aside earlier in this chapter.

THE MORALITY OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

The morality of violence is complicated, in large measure because so many cases must be considered. In general, violence (of whatever type and degree) is what essentially everyone uses in an attempt to influence others. Therefore and as I mentioned already, addressing the “morality of violence” requires addressing, first, “the morality of attempting to influence others” and, then, “the morality of attempting to influence others using violence”. There are also the questions: who started the aggression, how, and why? And in dealing with any question about morality, of course there’s need to address the question: “Morality with respect to what objective(s)?” I don’t want to address all those questions, in part because going through so many details is “a pain”, in part because going through some of the details are personally painful, and in part because most of the details are all rather obvious. So, instead, I’ll mention just a few points.

For reason that I’ve already addressed in the **M**-chapters (dealing with Morality), consideration of the morality of violence from a religious perspective is (as Plato suggested) a waste of time: on the one hand, if a god doesn’t have some bases from which to judge morality, then he’s a tyrant whose ideas of morality are no better than some evil, earthly tyrant, whose tyranny we should try to terminate; on the other hand, if a god has some bases for his moral judgments, then we should proceed directly to try to understand the bases for those moral principles (or ethics). Consequently, although nonthinking humans have done and continue to do whatever their clerics told or tell them to do (e.g., kill the infidels, kill the unbelievers), thinking humans have tried to understand the bases of ethics, and as summarized by the New Oxford American Dictionary:

Schools of ethics in Western philosophy can be divided, very roughly, into three sorts. The first, drawing on the work of Aristotle, holds that the virtues (such as justice, charity, and generosity) are dispositions to act in ways that benefit both the person possessing them and that person’s society. The second, defended particularly by Kant, makes the concept of duty central to morality: humans are bound, from a

knowledge of their duty as rational beings, to obey the categorical imperative to respect other rational beings. Thirdly, utilitarianism asserts that the guiding principle of conduct should be the greatest happiness or benefit of the greatest number.

But all three of these “schools of thought” encounter troubles when trying to understand the morality of violence: the Aristotelian school encounters troubles in justifying the choice of “benefits” (e.g., in “the long run”, is it beneficial for a child to be punished with physical violence so he’ll subsequently behave?), the Kantian school encounters troubles in defining both “duty” and the “categorical imperative to respect other rational beings” (e.g., is it a parental “duty” to punish a child with physical violence for showing lack of respect to a parent?), and the Utilitarian school encounters troubles both in defining “happiness” and in trying to keep score (into the future, no less!) of the greatest benefit for the greatest number (e.g., is it wise to punish a child’s theft with physical violence to decrease the probability that he won’t later steal from others?). And more troublesome than all such concerns is that they don’t account for the basic concept behind all of morality: as with all values, moral values have meaning only relative to some objective; therefore, the fundamental question re. the morality of violence is: **What’s the objective?**

Now, as I’ve written so many times that it’s probably “driving you up the wall”, I maintain that the prime objective of all humans is a trio of survival goals (of themselves, their “families”, and their values). Further, as I tried to show you (e.g., in the V-chapter, dealing with Values), essentially all our values (save, e.g., those dealing with aesthetics) are derived from our dual survival goals. It’s unfortunately the case that so many humans have succumbed to wishful thinking (rather than rely on the scientific method), “concluding” that they have the opportunity to live forever – provided that they do as their clerics tell them. If the clerics tell them, for example, to “kill the unbelievers” in some Jihad, then the brainwashed automatons proceed to do so. But setting all such idiocy aside (i.e., that any cleric knows the will of any god and that any god dictated any morality), I’ll now turn to the question of the morality of violence as judged by Humanists.

Using the pronoun ‘you’ rather than ‘one’ to simplify the wording, I maintain that: 1) if the majority of your values (save those based on your “instinctive” and possibly “inherent” values of symmetry, harmony, beauty, and similar) are based on your dual survival goals (of yourself and your “family”, out to an including all life) rather than on what the clerics claim

was dictated by their god(s), and 2) if you use your brain as best you can (viz., be moral!), then those dual survival goals will provide you with a sound basis for essentially all your “moral decisions”. Further, if you realize that normally you can’t help family members (including, e.g., all humanity) if you’re dead, then you might conclude that your prime goals are to try to survive and to help humanity continue to evolve – to become a more intelligent, creative, compassionate... species. Then, your values follow.

Thus, once you’ve adopted objectives, then you have standards against which you can measure your moral values. For example, if your objective is to try to help intelligent life evolve (to try to help humanity solve its problems more intelligently), then almost certainly, you’d concur with various “interpersonal moral codes” such as: “try to be kind to others – with keenness” and “love one another – within limits” (because “what goes around, comes around”), “everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence” (because you, also, want such a “right”), and “without their knowledge and consent, never use people as a means to an end” (again, because that’s how you want to be treated).

Further and more to the point re. physical violence, almost certainly you’d conclude that it’s moral to try to influence others (no matter whom) if your purpose is either for your own survival (although generally not at someone else’s expense) or to help them and humanity survive, thrive, and continue to evolve. Therefore, given that there are conditions under which it’s morally defensible to try to influence others, the challenge is to determine the best way to try to influence them – which sometimes might include using physical violence (just as a lioness uses violence to try to help her cub).

To determine the “best way” to try to influence others, you’ll need to continue to be moral, that is, continue to use your brain as best you can – to evaluate details of each circumstance. And although it’s essentially impossible to illustrate all such details, I’ll mention at least three general cases, distinguished by who has gained authority over (and associated responsibility for) whom.

1. Interactions in which you’re in a “superior” position

In such cases (the parent in a parent-child relationship, the teacher in a teacher-student relationship, the boss in a boss-worker relationship, the employer in an employer-employee relationship, anyone – including any government official – in authority in any hierarchical organization), then

when you find that your responsibilities require that you try to influence subordinates, you must (to be moral) seek to identify and use the minimum type and amount of violence.

For parents, for example, finding an effective “minimum violence” is extremely challenging, especially in the case of young children (whose ability to comprehend displeasure with their behavior is limited) and in cases when a rapid decision is needed (e.g., a child in danger). And let me add from personal experiences that, if a parent (or grandparent granted authority by parents) chooses to use physical violence to try to influence a child, then the parent can simultaneously do lasting psychological violence not only to the child but also to himself or herself, i.e., there’s truth in the adage: “[This will hurt me more than it will hurt you.](#)” As a case in point, once I decided to spank my daughter; to this day, I regret that decision.

2. Interactions between “equals”

When neither party is “superior” or “subordinate” (e.g., interactions between children, between adults, between independent states, etc.), experience recommends and therefore prudence dictates using minimum violence. In such cases and when you feel morally justified in initiating attempts to influence the other party, then as Gandhi recommended, always seek to identify and use the minimum type and amount of violence that you think will be successful. For example, if you seek to change a friend’s behavior (e.g., because her behavior seems potentially dangerous either to you or to your friend), then you might try to determine the cause of your friend’s behavior and then carefully discuss with your friend your assessment of the potential causes, leaving it to your friend to judge the assessment and to define corrective actions. As Dean Rusk said: “[The best way to persuade people is with your ears – by listening to them.](#)”

On the other hand, if the other party initiates some type of violence against you, experience recommends attempting to decrease the level and type of violence. As Gandhi said: “[An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.](#)” For example, if an acquaintance says to you “[You sure looked stupid at last night’s party](#)” (psychological violence), then rather than escalating the violence by hitting the person (physical violence) or reciprocating with an even worse insult (e.g., with “[Well, you look stupid all the time](#)”), and rather than maintaining the level of violence (with, e.g., “[Yah, so did you](#)”), it’s wiser to attempt to decrease the level of violence (with, e.g., “[Oh – well, since you looked so good, I wonder if you could help](#)”

me to improve my appearance”). As is said: “You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar”, i.e., you can win people to your side more easily by gentle persuasion and flattery than by hostile confrontation.

In some cases, however, when the other party initiates physical violence (e.g., another nation starts a war), then unfortunately, it’s sometimes necessary not only to respond in kind but even to increase the level of violence, in an attempt to win the war. For example, it would have been immoral (i.e., dumb) not to attempt to defeat Hitler, but the morality of dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is debatable: maybe American could have ended the war equally rapidly by, for example, dropping the bombs on an unoccupied part of Japan. In any case, the consequences of escalating the level of violence can be dangerous and the outcome is always uncertain. For example, in the case of “the war against [Islamic] terrorism”, what would be the consequences if America now initiated psychological violence by informing the terrorists that if they hit us with a weapon of mass destruction, then we’ll obliterate Mecca?

3. Interactions in which you’re in a “subordinate” position

In such cases (the child in a child-parent relationship, the student in a student-teacher relationship, the worker in a worker-boss relationship, the employee in a employee-employer relationship, the citizen in the citizen-state relationship), as you well know (because such has been the majority of your experiences!), it’s best to carefully choose how much and what kind of violence you use to try to influence your “superior”. For example, a certain grandchild was definitely in error by attempting to influence a certain mother by hitting her (and I think it was wrong of the mother to tolerate such behavior).

On the other hand, trying to influence a “superior” by ingratiating oneself seems almost equally offensive (in this case, offensive to the sycophant’s self esteem – where as you may know and can probably deduce, a ‘sycophant’ is “somebody who servilely or obsequiously flatters a powerful person for personal gain”, e.g., all religious people who try to influence some god). Instead, when you’re convinced of the morality of attempting to influence your superior, then the wisdom of experience is to seek an effective mean (or middle position) between rebellion (whether physical or not) and acquiescence.

This “experience” has been long and slow in developing. A huge number of errors can be seen in the methods told in the stories about Moses (e.g., physical violence against the Egyptians and against “nonbelievers”, rather than the nonviolent methods adopted by Hindus of the same time period) and about Jesus (e.g., physical violence against the money changers – rather than, for example, attempting to convince the priests that money-changing shouldn’t be permitted near the Temple). Similar errors were made by Muhammad (whose violence, as I reviewed in **Qx**, pollutes much of the Koran), and in the American, French, and Russian revolutions. In fact, one of the worst features of communism was its commitment to violent revolution, leading to the horrors of Stalin and Mao – and similarly for the horrible atrocities committed by fascist Germany, Italy, and Japan.

In contrast, from the ancient Hindus and Buddhists (descriptions of which, as I already mentioned, seem to have influenced Thoreau and then Tolstoy, who in turn may have influenced the women in the Women’s Suffrage Movement), a method of nonviolent resistance against “superiors” developed and was perfected by Mahatma [“the great soul”] Gandhi and by Martin Luther King, and has subsequently been used by many groups, including those led by Nelson Mandela. In this method, which requires great courage, patience, and endurance, people confront “superiors” but always with less violence than is perpetrated against them.

And let me add, Dear, that although Gandhi (and Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela) preached “nonviolence”, and although you can find many statements that I consider to be misleading about their method, I hope you’ll see that, in reality, they “just” promoted confronting the violence perpetrated against them (physical and social, mostly perpetrated by local “authorities”) by using other types and degrees of violence (economic, psychological, and cultural). Thereby, although they didn’t avoid violence, yet to their great credit, they tried to minimize it – and they specifically excluded the use of physical violence. As Gandhi said:

*In the application of *Satyagraha* [literally, “holding onto truth”] I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not permit [physical] violence being inflicted on one’s opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears [to be] truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of [one’s idea of] truth, not by the infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one’s self.*

Thereby, Dear, in all three cases listed (whether you're "superior", "equal", or "subordinate"), the best method, the most intelligent method, the "moral method" of attempting to influence others (assuming that you've concluded that it's morally acceptable to try to influence them) is almost always to use the least amount of the most gentle type of violence that might achieve the desired result. Stated differently, almost always seek to diminish violence.

Not always, however, because as I've already mentioned, there are exceptional cases. Let me make a few comments about three special cases that immediately come to mind.

- 1) In the parent-child (or guardian-child) relationship, parents have a long-term (sometimes even a lifetime) responsibility; therefore, their choices of methods to attempt to influence their children should attempt to evaluate long-term consequences. For example, a mother would be wise to take significant steps to stop her child from hitting her, because if she fails to terminate such behavior, the consequences for future women (not to dwell on the consequences for her child) could be horrible. In this case, therefore, I think that escalating the violence by physically punishing her child would be wise: the child must learn that such behavior is not tolerated and never will be – and it will incur significant punishment.
- 2) In relationships between a state's government and citizens, the government must have a monopoly on physical violence (if anarchy is to be avoided), but citizens grant (democratic) governments this monopoly subject to the condition that government officials then protect agreed-upon rights of the citizens. Such "rights" differ in different cultures, but surely all societies strive to what Thoreau described in the final paragraph of his essay *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (which I know that I've already quoted, but its worth re-quoting – even memorizing!):

The authority of government... is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it. The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual. Is a democracy, such as we know it [in 1849], the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State, until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power (from which all its own power and authority are derived) and treats him accordingly.

Einstein said similar: "The only justifiable purpose of political institutions is to assure the unhindered development of the individual."

- 3) A third exceptional case deals with interactions between various groups, such as between nations or between democratic nations and "terrorists", but I don't plan to try

to squeeze all my comments about this case under this subheading: they'll keep me busy in chapters to follow!

Instead, below, I'll start addressing this third case by commenting just on the concept of "ideology" and on violence that has been associated with the ideologies known as Communism, Fascism, and Islam.

VIOLENCE ASSOCIATED WITH IDEOLOGIES

Dear: ideologies needn't lead to violence (witness Gandhi's ideology of nonviolence!), but many ideologies (e.g., communism, fascism, religious fundamentalism such as Islamism) have led to horrible violence, including wars. To see why, I'll first try to explain my summary:

People possess ideas; ideas possess ideologues.

To see what I mean, Dear, first realize that, although everyone has a worldview (i.e., a personal and more-or-less comprehensive idea or "picture" or "viewpoint" or "mental image" of the universe and how and where he or she fits into it), yet fortunately for humanity, not everyone promotes an ideology.

In fact, even my German shepherd ("Heidi") seems to have a worldview: that your grandmother is to feed her, that I'm to take her for walks in the desert, and that she owns our yard. But an ideology goes further than a worldview, in that (according to the dictionary that comes with this word processor, Word) an ideology is: "a closely organized system or beliefs, values, and ideas [i.e., a worldview] forming the basis of a social, economic, or political philosophy or program" [underlining added]. Thus, an ideology includes a "program" that almost invariably includes active promotion of one's worldview. For example, the component of Heidi's worldview in which she thinks she owns our property leads her to conclude that strangers (including most dogs and all cats!) don't belong on it – and leads her to the ideology (the "program") to defend her property by confronting intruders!

What I hope you see, Dear, is that, although any ideology contains a worldview, an ideology is more than a worldview: people adopt worldviews, but they promote ideologies – and the promotion of various ideologies (fascism, communism, religious fundamentalism of various forms) has led to a huge number of horrible wars. I therefore summarize:

People possess worldviews, but in extreme cases (e.g., in Communism, Fascism, and religious fundamentalisms such as Islamism), ideologies possess people.

I should add that people can have similar worldviews but different ideologies. For example, all Muslims have similar worldviews (as do all Mormons, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Humanists...), but the ideologies of all Muslims (for example) needn't be similar.

Thus, if pressed to describe their ideology, most Muslims would probably say their “ideology” was similar to that of most people: **live and let live** (provided others don't bother them). Islamic fundamentalists (or “Muslim supremacist” or “Islamists”), on the other hand, promote their “glorious plan” or “program” (ideology) in which everyone in the world is to be a devout (fundamentalist) Muslim, ruled by barbaric laws dictated by fundamentalist Muslim clerics. As I'll show you in a later X-chapter, similar ignorant (and therefore immoral) ideology is promoted by this country's Christian fundamentalists (or “Christianists”).

During my lifetime, the ignorant (immoral) ideologies of Fascists and Communists had to be defeated, so the rest of us could generally “**live and let live**”. Fascism is defined as “**any... ideology that favors dictatorial government, centralized control of private enterprise, repression of all opposition, and extreme nationalism.**” Pushed by corporate interests in the 1930s, fascist Japan invaded China, fascist Italy invaded Ethiopia, fascists defeated and slaughtered the socialists in Spain, and fascists in Germany and Austria united the two countries – and subsequently grabbed more territory during WWII, with a prime driver being industrialists' fear of communism.

Meanwhile, although the Communists in the USSR and in China nationalized all industries (decimating all corporate power), the fundamental immorality of their ideology was to adopt a policy of violent revolution. Thus, the founders of communism (Marx and Engels) concluded that revolution was inevitable, and then Lenin and Stalin (and later, Mao, Pol Pot, Castro, and others) adopted violent revolution as the key policy of communist ideology.

Simultaneous with the expansion of communism, though, and continuing a trend that had a long history, corporate interests were financially corrupting democratic nations, particularly ours. As I already mentioned, most democratic countries are currently organized around one of many variations

of constrained capitalism. In such schemes, the freedom of the people to choose which “levers” to try to operate their portion of the economy is rightfully recognized as fundamental to all their freedoms.

Experience has shown, however, that such economic freedom can easily lead to attempts by various corporations (and with varying degrees of success) to manipulate the government, causing serious problems for the society, constraining people’s freedoms. Such corruption of political processes by economic factors and factions, especially from large corporations, is currently one of the most serious problems threatening democracies throughout the world

Powerful economic interests (including individuals, religions, and corporations) have undoubtedly sought to influence all types of governments. When they’re successful, fascism usually results. As Benito Mussolini (the fascist dictator of Italy) said:

Fascism should more appropriately be called ‘Corporatism’, because it is a merger of State and corporate power.

Actually, though, fascism isn’t restricted to alliances between corporations and governments. As the (unknown) author of the web page at <http://www.eurolegal.org/useur/usneocon2.htm> wrote:

The essence of fascism is not men strutting around in black or brown shirts. It is the transformation of the primary purpose of the state from the promotion and protection of individual liberties to the promotion and protection of “the corporate interest”, where “the corporations” are not just the business entities but also all other forms of collective: unions, professional bodies, even the churches, are all treated as corporations... The state becomes the protector and promoter of the corporate interest and the arbiter between competing interests, and the liberty of the individual is subordinated to the corporate interest as perceived by the state.

Current examples of such “[promotion and protection of... \[religious\] interests](#)” include those between the Catholic Church and governments throughout the world,⁹ as well as between the Mormon Church and local and state governments in Utah and Arizona. Currently, however, the most blatant cases of “[promotion and protection of... \[religious\] interests](#)” occur in the Arab world. Thus, the prime function of governments in essentially

⁹ For example, see <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601109&sid=afC8F.fnUKvg&refer=home> for an example of attempts by the Catholic Church to hang on to power (and money!) in Spain by having Catholics vote in opposition to Spain’s current (2008/02/07) ruling party.

all Muslim countries is, not to protect the rights of individuals, but to protect “Islam”, i.e., the clerics’ grip on the throats of the people. In turn, though, most of the people have been so brainwashed by their clerics that they’re prepared to wage Jihad against anyone who tries to pry the clerics’ hands from the people’s throats! Consequently, the term “Islamic fascists” is appropriate when (as in Iran) the government’s prime goal is to protect, not the people, but Islam.

In general, fascism results when powerful economic (or religious) interests effectively take control of any government – no matter if the government is advertised to be authoritarian, communist, democratic, theocratic, totalitarian, or whatever. When fascists gain control, invariably the rights that people have expropriated are sacrificed for the sake of some “corporate” interests (including religions). In *Fascism Anyone?* Laurence Britt identifies 14 characteristics common in fascist regimes. His comparisons of Hitler, Mussolini, Suharto, Pinochet, and Franco yielded the following fourteen common traits.¹⁰

1) Powerful and continuing nationalism

Fascist regimes tend to make use of patriotic mottos, slogans, symbols, songs, and other paraphernalia. Flags are seen everywhere as are patriotic symbols on clothing, public displays, and cars.

2) Disdain for the recognition of human rights

Because of the fear of enemies and the need for security, the people in fascist regimes are persuaded that human rights and civil liberties can be ignored in certain cases because of ‘need’. The people tend to look the other way or even approve of torture, summary executions, long incarcerations of prisoners without trial, etc.

3) Identification of enemies/scapegoats as a unifying cause

The people are rallied into a unifying patriotic frenzy over the need to eliminate a perceived common threat or foe: ethnic or religious minorities, liberals, communists, terrorists, etc.

4) Supremacy of the military

Even when there are widespread domestic problems, the military is given a disproportionate amount of government funding, and the domestic agenda is neglected.

¹⁰ Available at <http://www.oldamericancentury.org/14pts.htm>.

5) Rampant sexism

The governments of fascist nations tend to be almost exclusively male-dominated. Under fascist regimes, traditional gender roles are made more rigid. Opposition to abortion is high, as is homophobia, and anti-gay legislation is national policy.

6) Controlled mass media

Sometimes the media is directly controlled by the government, but in other cases, the media is indirectly controlled by government regulation, or sympathetic media spokespeople and executives. Censorship, especially in war time, is common.

7) Obsession with national security

Fear is used as a motivational tool over the masses.

8) Religion and government are intertwined

Governments in fascist regimes tend to use the most common religion in the nation as a tool to manipulate public opinion. Religious rhetoric and terminology is common from government leaders, even when the major tenets of the religion are diametrically opposed to the government's policies and actions.

9) Corporate power is protected

The industrial and business aristocracy of a fascist nation often are the ones who put the government leaders into power, creating a mutually beneficial business/government relationship for the power elite.

10) Labor power is suppressed

Because the organizing power of labor is the only real threat to a fascist government, labor unions are either eliminated entirely or are severely suppressed.

11) Disdain for intellectuals and the arts

Fascist regimes tend to promote and tolerate hostility to higher education and academia. It is not uncommon for professors and other academics to be censored or even arrested. Free expression in the arts is openly attacked, and governments often refuse to fund the arts.

12) Obsession with crime and punishment

Under fascist regimes, the police are given almost limitless power to enforce laws. The people are often willing to overlook police abuses and even forego civil liberties in the name of patriotism. There is often a national police force with virtually unlimited power in fascist nations.

13) Rampant cronyism and corruption

Fascist regimes almost always are governed by groups of friends and associates who appoint each other to government positions and use governmental power and authority to protect their friends from accountability. It is not uncommon in fascist regimes for national resources and even treasures, to be appropriated or even outright stolen by government leaders.

14) Fraudulent elections

Sometimes elections in fascist regimes are a complete sham. Other times elections are manipulated by smear campaigns or even assassination of opposition candidates, use of legislation to control voting numbers or political district boundaries, and the manipulation of the media. Fascist nations also tend to use their judiciaries to manipulate or control elections.

And yes, Dear, if you're concerned that America is beginning to show signs of becoming a fascist state, then you're among many who are similarly concerned.

Relative to concern about American fascism, I should mention that, ever since the time of the ancient Greeks, there has been concern that business leaders could gain (and, in many cases, did gain) too much power. Probably such concern has been expressed ever since traders began to accumulate wealth – and notice that the patriarch of the Jewish people, Abraham, was a trader, as was the founder of Islam, Muhammad. As the Scottish economist-philosopher Adam Smith (the founder of modern economic theory, who lived from 1723–1790 and who published his famous book *Wealth of Nations* in 1776) saw it:

People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.

Earlier, in his *Essays (1741–1742) of Civil Liberty*, the Scottish philosopher David Hume assessed the cause of such conspiracy as follows: “**Avarice, the spur of industry.**”

As I reminded you in an earlier X-chapter, James Madison (writing in the FEDERALIST No. 10 in 1787) bemoaned the “factious spirit” as follows:

... the prevailing and increasing distrust of public engagements, and alarm for private rights, which are echoed from one end of the continent to the other... must be chiefly, if not wholly, effects of the unsteadiness and injustice with which a factious spirit has tainted our public administrations.

Aware of such “unsteadiness and injustice”, the framers of our Constitution attempted to constrain factions, especially the “factious spirit” of economic groups. Unfortunately, however, they failed – a conclusion supported by substantial evidence. For example, in the 1830s and again in the 1860s,

manufacturing factions in the Northern States sought and obtained import taxes on manufactured goods from Europe – to the advantage of manufactures in the Northern States and to the disadvantage of agricultural exporters (and the public) in Southern States. That (not the immorality of slavery) seems to have been the prime cause of America's Civil War. After the Civil War, in a letter to Col. William F. Elkins dated 21 Nov. 1864, President Lincoln warned:

We may congratulate ourselves that this cruel war is nearing its end. It has cost a vast amount of treasure and blood... It has indeed been a trying hour for the Republic; but I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. As a result of the war, corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people, until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed. I feel at this moment more anxiety for the safety of my country than ever before, even in the midst of war.

An example of Lincoln's prescience was the Rockefeller family, as is illustrated in a 2004 survey article by Jim Macgregor:¹¹

It was not until 1850 that most white adult males [in the US] could vote; a time when the ideal of the "poor boy made good" was coming to be seen as the American dream. One such dreamer was John D. Rockefeller, born in the US in 1839, the son of a quack con-man who sold expensive "miracle cures" (Seneca oil) to people with cancer. Rockefeller inherited his father's business ethics and became a war profiteer during the Civil War. While hundreds of thousands were dying for their cause, he amassed wealth by selling liquor at vast profit to Federal troops. With the proceeds Rockefeller bought into small oil concerns and by 1870, had enough money to set up the Standard Oil Company.

Over the next thirty years, Rockefeller also bought up railroads and banks and acquired a near monopoly of the US petroleum industry. By the turn of the century, he was counted among the richest men in the world. He financed numerous fine churches and institutions, including the University of Chicago. [One] perception was of an extremely generous, Christian benefactor and philanthropist, but... reality was very different. Journalist Ida Tarbell wrote that Rockefeller was involved in many illegal activities and in her book, *The History of The Standard Oil Company*, published in 1904, exposed how big corporations were controlling the press and government. "Its power [Standard Oil] in state and federal government, in the press, in the college, in the pulpit, is generally recognized."

¹¹ Article available at <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article7553.htm>.

In 1906, approximately 50 years after Lincoln expressed his “anxiety” over “money power”, President Theodore Roosevelt experienced such power and stated:

Behind the ostensible government sits enthroned an invisible government owing no allegiance and acknowledging no responsibility to the people. To destroy this invisible government, to befoul the unholy alliance between corrupt business and corrupt politics is the first task of the statesmanship of the day.

During the twentieth century, members of this “invisible government” are generally recognized to be the Rockefeller, Harriman, Bush, and Kennedy families, the Dulles brothers (one became Secretary of State, the other became director of the CIA), and Henry Kissinger. In 1961, approximately 50 years after President Theodore Roosevelt’s warning, President Eisenhower warned about “the military-industrial complex”:

We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.

President John F. Kennedy must have seen similar. Just after he fired Allen Dulles as director of the CIA and announced plans to pull US “advisors” out of Vietnam, he said (in a speech at Columbia University, 10 days before he was assassinated):

The high office of President has been used to foment a plot to destroy the American’s freedom, and before I leave office I must inform the citizen of his plight.

Now, another ~50 years still later, similar warning are still being made (e.g., by 2004 Presidential candidate Senator John McCain) about the corruption of democratic institutions by “big business” and “big money”.

Further, such corruptions certainly aren’t restricted to the US – and the potential for such corruptions throughout the world seem to be increasing. Thus, during your lifetime, almost certainly you’ll be impacted by what many people throughout the world have concluded is a new ideology, which in their opinion is spreading around the globe like a cancer and must be stopped. It’s variously called consumerism, capitalism, global-capitalism, new- (or neo- or modern-) imperialism, or globalism.

To be sure, capitalism is spreading throughout the globe *via* international investments and transnational corporations. For example, Dear, in your

mutual funds you own small parts of many trans-national companies (including Apple Computer, Microsoft, Shell, Sony, and so on). Also, there's no doubt that such corporations are having major impacts throughout the world: through the use of their products (thereby causing "cultural homogenization"), through their employment practices (boosting employment in "underdeveloped countries", but paying the workers a small fraction of the salaries of workers in "developed countries", thereby reducing employment in such countries), and through dealings with local governments in various ways (quite likely some of which wouldn't be approved by citizens if their government's activities were transparent), potentially corrupting local governance.

It is, however, difficult for me to accept that this globalization should be described as an ideology – except in so far as it conforms to an idea that I have come to accept, namely: "If in doubt, let the system be free." For example, I'm sure that the prime goal of Steve Jobs (the founder and head of Apple Computer – and someone I admire) is not to force anything on anybody but to do his best to make sure his company makes adequate profits, so that it can continue to provide, to as many people as possible, the best possible hardware and software at the most competitive price.

Similarly at Microsoft: if Bill Gates (whom I don't admire so much – because he seems more wily than wise) attempts to dominate the market in operating-system or internet-browsing software (and fails), attempts to dominate the software market in Europe or Brazil (and fails), or decides to hire software writers in India and China and so on, then I don't see this as a threatening ideology (so long as government officials are responsible to the people, aren't bought off, and are able to keep the marketplace competitive and free) – although the economic threats to workers in "developed countries" certainly is real.

Stated differently, to me the "ideology" of globalization seems to be the expansion of freedom (of the people and in the marketplace), and provided that the people through their governments can ensure that "the playing field" is level, then I don't object to the propagation of such an "ideology" – although I'm painfully aware that my grandchildren will need to struggle harder to successfully compete against struggling children in China, India, and throughout the world.

Yet, Dear, be aware that history and current events show that democracies certainly aren't immune to financial corruption, and further, that such corruption has led (and continues to lead) not to more peace and prosperity but to more deprivation and war. As Kofi Anan (a former Secretary General of the UN) said during his speech accepting the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize (awarded to him and to the UN):

The obstacles to democracy have little to do with culture or religion, and much more to do with the desire of those in power to maintain their position at any cost. This is neither a new phenomenon nor one confined to any particular part of the world.

In that regard, Osama Bin Laden and his ignorant Muslim supremacists have set the world back, perhaps as much as a century. Thus, “statism” took a wonderful blow when Gorbachev opened up the Soviet Union, but thereby, leaders of the US and other western nations were weakened tremendously: power mongers running their nations lost their major excuse for their continued hold on power! Now, though, and no doubt with the power mongers tremendous (but silent) thanks to Bin Laden, they have a new excuse for maintaining their grip on their power over the people. As Norman Mailer wrote (*US News & World Report*, 18 February 2002):

The right wing benefited so much from September 11 that, if I were still a conspiratorialist, I would believe they'd done it.

Now, Dear, from personal experiences with many individuals (including my mother) and from observations and reading many tirades, I know that many humans have a tendency to succumb to conspiracy theories. Probably this tendency had survival advantage (maybe it still does); it seems to be a component of “the herd instinct”; taken to extremes, it leads to “persecution complexes” (paranoia), which I think is common for schizophrenics. Nonetheless, there is the familiar line “I'm not paranoid; people are out to get me”, and when a string of presidents (from Jefferson and Lincoln through to Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Kennedy) warn about “money power”, then it would seem to be prudent to be concerned that corporations in America (and elsewhere) have gained too much power – just as corporations did in Italy, Japan, and Germany during the 20th Century.

But returning to my assignment, I should add that not all influences of religion are bad and that some very bad stuff has occurred with no help from religion. For example, two of the best “political problem-solvers” during the 20th Century were Gandhi and King, both of whom were religious and relied

on their religions to lead their followers. Meanwhile, three of the worst “political problem-makers” during the 20th Century were Marx’s principal followers, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, who were opposed to all religions. Therefore, religion is not necessarily the most appropriate topic on which to focus – except for a certain old grandfather who is trying to complete an assignment given to him by a certain troublesome grandchild, who should be out getting more exercise!