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## PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

### Power: Its biological nature and its human elaborations

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#### ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the evolutionary reality of power-driven competitive humans. It documents how evolutionary biologists describe successful power-driven males as ‘alpha males’ and later references Darwin’s extensively documented account of ‘the law of battle’ that drives male–male competition for females on behalf of reproduction. The article proceeds to show how male–male competition across species has been exapted by humans in their harming and killing of other humans in wars of all kinds: ethnic, religious, territorial, racial, and so on. The article questions whether war is an inevitable practice of humans. It continues by exemplifying wars in today’s global world; wars activated by power-driven autocratic leaders and their power-driven followers. The closest psychotherapy comes to recognizing the sickness of such power-driven humans is via diagnoses of narcissism that take addictions into account. Self-addiction, however, is not among the addictions taken into account. In effect, no matter the cost to other humans, power-driven self-addicted humans are not recognized as psychologically deficient but remain free to perpetuate their own glory.

**KEYWORDS:** alpha males; war crimes; transformation of ‘the law of battle’; pan-animate territoriality; self-addicted leaders; Wotan

## BEGINNING OBSERVATIONS

The present 21<sup>st</sup> century human world is replete with examples of both powerful and power-seeking humans. The most notable in terms of excessive displays of power are those who wantonly and violently harm and kill, who threaten, and/or use militaristic force to oppress and decimate those humans they regard as inferior, as foreigners, or as contaminators of their purity, whether religious, national, ethnic, or racial. As pointed out elsewhere (Sheets-Johnstone, in press), Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, Kim Jong-un, Xi Jinping, Bashar al-Assad, and Naftali Bennett (following Benjamin Netanyahu) are far and away the most exemplary. They have all had and continue to have varying but far-reaching global as well as national impact. They are furthermore all exemplary in various ways of a dominant male macaque. Primatologists Sarel Eimerl and Irven DeVore (1965) describe this alpha male in fine detail:

There is no mistaking a dominant male macaque. These are superbly muscled monkeys. Their hair is sleek and carefully groomed, their walk calm, assured and majestic. They move in apparent disregard of the lesser monkeys who scatter at their approach. For to obstruct the path of a dominant male or even to venture, when unwelcome, too near to him is an act of defiance, and macaques learn young that such a challenge will draw a heavy punishment. A dominant animal controls the space around it ... It can invade an inferior's space as a right, whereas no inferior would dare to venture into its space without first making a gesture of appeasement ... On being threatened by a definitely dominant monkey, a subordinate is likely to display submission. Confronted with a fixed stare, it will look away. Faced with a possible charge, it is likely to crouch close to the ground, its head turned away. And if it flees and is chased, it will cringe away from the threatened bite or try to avoid punishment by presenting its hindquarters. (pp. 106, 108, 109)

A cautionary note might well be inserted here to avoid any misinterpretations in what follows. I add this to avoid any misinterpretations of the subsequent text, particularly in light of the deep concern and seeming alarm expressed by a reviewer about what they termed the 'reductionism' of this article and of their related deep concern and seeming alarm about what they term the article's reliance on 'existing stereotypes and deep rooted prejudices' regarding male behavior. What is written of the biological nature of power and its human elaborations is not meant in any way, shape, or form to deny or to dismiss the influence of familial upbringing or of cultural or societal practices, nor is it in any way, shape, or form meant to castigate males. In this context, it is of additional and utmost importance to recognize variation, a biological fact of animate life discussed and exemplified in the text, thanks to Darwin's specific attention to its reality, to his emphasis upon it, and to his descriptions of it at length. Indeed, Darwin begins Chapter I of *The Origin of Species* titled 'Variation under Domestication' with the following observation:

When we look to the individuals of the same variety or sub-variety of our older cultivated plants and animals, one of the first points which strikes us, is, that they generally differ much

more from each other, than do the individuals of any one species or variety in a state of nature. (Darwin, 1859/1968, p. 71)

In Chapter II, titled 'Variation under Nature', he writes,

No one supposes that all the individuals of the same species are cast in the very same mould. These individual differences are highly important for us, as they afford materials for natural selection to accumulate, in the same manner as man can accumulate in any given direction individual differences in his domesticated products. (p. 102)

As pointed out in an earlier article in *Psychology and Politics International* (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017a), the actions of the above-named human alpha males are more deadly than those of a dominant male macaque. All, however, are coincident with what Jung describes as the *Ergreifer*: males who, with their executive power, autocratically dominate the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of those in their society in whatever ways necessary to perpetuate their power and even increase the extent of their power. They are like an incorrigible sponge that always wants to soak up more. Jung pointedly describes them as akin to Wotan, 'the god of storm and frenzy, the unleasher of passions and the lust of battle' (Jung, 1936/1970a, p. 182). Jung later characterizes them as hysterics, that is, as suffering from '*pseudologia phantastica*, that form of hysteria which is characterized by a peculiar talent for believing one's own lies' (Jung, 1945/1970b, pp. 203–204). He elaborates this characterization in the course of writing of the rise and fall of Hitler, specifying further deficiencies in what he calls 'this scarecrow' and 'demagogue': a 'sorry lack of education, conceit that border[s] on madness, a very mediocre intelligence combined with the hysteric's cunning and the power fantasies of an adolescent' (p. 204). However great their deficiencies, they pursue their power-driven 'passions and the lust of battle'. Power is indeed the driving force motivating demagogic males.

In light of Eimerl and DeVore's description of a dominant male macaque, we may ask whether there is a relationship in humans between physical features and power? Human males are not only commonly stronger than human females but are larger than human females. Size is in fact an archetypal biological marker of power in the animate world. Primatologist Frans de Waal, for example, points out that the 'habit of making the body look deceptively large and heavy is characteristic of the alpha male ... The fact of being in a position of power makes a male physically impressive, hence the assumption that he occupies the position which fits his appearance' (de Waal, 1982, p. 87). While de Waal's description of an alpha male does not mention archetypes, it aptly identifies an important feature of the dominant male archetype. Archetypes are thus not learned forms of behavior but are intuitively played out and understood. Jung exactly describes them as structurally homologous to '*a priori* instincts' that are integral to human nature, in fact 'common to man and animals alike' (Jung, 1968, p. 43). The alpha male apart, those males who are naturally large are able, and are looked upon as able, to defend themselves successfully against predators, to win in interspecies competitions for resources, and to win in intra-species

competitions to attract females for mating. Some nonhuman male animals in fact have the power to enlarge themselves—e.g., the common male European toad (Attenborough, 1979) and male sea-elephants (Darwin, 1871/1981). In the human animate world, those who are naturally large and even those who increase the size of their bodily parts through surgery as in penis or breast enlargement are regarded as more powerful in one way or another: as well-built and even vigorous, as more desirable and even inviting, and so on. As pointed out elsewhere (Sheets-Johnstone, in press), the value of size in the human world ‘has been evident for centuries in practices such as lip enlargement, buttock enlargement (steatopygia), tendril-like nail elongations, and head elongations (Rudofsky, 1971), all of which practices are thought to enhance one’s power of attraction in some way’.

Further insightful observations are made by anthropologist Raymond Firth in his studies of Tikopia culture, and in particular, in both of his studies of Tikopian spatial practices with respect to intercorporeal power relations and his comparison of those practices with those in British culture. In effect, how individuals relate spatially to one another is not only a basic feature of different cultures, but a basic indication of the different status of individuals and thus their power—or dominant position—with respect to others. As Firth writes (1978),

In the vertical plane degree of elevation is a very important Tikopia status index. In Tikopia language there is a direct correlation between physical elevation and social elevation ... Consequently, in bodily posture in an immediate personal context standing is ordinarily superior to sitting, squatting, crouching or kneeling ... Standing children are continually told ‘Sit down’ in the presence of adults who are sitting ... When a chief is seated in a house people will crawl over the floor in his vicinity ... In Tikopia the sitting and kneeling postures of men and women differ considerably. (p. 96)

Contrasting Tikopian and British social practices, Firth points out that in some situations, ‘degree of elevation is not a mark of status in present-day British society, but rather an acknowledgment or salutation, as when one briefly inclines one’s head toward another in greeting’ (Firth, 1978, as cited in Sheets-Johnstone, 2008, p. 45). But Firth also points out that ‘degree of elevation’ can vary from a bow, as on formal occasions, to kneeling, as on ritual occasions and in ceremonials when dignitaries of a church kneel in homage before their seated sovereign, for example, or when a man is knighted by his sovereign (Firth, 1978). Firth even calls attention to the fact that one can prostrate oneself before another, and though this is not a common British practice, it is not completely unfamiliar since it occurs in Catholic ordination rites. Firth’s conclusion is that ‘degree of elevation’ in Western societies plays a highly restricted social role, and that it is maintained primarily as a formal rather than everyday measure of status and power with respect to others (see Sheets-Johnstone, 2008, for further details and discussion).

## ALPHA MALES AND THE PRACTICE OF MALE–MALE COMPETITION IN THE ANIMATE WORLD

However oppressive or harmful their actions might be—indeed, whatever their actions—alpha males in the nonhuman animate world do not face criminal charges. Over time, however, they may be deposed by stronger and more powerful males. Some may furthermore be defeated at a special yearly battleground—a lek—where male–male competitive displays regularly take place on behalf of mating. David Attenborough devotes a substantive part of his chapter on ‘Courting’ in his book *The Trials of Life: A Natural History of Animal Behavior* to a range of animal species that participate in leks, describing some in fine detail. For example, of the blue-backed manakin, a South American bird, he writes:

The blue-backed manakin is particularly strange in that, in order to raise the choreographic complexity of their displays, two males collaborate like circus acrobats ... When a female appears the two go down together to a special perch close to the ground and begin to bounce up and down alternately, rising only few inches and accompanying each jump with a call. If the female flies down to them, then their acrobatics increase in intensity ... If the female is still sitting in front of them, presumably transfixed by this extraordinary display of virtuosity, the dominant male calls two sharp notes and the junior bird, having played his part, leaves the court. The dominant male, now left alone with his female, starts to court her directly, fluttering round her and repeatedly alighting beside her, vibrating his slightly opened wings and lowering his head so that his scarlet cap is presented squarely to her with his brilliant blue back showing above it. If after all this performance she is still there, he mates with her. (Attenborough, 1990, p. 276)

It is of interest to note that at the end of this description, Attenborough points out that this particular dance is not ‘the most complex of manakin dances’ and continues to remark that:

The blue manakin of south-eastern Brazil gives a similar performance, but with teams of males that may include three or even more birds sitting in a line on a display perch and taking it in turns to bounce into the air. (Attenborough, 1990, p. 276)

Attenborough thereafter points out that ‘It is not only birds that form leks. Even insects do so’. Following examples of insect courting, he notes that ‘Mammals too have their leks’, and proceeds with an extensive description of the African hammerhead bat, beginning specifically with the heads of males who ‘have grossly enlarged mouths and muzzles with puckered lips and huge cheek pouches’, all of which are quite unlike female African hammerhead bats. Attenborough dismisses the earlier explanation of the difference in terms of diet, explaining it now in terms of an adaptive evolutionary distinction—actually in terms of what Darwin terms ‘the law of battle’: ‘The males compete with one another for the attention of females in leks’ (Attenborough, 1990, p. 279; see further below on Darwin and ‘the law of battle’). Attenborough gives a lengthy description of the male hammerhead bat as an example:

The male bats, twice a year at the beginning of the dry season, assemble in the forest, usually along the bank of a waterway, hanging beneath the trees in a long spaced-out column, ... for distances of almost a mile. When they first arrive, they squabble for positions, but once that is settled, they take up their accepted places every night and start a loud metallic honking, uttering several notes to the second and flapping their wings twice as fast ... When a female appears, the male responds by clasping his wings tightly around her and increasing this frequency of honks until they become almost a buzz. (Attenborough, 1990, p. 279)

Interestingly enough, Darwin mentions leks in his discussion of the length of courtship in bird species. For example, he points out that ‘in Germany and Scandinavia the balzens or leks of the Black-cocks, last from the middle of March, through April into May. As many as forty or fifty, or even more birds congregate at the leks; and the same place is often frequented during successive years’ (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. II, p. 100). Interestingly enough too, historian Johan Huizinga, in his chapter on ‘Play and War’ in *Homo Ludens* (Huizinga, 1955), writes, ‘In the year 1400 a certain Count of Virneburg offered battle to the town of Aachen on a fixed day and place’ noting that ‘Such appointments regarding time and place of a battle are of the utmost importance in treating war as an honourable contest which is at the same time a judicial decision’ (pp. 98–99). In effect, rule-governed battles in a specifically spatiotemporal sense were not simply the practice of species in the nonhuman animate world, but of the human species itself.

Present-day human practices of war hardly conform to such rule-governed battles. On the contrary, surprise attacks are common and killing predominates. The website HistoryNet (Green, 2021) lists the nine most memorable surprise attacks, beginning with the Trojan War in the 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE and ending with Pearl Harbor in 1941, Operation Focus (also known as the Sinai Airstrike) in 1967, and the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in 1968. Alan Green, the author of the article, states, ‘These memorable instances of cunning and ingenuity demonstrate that, in warfare, there’s nothing like catching the enemy off guard’ (2021, para. 1). In such instances, actions can end up as war crimes. We see this possibility in today’s Russian bombings of hospitals, theaters, schools, and apartment buildings in Ukraine; in other words, bombings not of military quarters or fields but where civilians are being cared for, gathered, or live. Journalist Fintan O’Toole (2022) takes up the issue of war crimes in terms of what one might call the general issue of ‘catching the enemy off guard’. In his article titled ‘Our Hypocrisy on War Crimes’, he perspicuously points out:

There have long been two ways of thinking about the prosecution of war crimes. One is that it is a universal duty. Since human beings have equal rights, violations of those rights must be prosecuted regardless of the nationality or political persuasion of the perpetrators. The other is that the right to identify individuals as war criminals and punish them for their deeds is really just one of the spoils of victory. It is the winner’s prerogative—a political choice rather than a moral imperative. (O’Toole, 2022, p. 10)

O’Toole goes on to specify at length how the United States has both evaded responsibility for its own war crimes and failed to join the International Criminal Court (ICC),

and how in doing so, it has avoided any moral imperative. Indeed, as O'Toole (2022) specifically notes, 'What the US must give up is the comfort of its exceptionalism on the question of war crimes. It cannot differentiate itself sufficiently from Putin's tyranny until it accepts without reservation that the standards it applies to him also apply to itself. The way to do that is to join the ICC' (p. 13). O'Toole's (2022) earlier description, questions, and observations with respect to Putin are compelling to consider in this regard:

There is the war, and then there is the war about the war. Vladimir Putin's assault on Ukraine is being fought in fields and cities, in the air and at sea. It is also, however, being contested through language. Is it a war or a 'special military operation'? Is it an unprovoked invasion or a human rights intervention to prevent the genocide of Russian speakers by Ukrainian Nazis? Putin's great weakness in this linguistic struggle is the unsubtle absurdity of his claims—if he wanted his likes to be believed, he should have established some baseline of credibility. But the weakness of the West, and especially of the United States, lies in what ought to be the biggest strength of its case against Putin: the idea of war crimes. (p. 10)

O'Toole (2022) begins his identification of 'Our Hypocrisy on War Crimes' with a deft claim: 'The test for anyone insisting on the application of a set of rules is whether they apply those rules to themselves', immediately adding that 'It matters deeply to the struggle against Putin that the US face its record of having consistently failed to do this' (p. 12). To document his claim, O'Toole writes of the massacre of 24 Iraqi civilians by US Marines in the town of Haditha on 19 November 2005, of Marines taking 'five men from a taxi and execut[ing] them on the street', and of subsequently 'enter[ing] nearby houses and kill[ing] the occupants—nine men, three women, and seven children' (p. 12). O'Toole specifies the subsequent lies the US officially told of the slaughter and of its eventual cover-up explanation. He asks, 'How does the "tragic incident" at Haditha differ from the murders of civilians by Russian forces in Ukraine?' He points out 'some important distinctions', but later states, 'uncomfortable truths remain' (O'Toole, 2022, p. 12). Indeed, they do—actions in wartime that result in war crimes can be explained away and thereby altogether discounted. As O'Toole (2022) documents:

Perhaps most importantly, nothing that happened in these or other atrocities in Iraq or Afghanistan changed the way the deliberate act of violence against foreign civilians are presented in official American discourse. The enemy commits war crimes and lies about them. We have 'tragic incidents', 'tragic mistakes', and at the very worst, a loss of discipline. When bad things are done by American armed forces, they are entirely untypical and momentary responses to the terrible stresses of war. (p. 12)

## **A BASIC QUESTION CONCERNING HUMAN NATURE AND ITS FOLLOW-UP**

Is war an inevitable practice of humans? In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Hobbes wrote a book on social and political topics. On war in particular, he affirmed a human disposition 'to

contend in battle' (Hobbes, 1651/1930, p. 252), and furthermore affirmed that 'during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war'. He then pointed out that 'the nature of war ... consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE' (p. 253). Hobbes (1651/1930) goes on to point out the consequences of war, ending with a well-known characterization of 'the life of man':

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (p. 253)

The 'known disposition thereto' is a disposition to fight, 'to contend in battle', hence to compete with others.

Darwin gives lengthy descriptions of male–male competition across numerous species in what he terms 'the law of battle' on behalf of mating and reproduction. Darwin (1871/1981) does not mention war but gives extensive and highly detailed accounts of how males from beetles to birds, to mammals, and specifically to human mammals, compete to win females and mate. For example, Darwin begins his account of the law of battle in birds with the following observations: 'Almost all male birds are extremely pugnacious, using their beaks, wings, and legs for fighting together. We see this every spring with our robins and sparrows. The smallest of all birds, namely the humming-bird, is one of the most quarrelsome (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. II, p. 40). Moreover, in all his descriptive accounts, Darwin highlights the size difference between males and females. He writes, for example, of the size of the South Chile male beetle *Chiasognathus grantii* and includes illustrations that graphically show the impressive difference in size of the male and female. The male, he comments, 'has enormously-developed mandibles ... he is bold and pugnacious; when threatened on any side he faces round, opening his great jaws, and at the same time stridulating loudly' (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. I, p. 377). In his discussion of birds, he points out that 'The males of many birds are larger than the females, and this no doubt is an advantage to them in their battles with their rivals, and has been gained through sexual selection' (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. II, p. 43), but he also most interestingly points out in this context that 'In some few cases, as we shall hereafter see, the females apparently have acquired their greater size and strength for the sake of conquering other females and obtaining possession of the males' (p. 43). Of mammals, he writes, 'All male animals which are furnished with special weapons for fighting, are well known to engage in fierce battles' (Darwin, 1871/1981, Vol. II, p. 240), and notes after a number of examples, 'When the males are



provided with weapons which the females do not possess, there can hardly be a doubt that they are used for fighting with other males, and that they have been acquired through sexual selection' (Vol. II, p. 242). Finally, of human mammals, Darwin writes, 'There can be little doubt that the greater size and strength of man, in comparison with woman, together with his broader shoulders, more developed muscles, rugged body outline of body, his greater courage and pugnacity, are all due in chief part to inheritance from some early male progenitor, who, like the existing anthropoid apes, was thus characterised' (Vol. II, p. 325). A few sentences later, he states, 'With civilized people the arbitrament of battle for the possession of the women has long ceased', though he goes on to comment that 'on the other hand, the men, as a general rule, have to work harder than the women for their mutual subsistence; and thus, their greater strength will have been kept up' (Vol. II, p. 326). Whatever one may think of Darwin's 19<sup>th</sup>-century view of women, his observation that 'With civilized people the arbitrament of battle for the possession of the women has long ceased' is highly significant. It in fact feeds into the exceptional human transformation of the law of battle across species into the historically documented human pursuit of war.

Before launching into that transformation and to further detailing of the law of battle, it is critically important to call attention to the fact that the initial topic Darwin discusses and discusses at length his first book, *The Origin of Species*, is variation, specifically, the difference of variation under domestication from variation under nature. He ends his analysis of variation under domestication with the following conclusion: 'Over all these causes of Change I am convinced that the accumulative action of Selection, whether applied methodically and more quickly, or unconsciously and more slowly, but more efficiently, is by far the predominant Power' (Darwin, 1859/1968, p. 100). His analysis of variation under nature focuses on the formation of species and its relation to variability in the course of natural selection, a topic that readily introduces his next chapter titled 'The Struggle for Existence' that early on includes the following observation: 'Owing to struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring' (p. 115). In short, variation is a natural phenomenon across the animate world. We may well recall Darwin's initial description of male birds: 'Almost all male birds are extremely pugnacious, using their beaks, wings, and legs for fighting together'. Indeed, not all male birds, but 'Almost all...'. In *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Darwin specifies just how selection makes a difference, namely in dispositions. In particular, some males are more alert, more agile, more aggressive, and so on, than other males. In effect, male-male competition is a built-in, but not a built-in without variability. While natural selection is a prime factor in male-male competitiveness, so also in humans, in particular, are ingrained cultural practices and familial upbringing.

In Darwin's rendition of humans and the law of battle, it is notable, considerably so, that there is no mention of war with respect to male humans' 'greater size and strength', not to mention their 'greater courage and pugnacity' in comparison with females. Such endowments are not just an indication, but a substantive anchor point of male power, a personally felt sense of might, skill, and efficacy that are essential personal securities in launching a war and in defending in war. Clearly, and specifically, from Darwin's perspective of sexual selection, war may be seen as an exaptation of male-male competition that defines 'the law of battle'. Paleontologist/evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould and paleontologist Elizabeth Vrba (1982) coined the term 'exaptation' to specify traits co-opted for a purpose different from the one they originally served. Male-male competition for females has indeed been co-opted by humans for centuries and even millennia. Nonhuman animals certainly compete for territory and territorial resources (see below reference to Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative*), but not to the extent, planning, weaponry, militaristic forces, and so on, of humans. Moreover, as described elsewhere (Sheets-Johnstone, 2008), 'The ferocity and atrocities of wars can be and often are proportionately exacerbated by religious doctrines that promise one salvation, eternal life, or some form of immortality, and whose enactment at the same time makes one's life immediately and indelibly meaningful' (p. 94). War is indeed a human cultural elaboration, an exaptation of the biological law of battle.

In light of these facts of human nature, the biological underpinnings of humans can hardly be ignored. Yet male-male competition is not reducible to 'sperm competition', a topic that particularly engaged many male biologists at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century (e.g., Birkhead, 2000; Parker, 1998; Simmons, 2001). The thesis of these biologists is that when females mate with different males, sperm compete for reproduction. Thus, from the point of view of sperm competition, males do not compete head-on, but compete biologically with other males for females.

A directly experienced fact of animate life elucidates the real-life biological realities of male-male competition far more effectively than sperm competition. As documented in the quote above about the behavior of an alpha male macaque, 'A dominant animal controls the space around it'. Anthropologist/paleoanthropologist Robert Ardrey, in his book *The Territorial Imperative*, elaborates at length on just that, beginning with the fact that 'A territorial species of animals ... is one in which all males, and sometimes females too, bear an inherent drive to gain and defend an exclusive property' (Ardrey, 1966, p. 3). He points out that 'In most but not all territorial species, defense is directed only against fellow members of the kind' and that 'In most but not all territorial species ... the female is sexually unresponsive to an unpropertied male' (p. 3). He furthermore calls attention to the fact that 'in all territorial species, without exception, possession of a territory lends enhanced energy to the proprietor' (p. 3). We can thus appreciate even further the personal sense of power and the forceful drive of the alpha male, and not only to exert power and to retain power,

but to do so on behalf of territorial rights. Lest there be any doubt, the human species is not an exception with respect to the alpha male. In emphatically calling attention to the fact that the territorial imperative is 'an evolutionary fact of life', Ardrey specifically calls attention to the fact that 'man is a territorial animal' (Ardrey, 1966, p. 116). He has in fact earlier pointed out, 'That man's territorial nature is inherent and of evolutionary origin is scarcely a new thought; it is merely an ignored one. It has been pressed aside by our political antipathies, by our sexual preoccupations, by our romantic fallacies concerning the uniqueness of man, by our contemporary dedication to the myth that man is without instinct and a creature solely of his culture' (p. 102).

## MAN'S TERRITORIAL NATURE

When we look about the global world today, we can readily find multiple documentations of man's 'territorial nature' and its relationship to war. At the forefront of that world is Putin's invasion of the Ukraine, but we can also effectively document Kim Jong-un's threats of violence toward South Korea, China's threats of violence toward Taiwan, and Israel's long and ongoing oppression of and violence toward Palestinians, all on behalf of 'man's territorial nature'. That nature may, of course, be strongly anchored in religious beliefs, but that further anchorage does not diminish anchorage in territorial aggression. On the contrary, it makes territorial aggression all the more forceful.

From yet a further perspective, the territorial imperative that leads to aggression and war is basically an 'Us against Them' mentality that is rooted in a disdain and even hatred of Others who differ from Us and a consequent subjugation of those Others on the basis of their differences, as apparent in apartheid societies, in racial discriminatory practices resulting in segregation, in caste systems, and so on. In his lengthy discussion of the amity-enmity complex—a human complex initially described by philosopher Herbert Spencer and later specified more finely in evolutionary terms by anthropologist Sir Arthur Keith (see below for more on these writers)—Ardrey quotes 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher David Hume: 'Should a traveler give an account of men who were entirely divested of avarice, ambition, and revenge; who know no pleasure but friendship, generosity, and public spirit, we should immediately detect the falsehood and prove him a liar with the same certitude as if he had stuffed his narration with centaurs and dragons' (Ardrey, 1966, pp. 288–289). In short, the full nature of human nature warrants acknowledgment, full study, and subsequent full public awareness of the driving force of war, namely, full public awareness of power-driven 'passions and the lust of battle'.

In her review of Spencer's *The Principles of Ethics*, titled 'Spencer's Theory of Ethics in Its Evolutionary Aspect', psychologist Kate Gordon sums up Spencer's basic sense of human nature as an amity-enmity complex: 'A life of constant external enmity generates a code in which aggression, conquest, revenge are applauded, and conversely a life of settled internal

amity generates a code in which harmonious cooperation prevails. If conditions stay constant long enough, men will develop the emotions and conscience appropriate to this code' (Gordon, 1902, p. 595). Gordon (1902) later strongly criticizes Spencer's 'moral code':

Spencer fails to recognize the organic connection between the competitive and the cooperative forces at work in society in all its stages. The codes of 'amity' and 'enmity' are not different types of moral injunctions, the one intrinsically good and the other merely imperfect and expedient; but each represents a different stage in the same process of social evolution. Warfare among savage peoples and industrial competition in a civilized community both stand for the same selective method by which society secures for itself the survival of its best and fittest members ... Cooperation without competition and antagonism is conscious life without selective attention. A society in which the code of 'amity' prevailed, in which there was no tension, would be a perfectly static and unprogressive community. (p. 605)

Oddly enough, Gordon does not mention 'the law of battle' and hence male-male competition in her evolutionary view of Spencer's account of human nature as basically an amity-enmity complex, but instead simply emphasizes 'selection' leading to 'the survival of [society's] best and fittest members' (p. 605). She thus insists that competition is integral to human nature by implicitly referencing the major focus of Darwin's 1871 book, namely, his finely detailed account of sexual selection across species, a pan-animate selection that clearly highlights and documents at length the law of battle, a built-in of male nature across species.

Spencer's introduction of the amity-enmity complex and his *Principles of Ethics* aside, those who humans regard with enmity are Others, Others who are looked upon—literally looked upon—with disdain and even hatred based on their skin color or religious beliefs and practices, or on their subverting the avarice or ambition of one who considers himself of a higher human order, or that same human who desires revenge for infringing on an overlord's domain in some way. In effect, Others are treated as second-class beings who must live on entirely separate grounds from those who are existentially above them and who must even be exterminated.

Whether a matter of money, property, or bigotry, amity is definitely in short supply in today's human world. Clearly, the territorial imperative that leads to aggression knows no bounds, which is to say that power is displayed not just by alpha males—autocratic leaders and autocrats generally—but by humans who consider their self-value to far and away exceed that of others. Their amity indeed extends only to those who support them. Such self-valuing humans are self-addicted, a malady that present-day forms of psychotherapy have yet to recognize and to treat (see further below on this topic). The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)* lists 'Narcissism' and gives criteria for its evaluation that one might well ascribe to self-addiction. It states at the very beginning that 'Narcissistic Personality Disorder' 'is defined as comprising a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), a constant

need for admiration, and a lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts' (pp. 767–768). The relationship between narcissism and addiction arises specifically in an article on the website 'Medical News Today' (Lewsley, 2022). The article begins with the following claim: 'People with narcissism and those with an addiction share similar character traits. These include a lack of empathy and a willingness to put themselves at risk in the pursuit of feeling superior' (para. 26). It then points out that 'Narcissism may leave people more prone to problematic substance use, including alcohol use disorder, as well as other forms of addiction, such as sex addiction and social media addiction' (para. 2). It later summarizes its perspective: 'This article looks at the links between narcissism and addiction and explains why people with narcissism may be more likely than other people to engage in addictive behaviors' (para. 3). In short, the article gives references to, and discussions of various kinds of 'object addictions': alcohol addiction, drug addiction, sexual addiction, and social media addiction. It contains no reference to *self*-addiction. The need for such a reference is urgent.

Self-addiction is a serious malady that is actually detailed as such in a letter to the editor. Its opening paragraphs read as follows:

Self-addiction is a serious malady that warrants identification and description in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders (DSM) that is published by the American Psychiatric Association.

The malady has come to the fore in the most exemplary fashion in today's political world, and in so public a manner that it cannot properly be ignored. While addiction is most commonly related to drugs and to a lesser degree to psychologically driven activities such as gambling, self-addiction involves a different kind of relationship, one that is in fact inordinately public. It can be succinctly described as a psycho-sociological craving that demands making a spectacle of oneself. Just as drug addicts cannot live without drugs, gambling addicts cannot live without gambling, and so on, so self-addicts cannot live without a spotlight, a spotlight focused incessantly upon themselves.

The symptoms of self-addiction are readily apparent. They include 1) a flamboyant, self-aggrandizing presence, 2) a perpetual insertion of oneself as the center of attention, 3) the assertion that nothing can or does outstrip one's knowledge, abilities, or judgments, in particular, one's knowledge of the way things are, one's abilities to improve or correct what needs improvement or correction, and one's judgment of what or who is right and what or who is wrong. In brief, self-addicts are cognitively, actively, and ethically infallible. (Sheets-Johnstone, 2017b, p. A6)

An easy availability of weapons and of military forces can and does exacerbate all psychological aspects of self-addiction. Racial and religious killings in America alone testify to the problem of easy access to guns, and in fact to military rifles. Such killings are commonly followed by 'thoughts and prayers' of sympathetic persons and politicians for the victims' families and friends, 'thoughts and prayers' that actually do nothing to address the

basic problem of everyday citizens' ready access to guns and rifles. What in fact do 'thoughts and prayers' do except recognize the killings momentarily and lamentably as one more incidence of human violence? Clearly, thoughts and prayers have no power whatsoever: they neither block easy access to guns and rifles nor do they restore the lives of those who are killed. They are a wholly routine, perfunctory personal response.

Present-day forms of psychotherapy fail to address the violence of humans just as they fail to address the power-driven self-addiction of humans. Intra-human violence is not just ever-present in daily news but appears to be expanding. Guns and rifles, especially when easily accessed, expand not only the possibility of violence, but the power of an individual and their equally power-driven comrades over fellow humans. The insurrectional march on the US capitol on 6 January 2021 is a case in point. Such power-happy humans are addicted to their superiority over others, including those sycophantic others who duly acknowledge and applaud their superiority.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Our present-day human world gives ample testimony to the presence of self-addicted leaders and their followers. They are in fact supreme and indomitable exemplars of a power-driven self-addiction who are not only tethered here and now to their own glory but tethered to maintaining their own glory—and at all costs, no matter what those costs might be to others. Moreover, they are not alpha males who simply control the space around them. They are alpha males who aggrandize themselves as all-powerful leaders of the world. They are indeed akin to Wotan, 'the god of storm and frenzy, the unleasher of passions and the lust of battle' (Jung, 1936/1970a, p. 182), killing or oppressing others in their distinctive territorial claims, and in their distinctive lies and deceits. Their self-addiction knows no bounds. Indeed, they will not die—they will live on historically, remembered and revered like Peter the Great, to whom Putin compares himself (Roth, 2022), remembered and revered like Abraham Lincoln, to whom Trump compares himself (Blumenthal, 2019), remembered and revered like David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first president, to whom Netanyahu compares himself (Mualem, 2018), and so on. In sum, our present-day world is filled with self-addicted leaders, leaders who are powerful and who want to remain interminably ever-powerful.

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