Violence in Human Behavior

The role of violence in human behavior was discussed in the program sponsored by the Academy of Psychoanalysis and by the Committee on Science in the Promotion of Human Welfare at the AAAS Philadelphia meeting on 28 and 29 December 1962. The papers ranged from studies of animal behavior to psychoanalytic interpretations and studies of the use and control of violent behavior in various cultures. The outstanding feature of this symposium was the affirmation implicit in all the presentations and discussions that the behavioral sciences can indeed contribute to the control of the ultimate violence which hangs over us, that behavioral scientists must bring their several and collective skills to bear on the problem, and that behavioral scientists have a real responsibility to the community to make known what they *have* learned.

In his keynote address David McK. Rioch (Walter Reed Army Research Center) pointed out that the symposium would consider different aspects of violence from different points of view with the aim of better understanding human aggressive behavior and its socially organized expression in warfare. In such an endeavor it is necessary to keep in mind the setting, objectives, and limitations of each study, and to exercise great caution in translating concepts from one level of investigation to another. Rioch reviewed briefly such diverse contributions as Von Clausewitz's treatise on war, Marshall's reports on the experiences of combat troops, Clark's studies of the northern grasshopper mouse, and various experimental studies of the areas of the brain involved in aggressive behavior in animals. His overall conclusion was that there is no occult force which pushes people to violence; rather, violence is a pattern which may be reasonably used, or it may be resorted to in situations of uncertainty and social disorganization.

"Ceremonial" battles were depicted in color films of combat between male marine iguanas in the Galapagos Islands (Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Max Planck Institut). These battles are "ceremonial" in the sense that they follow a specific pattern of display, threat, and combat, but rarely result in actual damage to either combatant. Certain behaviors trigger or stop the combat. Many species exhibit such "ceremonials" which differ from the aggressive action taken against other species. This differential aggression toward con-specifics appears to be a biological mechanism designed to "space" animals within their range and at the same time to protect the species against self-annihilation. The analogue in man may be represented by submissive posture or crying which may evoke pity or inhibit an aggressor. In the modern scene, however, a bullet or a nuclear missile can kill a con-specific before he has any opportunity to appeal to any possibly inborn inhibitions in the aggressor (Fig. 1).

John B. Calhoun (Institute for Advanced Study of Behavioral Sciences) studied rat behavior as a function of the relation of each individual to its neighbor in its life space. The significant experimental variable was the size of the group, which in turn determines the social velocity or social temperature. There is an optimal size as well as a maximum tolerable size for the groups. Beyond this size individual and group behavior break down. The most striking products of breakdown were the "predator rats" which terrorized their group.

A series of ingenious experiments on the induction and expression of hostility in human subjects was revealed by Leonard Berkowitz (University of Wisconsin). The investigations were directed to the role of previous learned responses, the expectations of the subjects, the degree of specificity or generalization of hostile reactions, and the catharsis of hostility. The results suggested that (i) aggression is elicited and cued by stimuli which have particular meaning; (ii) an internal state, usually labeled anger, is necessary but not sufficient for the production of aggression; (iii) anticipation of an opportunity increases hostile activity; and (iv) expression of hostility (under the conditions of the experiment) did not have any cathartic effect and inability or lack of opportunity to express hostility did not intensify the hostility.

Anger was described as a basic emotion with a creative potential in the face of an actual anticipated threat (Bella S. Van Bark, New York City). The relatively healthy individual often knows the sources of his anger directly and is willing to become involved in the threatening situation and to expose himself to the possibility of struggle and conflict. In neurotics such sources are outside the realm of their awareness, the sense of identity is precarious, and the willingness to become involved is lessened. Suppression, regression, and alienation from self are substituted for inner controls. This creates an explosive potential which may find expression in outbursts of intense emotion and seemingly unrelated acts of violence.

Harold Lief (Tulane University) regards aggression as a term used too loosely. It should be restricted to behavior motivated by the wish to injure, remove, or destroy a threatening object. Violence is an end point on a continuum of behaviors with similar motivation. At least three types of violence may be discerned: the type driven by rage; a detached type in which the significant aspect is the violent act rather than the subject of the attack; and a detached type in which destruction of the object is the significant aspect and the violence is an instrument required for the attainment of the goal. Man in the 20th century is familiar with these in the form of the movie gangster, the Western gunman, the violent gang member, a genocide, and nuclear war. Increasing dehumanization in society leads to an increase in detached violence; dissociation from man's basic emotions is the greatest danger to man's survival. There is obviously an urgent need for societal controls which will prevent detached, dehumanized violence from being carried out, but the institutions to accomplish this must be created. There is need for a long-term and revolutionary new approach to education in which the realities of emotional life are taught to chil-

dren from the nursery on and which is designed to bring our cave man emotions into appropriate resonance with our technical genius.

The thesis was advanced by Joost A. M. Meerloo (New York) that an even greater danger than nuclear war arises from within man himself in the form of smoldering fears, contagious panics, primitive needs for cruel violence, and raging suicidal destructiveness. Confronted with inner and outer threats that appear insoluble, man reacts with rage and fury that mask a deeper wish for surrender. Hypercharged emotional words such as aggression, violence, first-strike, and preventive war reflect the primitive process of thinking as it takes place in the unconscious. The thought of nuclear destruction causes the dangerous return of wishes for infantile omnipotence. The assumption that fear of atomic destruction will frighten the nations into planning for a constructive peace is an unrealistic fantasy. The either-or approaches, world government or dying together, Red or dead, are primitive vacillations which reveal the inner paradox. Fortunately there are more constructive forces active in man. History has seen many lasting periods of peaceful coexistence. Peace is derived from a word meaning pact, a mutual agreement between forces in equilibrium. This idea of peace opposes the utopian illusion of perfect human harmony and the millenium in favor of a balance of growing mutual control. The passive inner acceptance of the dilemma of surrender versus glorious suicide is the greatest danger. Our great hope lies in the fact that potential enemies, who are psychologically not different from us, must ask themselves similar questions.

In his paper on "A psychoanalytic suggestion for the prevention of nuclear disaster," Sandor Rado (New York) said he touched on but a tiny fraction of the problems posed by the nuclear threat. It is clear that a vast plan is needed for global adaptation to the atomic threat. Such a plan would require contributions from the many sciences, would extend over a long period, and would be composed of all the rational elements that can be assembled. But the problem of survival, now no longer the problem of survival of individuals or small groups but of the survival of all, cannot wait. What can be added to the rational schemes that have yet to be created? Strong emotional forces! Peoples all over the world

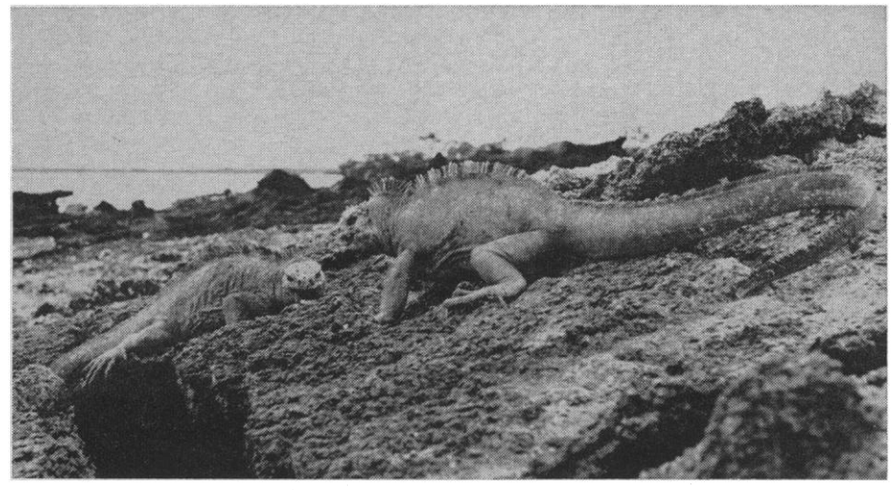

Fig. 1. Male marine iguanas at the end of a "ceremonial" battle. The submission of the loser (left) is respected by the winner. [I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt]

rely on spiritual and emotional forces to achieve security. Self-reliance is augmented by the hope that parental figures will help. These parental figures cannot be called upon in the present issue; they have already been invoked to aid the contending groups against each other. A symbol that is uniquely suited for the present purpose is the human infant. Every infant is an offspring of the human species, a continuation of the life of his parents, a carrier of our hopes for the future, an inspiration of present efforts for the benefit of generations to come. Said Rado: "I believe mankind is ready for an emotional, cultural and not religious cult of the infant that would be based on no illusions of any kind, no deceit of any kind. The emotional security of survival, global survival, would then be complemented by the economic security to be achieved by nuclear technology."

One approach to organized violence was developed after a study of conflict between members of related lineage and clan groups in Central Somalia (David H. Marlowe, Walter Reed Army Research Center). Among these people disputes are perceived in absolute, all-or-none, win or lose terms, and armed force is still the ultimate and preferred mode of achieving a solution. But individuals and groups do not fight at random, nor is violence directly in proportion to the gravity of the interests involved. Instead, conflict is controlled through the invocation of kinship, contracts, alliances, and myriad other legal and traditional mechanisms built into the social system. These mechanisms determine whether and to what extent and toward whom violence is permissible, obligatory, or interdicted. The distinctions are built into the very language. If an outsider assaults a clan member the act is referred to as "war," the spot where it occurred as the "place where war stands." If the assailant was of the same clan the event is assault; if within the clan and of the same blood lineage, the term of reference is invariably "accident." Suitable rationalizations support the perception of the event in the terms required by the system. Where violence is sanctioned, the system also sets limits upon it, and establishes the criteria for acceptable compromise.

Lewis A. Coser (Brandeis University), speaking on social control of violence, pointed out that outbreaks of violence, such as homicide, do not vary at random, but are socially patterned. The rates vary in the United States in terms of ethnic and class membership, region, and so forth. Lower position in the status hierarchy of American society and the frustrations which such lower position brings lead to higher homicide rates. Hence negroes have higher homicide rates than whites, the depressed Southern regions have higher rates than the developed Northern regions, and lower class rates are higher than upper class rates. Not only is aggressive acting out in general, and the rate of homicide in particular, connected with the relative deprivation of various status categories, but there are differences in the built-in barriers within the various groups. In moments of particular stress the lower status person experiences a lower degree of internalized restraint against the acting out of violence. Data on differential homicide

rates in the United States were compared to data on the participation in riots, revolutions and the like, both here and abroad, and it was found that the patterns are broadly similar. In both cases, the "underdogs" participate much more widely in violence than the "topdogs." These findings substantiate the view that rates of violence, far from resulting from biological impulse or idiosyncratic propensities, can be explained in terms of the position of people within the social structure of a given society.

It was proposed by Anthony Leeds (Pan-American Union) that war must be approached as if it were merely another social phenomenon, to be understood with the same armamentarium of concepts, the same weaponry of analysis, the same strategy of socio-cultural explanations as any other social phenomenon, and without a priori value positions however much the analyst may personally derogate war. Viewed in this way, war has functions in the social order which include consolidation and redistribution of internal power; consolidation of trends already present in a society, such as industrialization, administrative centralization, or militarism; the establishment of institutions of community coordination and control over the populace with removal of effective opposition; technological innovations; the revitalization of existing norms and values, and the resolution or intensification of old social conflicts. If decisions are made to cope with nuclear war in the assumption that war in general and a qualitatively new kind of war, nuclear war, is undesirable and to be eradicated, then this range of functions must be transferred to other social institutions. These institutions must be multi-functional so as to have a high likelihood of persistence. Such institutions include the family, the state, and the church.

Margaret Mead (New York City) called attention to a basic biological characteristic which man shares with most other animals, the protection of females and the young by the male. In no known human group has this responsibility disappeared. Man's cognitive and imaginative abilities, not shared by other animals, enable 100 million people who never see each other to define themselves as con-specifics, or, on the other hand, enables two adjacent tribes to define each other as prey and predator and spend their time killing each other off. The basic biological ability of humans to live in small groups and protect each other can be extended through the knowledge that all men are in fact interdependent in the modern world scene. All human cultures attempt to ritualize and stylize destructiveness in ways that are reminiscent of the iguanas or stags. This is done through symbolic processes, understanding of which is the daily work of psychoanalysts, who can illuminate why the processes succeed with some individuals and fail in others. The concept that all men are, after all, conspecifics is relatively new. It can be the basis for Rado's suggestion of the human infant as a symbol that as one species all men will take responsibility for all the children of that species.

Several possible models of what a disarmed world might look like were described by Arthur I. Waskow (Peace Research Institute). This, he said, is not only a necessary exercise of scholarship, but a practical political one, of importance in making disarmament more likely. Even a government that wants disarmament and believes that problems of inspection and enforcement have been solved will not take such a step if it has no idea how its conflicts with other states and how the hostilities of its own citizens will be handled. One possible model is a "world under law," with controls vested in a world government, with an appropriate parliament, executive and peace police. The difficulty with this model is that existing conflicts between states are too intense and there is not sufficient agreement on the bases for the legal codes to be followed. Another model is that of "disarmed disorder," in which each nation could attempt to advance its interests and defend its ideology so long as it did not use violence. The main objection here is that nations would not stay disarmed very long. The dilemma is between placing so much emphasis on preserving order that no nation agrees to disarm, and having so little machinery to maintain order that the world cannot be kept disarmed. The dilemma might be resolved by a "world state" which would have a monopoly of legitimate violence, but not the physical power or legal authority to change the social systems of any country. Substitutes for war would have to be invented. Research in this direction can be undertaken at once, and is urgently needed.

Jules H. Masserman (Northwestern University Medical School), in a final critique and integration, concluded that the speakers at this program had shown that aggression is not to be regarded as a mythical, absolute quantity, which must be channeled, directed, turned on or off, discharged or accumulated. It is, rather, a panchrestic term, which does not have the same operational connotation to any two persons or to the same person in two successive transactions. Then, referring to Rado's proposal to adopt the human infant as a universal symbol of peace, Masserman offered a concrete alternative. He suggested that we send to Russia, as soon as possible, large numbers of students, and invite the Russians to reciprocate, in order to broaden mutual education and promote a new and advantageous understanding. Masserman said, "Perhaps, in this way we can help awaken the world out of its current nightmare of violence into a happier day of welfare through sanity."

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Forthcoming Events

June

23–26. American Soc. of **Mechanical Engineers,** Ithaca, N.Y. (A. B. Conlin, Jr., 345 E. 47 St., New York, N.Y.)

23–28. American Soc. for **Testing and Materials,** 66th annual, Atlantic City, N.J. (ASTM, 1916 Race St., Philadelphia 3, Pa.)

23–30. American Soc. for **Horticultural Science,** Caribbean region, 11th annual, Mexico City, Mexico. (E. H. Casseres, Calle Londres 40, México 6, D.F.)

24–26. American Soc. of **Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning** Engineers, Milwaukee, Wis. (R. C. Cross, 345 E. 47 St., New York 17)

24–26. **Colloids,** 37th natl. symp., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. (B. R. Ray, Dept. of Chemistry, Washington State Univ., Pullman)

24–26. International **Astrophysical** Symp., 12th, Liége, Belgium. (M. Migeotte, Institut d'Astrophysique, Cointe-Sclessin, Belgium)

25–28. American **Home Economics** Assoc., Kansas City, Mo. (D. S. Miller, 3705 Van Buren Ave., Corvallis, Ore.)

26–27. **Computers and Data Processing,** Estes Park, Colo. (W. H. Eichelberger, Denver Research Inst., Univ. of Denver, Denver 10, Colo.)

26–28. **Wind Effects** on Buildings and Structures, Teddington, Middlesex, England. (Mrs. S. M. Russell, Aerodynamics Div., Natl. Physical Laboratory, Teddington)

26–29. American Assoc. of **Bioanalysts,** annual, Chicago, Ill. (R. Thornburg, 720 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11)

26–29. Society of **Nuclear Medicine,** Montreal, Quebec, Canada. (S. N. Turiel, SNM, 333 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.)

(See issue of 26 April for comprehensive list)