

Rogers, C.R. (1989). *The Carl Rogers Reader*. H. Kirschenbaum and V.L. Henderson (Eds.). New York: Houghton Mifflin, pp. 403-404.

Suppose we turn to the animal world and ask ourselves what is the basic nature of the lion, or the sheep, or the dog, or the mouse. To say that any one or all of these are basically hostile or antisocial or carnal seems to be ridiculous. To say that we view their nature as neutral means either that it is neutral in terms of some unspecified set of values, or that their natures are all like, all putty waiting to receive a shape. This view seems to me equally ridiculous. I maintain that each has a basic nature, a common set of attributes generally characteristic of the species. Thus the sheep is by far the most gregarious or group-minded, the mouse the most generally timorous. No amount of training – therapeutic or otherwise – will make a lion out of the mouse, or vice versa, even though a wide degree of change is possible. There is a basic substratum of species characteristics which we will do well to accept.

We might take a closer look at some of those characteristics. Since the lion has the most pronounced reputation for being a ravaging beast, let us choose him. What are the characteristics of his common nature, his basic nature? He kills an antelope when he is hungry, but he does not go on a wild rampage of killing. He eats his fill after the killing, but there are no obese lions on the veldt. He is helpless and dependent in his puppyhood, but he does not cling to the dependent relationship. He becomes increasingly independent and autonomous. In the infant state he is completely selfish and self-centered, but as he matures he shows, in addition to such impulses, a reasonable degree of cooperativeness in the hunt. The lioness feeds, cares for, protects, and seems to enjoy her young. Lions satisfy their sexual needs, but this does not mean they go on wild and lustful orgies. His various tendencies and urges come to a continually changing balance in himself, and in that sense he is very satisfactorily controlled and self-regulated. He is in basic ways a constructive, a trustworthy member of the species *Felis leo*. His fundamental tendencies are in the direction of development, differentiation, independence, self-responsibility, cooperation, maturity. In general the expression of his basic nature makes for the continuation and enhancement of himself and his species.

With the appropriate variations, the same sort of statements could be made about the dog, the sheep, the mouse. To be sure, each behaves in ways which from some specific point of view are destructive. We wince to see the lion kill the antelope; we are annoyed when the sheep eats our garden; we complain when the mouse eats the cheese we were saving for our picnic; I regard the dog as destructive when he bites me, a stranger; but surely none of these behaviors justifies us in thinking of any of those animals as basically evil. If I endeavored to explain to you that if the lion-ness of the lion were to be released, or the sheep-ness of the sheep, that these animals would then be impelled by insatiable lusts, uncontrollable aggressions, wild and excessive sexual behaviors, and tendencies of innate aggression, you would quite properly laugh at me. Obviously, such a view is pure nonsense.

I would like now to consider again the nature of man in the light of this discussion of the nature of animals. I have come to know men most deeply in a relationship which is characterized by all that I can give of safety, absence of threat, and complete freedom to be and to choose. In such a relationship, men express all kinds of bitter and murderous feelings, abnormal impulses, bizarre and antisocial desires. But as they live in such a relationship, expressing and being more of themselves, I find that man, like the lion, has a nature. My experience is that he is a basically trustworthy member of the human species, whose deepest characteristics tend toward development, differentiation, cooperative relationships; whose life tends fundamentally to move from dependence to independence; whose impulses tend naturally to harmonize into a complex and changing pattern of self-regulation; whose total character is such as to tend to preserve and enhance himself and his species, and perhaps to move it towards its further evolution. In my experience, to discover that the individual is truly and deeply a unique member of the human species is not a discovery to excite horror. Rather I am inclined to believe that fully to be a human being is to enter into the complex process of being one of the most widely sensitive, responsive, creative, and adaptive creatures on this planet.

So when a Freudian such as Karl Menninger tells me (as he has, in a discussion of this issue) that he perceives man as “innately evil,” or more precisely “innately destructive,” I can only shake my head in wonderment.

Peterson, J.B. (1999). Chimps 'R Us. Class Notes: Psy 230s:

Quotations from Wrangham, R., and Peterson, D. (1997). *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, p. 17.

Until recently, it appeared reasonable to presume that the hominid line and the line of the great apes had diverged as long ago as 10 to 15 million years; that the orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos comprised one natural, closely related group, and that humans comprised another, more distantly associated. This claim was decisively challenged in 1984, when Sibley and Ahlquist demonstrated that the DNA of chimpanzees and humans was surprisingly similar – more similar, in fact, than that of chimpanzees and gorillas. Suddenly it appeared that the bifurcated classification system “apes and humans” was less probable than the simpler classification of apes: orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, and humans. Since then, these results have been convincingly replicated, using a variety of techniques.

So what are chimps like? Well, they certainly differ from human beings in a number of non-trivial manners. They have no language, for starters; their thumbs are not truly opposable; they are much less encephalized than human beings (and their prefrontal cortices constitute a smaller proportion of their brains). They are relatively limited, in terms of the territory they can inhabit, unlike human beings – who, like rats, can live anywhere. Their social groupings are much smaller in size, they demonstrate little if any facility for cultural innovation and tool use; they are more promiscuous and less choosy in their sexual relations than their human counterparts (at least in comparison to their female human counterparts). They are smaller, although stronger, and are not truly bipedal, although they can walk upright for reasonably long distances. It might be claimed that it is a testament to the power of relatively small genetic alterations that humans and chimps are so different, rather than so similar – and it does not seem unreasonable to claim that the “other” apes are more like chimps in immediately evident appearance and behavior than we are.

And yet.

Chimpanzees are very social, very familial, and very playful. They laugh, and tickle one another, and squabble among their kin and peers, and kiss, and make up. They pat one another on the head. They use plants, for apparent medicinal purposes. They hunt, collaboratively, and kill for meat – and share the spoils, and beg. They are “political” – particularly the males – and form loose and shifting power alliances as they strive to move up the intragroup dominance hierarchy. They hold grudges – particularly the females. They make friendships, that may last decades. The young tease, playfully and not-so-playfully, and garner useful information about the context-dependent nature of the social hierarchy while they do so. They are acutely “aware” of the nature of the status-quo, and are dependent on the maintenance of that structure for their own emotional stability.

And they wage war.

As late as the early 70's, it still appeared plausible that the “pre-cultural” paradise on earth whose potential existence haunted the European imagination long before the birth of Rousseau manifested itself in its pristine form in the social life of the chimpanzee. It was man, separate from all the animals, who would kill conspecifics, who was insanely aggressive – because of the rapid and unpredictable growth of his cortex; because of the pathological effect of his culture; because of his capacity for language (and ideology) and tool-use. But then in the depths of the Combe National Park in Tanzania Figan, Humphrey and their “Kasekela” compatriots moved out of their habitual territory and attacked and mortally wounded Godi, a member of the “Kahama” group. Initially perceived as an aberration, this pattern of behavior soon came to appear common, if not defining. Less than two months after the attack on Godi, De was dispatched, in the same manner – then, a year later, Goliath – and so on, until all seven of the adult Kahama males (and some of the females) were killed. Wrangham and Peterson describe the death of Sniff, an adolescent of 17 years, and the last male victim:

“Six Kasekela males screamed and barked in excitement as they hit, grabbed, and bit their victim viciously – wounding him in the mouth, forehead, nose, and back, and breaking one leg. Goblin struck the victim repeatedly in the nose. Sherry, an adolescent just a year or two younger than Sniff, punched him. Satan

grabbed Sniff by the neck and drank the blood streaming down his face. Then Satan was joined by Sherry, and the two screaming males pulled young Sniff down a hill. Sniff was seen one day later, crippled, almost unable to move. After that he was not seen and was presumed dead.”

Originally, shocked by these stories, critics of Jane Goodall’s research program suggested that Kasekela chimps had been rendered hyper-competitive as a consequence of unnatural provisioning. However, soon afterwards, the Kasekela group, who had expanded their range through the Kahama territory, encountered another group – the Kalande – and this time played the role of victim. The Kalande group, who had never been “corrupted” by human contact, attacked and killed some of the Kasekela males, in the now-predictable pattern of territorial raiding discovered in 1974. In the Mahale Mountains National Park, one hundred miles south of Gombe, the story appears similar: “patrols” at the territorial edge, violent displays towards “strangers,” and dangerous clashes between male-bonded groups from different ranges. In Senegal, in the Niokola-Koba National Park, violent raids by local chimpanzees forced the closure of a program optimistically designed to re-introduce chimps raised in captivity to a wild existence. In the Tai Forest of the Ivory Coast, in West Africa, and in Kibale, in Western Uganda, the same behavior is in evidence: male chimps group together, cruising the borders of their world, and attacking any unknown conspecifics careless enough to be caught in a vulnerable position.