



ISSN: 0975-833X

**REVIEW ARTICLE**

**“HUMAN BEINGS ARE THE MOST DANGEROUS ANIMALS TO ITS SPECIES”**

**Weldon Kipkoech Kering and Simon Kiprotich Korir**

African International College, Kericho Campus- Cellphone: +254727557919

*Article History:* Received 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2012; Received in revised form 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2012; Accepted 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2012; Published online 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2012

**INTRODUCTION**

Of the created animal species, man is the only rational one. Because of his intellect, man controls the universe so that all things seem to rotate about him. Even so, there is one aspect of the human species that baffles everybody; that is his aggression against his own species. Because of this aggression, the human species has become a danger to its own existence. This is an issue that has made many scholars to come up with various theories to try to explain this behaviour of man.

This paper tries to look at some of these theories beginning with the view that aggression in man is innate and that it must be vented out in some way. This often is done through violence on other human persons. This view tries to trace an evolutionary route to aggression. Another reason for human aggression on fellow humans is that of competition for political power. Related to, and connected to political power is the competition for resources. Because of scarcity of resources or because of lack of a proper criteria of sharing out the resources wars have been fought with a high cost on lives. Religious fundamentalism has also played part in the killings witnessed in the world. This is a religious intolerance with religious adherents waging what they regard as ‘holy’ wars against perceived infidels. This paper also discusses another group of killers known as mission killers. These people kill others for personal or group reasons. They include serial killers who when they strike leave a string of dead people and are said to draw certain psychological satisfaction through killing. On this group also are the terrorists who kill to attain certain desired goals known to them. This paper ends by discussing the need to maintain world peace based on the fact that, without peace the life of man in the world is threatened. The onus of ensuring world peace though still rests on man himself. This is why man has established various organisations that preach and maintain world peace. The challenge posed though in the conclusion is that this task of ensuring world peace needs collective responsibility from every quarter of human society so that true peace and security is attained.

**Human Beings Aggression to its own Species**

Looked at from what a human being is capable of in terms of knowledge and technology, it is certain that the human person occupies the centre position in the universe. Based on this, it would be correct to say that the universe rotates about man. This is perhaps why Pythagoras the ancient philosopher

asserted that man is the measure of everything. This assertion grants the human species a very lofty position in relation to the rest of the created universe. What though begs the question is, has the human species merited the status that has been accorded it by nature?

Due to man’s rationality, it is expected that the human species should arrange the universe and itself in a manner that befits its ascribed status. With man’s guidance things should be well organised and harmonious. This though has not been the case. The human species has often worked to disorganise and disorient the universe and even more shocking is the fact that man has been a danger to his own existence. In relation to other creatures in the universe, the human species is the only one that is a danger to itself. Naturally other animals behave well to their own species and animals only kill others for food in the order in which nature has provided. A satisfied lion for instance would not kill another animal for the sake of killing it. As well, a lion will not kill an animal it will not eat. This applies generally to all animals of prey. This means that the animal species is not a danger to itself. Man on the contrary does exactly the opposite of that; it kills its own species to the extent that humanity is at the danger of annihilating itself. This killing attitude in humanity baffles even humanity itself and various reasons and theories have been posed to try to explain this tendency.

**Reasons for Human Aggression to its own Species**

**a) Innate Aggression**

This theory explains that human nature is innately aggressive and that this aggression is often turned against its own species. According to this theory, the aggressive behaviour that human beings express is naturally engrained in their makeup. One of the proponents of this theory is Lorenz whose view of the human species is that, “we have an innate drive to aggressive behaviour to our own species” (Stevenson, 1974, p. 112). Lorenz says that this is the only possible explanation of the conflicts and wars throughout all human history and of the continuing unreasonable behaviour of the supposedly reasonable beings (Stevenson, 1974, p. 112). Lorenz seeks an evolutionary explanation for our innate aggressiveness and for its peculiarly communal nature for

*\*Corresponding author:* laboso6too@gmail.com  
*Copy Right, IJCR, 2012, Academic Journals. All rights reserved.*

according to him, the most destructive fighting is not between individuals but between groups (Stevenson, 1974, p. 112). The groups could include tribes, clans, and even races. The aggression of groups has often been manifested in Kenya and in the neighbouring countries like Rwanda in tribal conflicts that have resulted in mass killings. Clans have also turned against each other in some neighbouring countries like Somalia with disastrous results of mass killings of members of one clan by another and consequent retaliatory attacks. Racial killings and aggression on its part was witnessed during the slave trade period, colonisation and on a large scale during the world wars. During the Second World War, it is reported that the German Aryan race led by Adolf Hitler killed an estimated six million Jews on the pretext that the Jews were an impure race and needed to be wiped off the surface of the earth. This devastating act of aggression against the Jews has been referred to as the Jewish holocaust and it goes a long way in showing how the human species can turn against its own species and kill it.

To explain this evolutionary aggressive trait Lorenz speculates that, "at a certain stage of evolution of our ancestors, they had more or less mastered the danger of their non-human environment and the main danger came from other human groups. The survival value in the process of natural selection then lay in warrior virtues. At this stage, those groups that banded together best to fight other groups would survive longest" (Stevenson, 1974, p.112). Lorenz thus explains the existence of what he calls 'militant enthusiasm' by which a human crowd can become excitedly aggressive and lose all rationality and moral inhibitions" (Stevenson, 1974, p.112). When all rationality and moral inhibitions are lost then the human person becomes wild and turns against its own species killing it indiscriminately. This nature of violence and aggression according to Lorenz has evolved from the communal defence response from our pre-human ancestors. Because of this human instinct on aggression, man has through time armed himself with various weapons to destroy its own species; from the sticks and stones of pre-human ancestors, through the arrows and swords of history to guns and bombs of our contemporary times. The situation is so grave that if the many nuclear weapons developed by man were detonated today the whole of humanity and the entire of the living species would be decimated in a very short time. Even though man has usually been defined as a rational animal, appeals to rationality and moral responsibility have been notoriously ineffective in controlling conflict. According to Lorenz, this is because "aggression is innate in us and like the instinct in the Freudian id; it must find an outlet in one way or another" (Stevenson, 1974, p. 113). More often than not, this human aggression has been vented out through violence and wars.

This view by Lorenz on innateness of human aggression, which is psychological in approach, has been supported by modern philosophers in the west including Thomas Hobbes who analysed the nature of human society according to human nature. They have tried to analyse the state of man before the advent of society. This state is termed 'the state of nature'. They have gone ahead to look at the origin of society. To them society came to be as a mutual agreement otherwise called the 'social contract'. According to Thomas Hobbes who is one of the proponents of the social contract theory of society, society

was formed so as to regulate people in society so as to escape the evils of man in a state of nature which was a war of all against all and lives were accordingly nasty, brutish, and short (Solomon & Higgins, 1995, p. 329). To Hobbes, it was in recognition of the high brutal unbridled competition that people banded together to form a society agreeing in effect to surrender much of their power to hurt one another and hand it over to a sovereign who would henceforth keep people in check (Solomon & Higgins, 1995, p. 329). Thomas Hobbes serves to explain further the inherent aggression within human nature. In fact, according to Hobbes man is naturally evil and would hurt others at will unless checked by legislation.

#### **b) Competition for Resources the Cause of Human Aggression**

Socrates one of the greatest ancient philosophers notes that, "the cause of all war is wealth..." (Layton, 2006, p. 117). Perhaps this particular statement by this renowned philosopher puts it succinctly. Most of the conflicts around the globe that have witnessed massive loss of lives have been engendered by competition for resources. Either resources are scarce necessitating a stampede for the same or some groups or individuals want to have it all in disregard of the need to have it shared out equally among people. The need by certain groups to amass wealth at the expense of others has been witnessed in many African countries especially those endowed with minerals resources. These countries have been affected by what has been called 'the mineral curse'. This is because despite the mineral endowment most of these countries are the most politically unstable, the poorest, and the most corrupt. Accordingly, these countries have suffered massive loss of lives as communities compete for these resources or as cartels that control the trade in minerals engage each other in violent confrontations.

Even the mass killings of the world like the genocide of Rwanda in 1994 where it is estimated that eight hundred thousand Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered by the Hutu militia had an economic push as observed by Layton Robert. Layton who wrote on the genocide observes, "many of the extremist militia in Rwanda were unemployed or underemployed adolescent males armed with clubs and machetes" (Layton, 2006, p. 117). According to Layton, these young unemployed or underemployed men could find work by participating in the genocide (Layton, 2006, p. 117). Closer home in Kenya, the ethnic clashes that have been witnessed through subsequent elections despite having other causes like political instigations have had an economic perspective to it. In the Kenyan situation, the land issue has been the cause of disagreement. In the 2008 post-election violence an estimated one thousand five hundred people lost their lives and tens of thousands displaced (Tarimo & Manwelo, 2009, p. 204). Related to the land problem in Kenya has been the massacres witnessed especially among the pastoral communities as they engage each other in cattle rustling and as they battle each other over grassing and watering points. It is therefore evident that in the face of competition for resources, human beings will always turn to each other in violent confrontations that cost lives. This is because of an unequal distribution of resources that leave the majority poor. Many observers have seen this as a serious threat to peace and security and political

stability a consequence of which is violent confrontation and loss of lives (Tarimo & Manwelo, 2009, p. 105).

### **C) A Fight for Political Power**

Politics and leadership is natural to every human society to the extent that man has been defined as a political animal as given by Aristotle. Whenever politics and leadership are involved, there are of necessity the leaders and the led. A problem emerges though when all want to be leaders and none want to be led. This often causes a competition among people with each group of people wanting to take the mantle of power. This competition for leadership comes about because leadership is often tied to issues of resource allocation. Those that take leadership often tend to favour their own clansmen or tribesmen in resource allocation or distribution and other opportunities. This explains why people jostle for political power to the extent of employing even unorthodox means to ascend to power.

Because the world is inhabited by people of various races; and ethnic identities, there has always been a tendency in the many nation-states of the world for these people to compete for power. Taking Kenya as a case in point, it is a multi-ethnic society said to have forty-two tribes some big and others small. The less dominant communities have through time been trying to rise to positions of leadership with little success. The situation has "fomented anger, resentment, lust for revenge and aggressive competitiveness that has overlooked the common good of the entire country" (Tarimo & Manwelo, 2009, p. 25 ). Frustration among these groups has created a growing tendency to use violence as a means to correct the situation the net effect being the massacres of people from the perceived enemy community. The toll on life has always been great. This ethno-political competition has often been fuelled by political leaders from various ethnic communities who have wanted to use the tribal factor as a ladder of ascend into political offices.

### **d) Religious Fundamentalism**

Religious fundamentalism has also played a role in the killings witnessed in the world. Within the Islamic religion for instance there has been the formation of fundamentalist groups with Islamic militias like the Islamic jihad in the middle east that have been involved in hijackings, hostage taking, killings and acts of terrorism ( Esposito, 2009). These minority fundamentalists groups believe that they have a mandate from God to carry out God's will. These groups further believe that because the rulers in the Muslim world are authoritarian and anti-Islamic, violent change is necessary. They seek to topple governments, seize power and impose their vision or interpretation of Islam upon society ( Esposito, 2009). Islamic radicals also believe that Islam is not only a theological but also a political imperative and the command from God to implement it is immediate not gradual. The obligation to implement this command is on all true Muslims. The course is urgent and can even entail the waging of war in the form of jihad. Those that wage the holy war or jihad are said to cut themselves a ticket to heaven because of fighting on the side of God. Killing to them has become an act of human sacrifice that propels them into bliss. The Palestinian jihadists for instance who are fighting the Israeli incursion in their land are

said to have a slogan that reads "we kill so that we may live" (Murawiec, 2008, p. 12). Here, killing has become an aspect of human sacrifice. Spilled blood of the Israeli renews the identity of the lynch mob. It is also reported that on the walls of Hamas kindergarten in Gaza it is written, "The children are the Holy martyrs of tomorrow. We love death" (Murawiec, 2008, p.12). This particular statement serves to from an early age to groom children into murder instruments trained to believe that killing is normal and is to be unleashed on anybody perceived to be living a life not in keeping with Islamic specifications or shariah law.

The Taliban is another radical religious organisation that developed in Afghanistan in the early 1990s and it has been associated with terrorist activities around the world that have seen the death of very many people. It first committed atrocities in Afghanistan itself where it was founded to fight the soviet occupation of Afghanistan. When the soviets pulled out of Afghanistan in the late 1980s the Taliban changed roles as a liberator of the people from the Soviet rule and became a militant and radical brand of Islam. The Pashtun, afghanistan's dominant ethnic group dominated the Taliban. Using religion for legitimacy, the Pashtun Taliban fought 'holy' wars to subdue other ethnic and Muslim groups in Afghanistan that led to the slaughter of the Shia minority, whom the Taliban disdained as heretics (Esposito, 2009). The Taliban brand of Islam produced a "jihad culture" of Islamic radicalism and revolution. The classical Islamic belief that jihad is a defence of Islam and the Muslim community against aggression was transformed into a militant worldview that targeted Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Esposito,2009 ). This radical brand of Islam received funding from the Saudi born Osama bin Laden and carried out terrorist activities in many parts of the world. Attacks believed to have been orchestrated by the al-Qaeda operatives on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 provided a grim reminder of Osama bin Laden's reputation as the godfather of global terrorism. In this particular attack, the death toll was high with an estimated five thousand people losing their lives (Esposito, 2009).

In our neighbouring country, Somalia there has been a gross violation of human rights by the al-shabaab operatives that emerged in the year 2007. This militant organisation operates as a religious organisation with a strict application of the shariah law. As a militant organisation, it blocked aid agencies from delivering food to the starving population and is responsible for the displacement of thousands who live in horrendous conditions in refugee camps. This militant organisation while fighting the government in office, has been involved in suicide bombings against its perceived enemies ("Life under al-Shabaab", 2011). Closer home in Kenya we have also been victims of terrorist organisations that have seen the murder of large number of people like as it happened in the bombing of the US embassy in 1998. This saw the death of many people with many others maimed. This was the work of a terrorist organisation, the al-Qaeda network masterminded by Osama bin Laden the Saudi billionaire that was fighting the west and done in the name of religion. The killings that have been committed by the human species in the name of religion are part of what has made the life of the human species on earth very unbearable. The irony of it all is that man himself perpetuates this aggression of man. From my own understanding, religion is supposed to apart from

satisfying the spiritual aspect of human existence; make the life of man on earth better. This should be so, to the extent that to be religious is to be human. On the contrary, though, this has not always been the case. In some instances, religion has become a threat to human existence especially when it becomes fundamentalist and radical in its evangelistic mission.

#### e) Mission Killers

There is another category of killers within the human race. These are the mission killers. These are those that go out to kill as to satisfy a certain desire or to accomplish certain targets. An example of this group of mission killers is the serial killers. The Macmillan English Dictionary defines a serial killer as, "someone who kills several people one after the other, often in the same way." Serial killers are present in our societies and have often killed many people. The question though is, why do these people kill? It could be because man is naturally evil as discussed earlier. Laurent Murawiec, in his book 'The mind of Jihad' tries to explain both socially and psychologically what makes serial killers to commit crimes. He says that in every society social rules are made to control the bestial impulse in the society's members (Murawiec, 2008, p.14). He continues to say that in every society the transgressor who kills another must mentally and morally face the whole society as to explain their actions.

An individual then who transgresses the taboo crosses the line not only with respect to society but also in his own mind. This is because from the beginning society inculcates the law of respect for human life in the heart and minds of its members (Murawiec, 2008 p. 14). By violating the norm then, the perpetrator, "places himself outside society by violating a fundamental norm. Conversely, this violation gives the criminal a new sense of power since he has just overpowered the burdensome superego within himself and thus placed himself above society. He has freed himself from the heavy shackles of internalised norms. This act of rebellion establishes the guilty individual as the autocrat of his own will; it places his own will above that of society and its norms" (Murawiec, 2008, p. 14). Crime then 'lightens' the individual and makes him free becoming 'superior' to the rest who are under the conventional rules and in this sense the killing especially the innocent, the weak and the defenceless becomes an intense satisfactory emotional event and an addictive one hence the serial killings and serial killers (Murawiec ,2008, p.14). Murawiec continues to say that in such killings there is an element of hubris, which is a great and energetic facilitator to crime. The killer plays God; he disposes of life and death at his pleasure ( Murawiec 2008, p. 14). The pride that comes with killing makes the killer to continually seek to kill as to satisfy his ego and often a trail of dead people usually killed in more or less the same way. The jihadists and terrorists are another type of mission killers who murder because they are on a mission to rid the world of a group of people perceived as unworthy or inferior in a certain way. They are guided by a desire to kill that has been inculcated in them by their trainers. During training, they undergo a 'superego restructuring' where they are rewired so to speak and a new personality implanted in them. In psychology, this rewiring is called 'brain washing'. This entails the subject breaking up with his former self and the former self's attachments like family, friends, professions, and

even cultural habits (Murawiec 2008, p, 15). The new superego acquired in the course of the conversion is able to implant its own belief structure on the mind of the convert. The convert then becomes a jihadist, serial killer, terrorist or any other thing as dictated by the new rules. New set of rules replace those commonly accepted by the former personality. In other words, a new personality is created who is now able to kill without having the feelings of having broken any moral code.

#### The Need to Ensure World Peace

Having thus looked at some of the reasons and theories why the human species faces the threat of annihilation by itself, the next question would be; what options does the human species have so as to ensure its own continued existence? The automatic answer to this question is that; the human species has the responsibility of building an atmosphere of harmonious existence; the building of world peace. It is manifest from the various violent scenes that have been witnessed across the world that universal peace is the best of those things, which are ordained for happiness (Curtis, 2008, p. 181). This particular mission to ensure world peace needs concerted effort from every quarter of the human society. This calls for governments, non-governmental organisations and the civil societies to ensure that those factors that predisposes the human person to prey on fellow human beings are ironed out before lives are lost. This effort to ensure world peace should be informed by the fact that amid the calm and tranquillity of peace the human race accomplishes most freely and easily its tasks and aspirations ( Curtis, 2008, p. 181). The opposite of the above is equally true that, without peace life becomes difficult and aggressions and counter aggressions would surely exterminate the human race. The duty to establish world peace is therefore noble and urgent.

#### Methods of Ensuring World Peace

Having realised that the threat of getting killed by a fellow human being is real, the human society has had to come up with various ways of maintaining world security. First, there has been the formation of international organisations like the United Nations organisation with a Security Council charged with the responsibility of ensuring world peace. This world organisation was formed after the world experienced two world wars and it was formed with the view of ensuring that the world does not experience another war of similar magnitude since the toll on life was great. Apart from the global organisations, there have also been regional organisations that strive to ensure human security and peace. Such organisations include the African Union and the East African Community among others. These regional organisations try to adapt regional security approaches since countries within every region share common security concerns often of a multi-dimensional nature, which are better addressed together rather than alone or in opposition to each other (Field, 2004, p. 32). These regional organisations try to ensure that there is peace in their areas by acting as agents of peace; and dealing with any threats to peace should they occur. There has also been an effort in many countries and regions of the world to adopt peaceful dispute resolution measures like negotiation, arbitration, mediation, and litigation. These are non-violent conflict resolution strategies

that try to come up with measures that are agreeable to the parties involved in the conflict. When such agreements are reached, the parties will take responsibility of ensuring peace based on the terms of the agreements (Fischer, 1984, p, 175). Within individual countries also, there are various civil society groups, government, and non-governmental organisations that try to preach peace between and among societies. These organisations serve to dispense tension occasioned for instance by competition for resources or suspicion that may exist between various ethnic communities or groups of people. These organisations in Kenya include the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission, (TJRC) that was formed to address forms of past injustices in Kenya that have been behind the perennial ethnic related conflicts.

### Conclusion

The question of aggression of the human species on itself is a pertinent issue that needs proper analysis as to unearth its causes and address it accordingly. Many theories and reasons have been developed some of which are those discussed in this paper. What perhaps remains is to try to sort out issues in line with their findings. The most important thing to note though is that since the causes are varied any approach taken to remedy the situation needs to be a multi-dimensional one as to address the multi-faceted nature of the human person who is at the same time a political, social and spiritual being. All these faces of the human being need to be satisfied to stabilise his character. In the final analysis, though whatever the approach is the main thing is to inculcate in man a respect for human

life in every life's endeavour. This will ensure lasting peace. This also needs collective responsibility where all of us take charge in the duty of peace maintenance. It is only then that we shall obtain lasting and true peace and with it, security.

### REFERENCES

- Curtis, Michael, 2008, *"The Great Political Theories: From the Greeks to the Enlightenment"* Harper Perennial Modern Classics. New York:
- Esposito, John L., 2009, *"Islamic fundamentalism"* Microsoft Encarta ® DVD Redmond W,A: Microsoft Corporation.
- Field, Shannon. (2004). *"Peace in Africa" institute of Global Dialogue.* Cape Town:
- Fischer, Dietrich, 1984, *"Preventing War in a Nuclear Age,"* Rowman & Allanheld Publishers. New Jersey:
- Layton, Robert, 2006, *"Order and Anarchy"*, Cambridge University Press. London:
- "Life Under al-Shaabab" (24<sup>th</sup> October 2011) Standard Newspaper.
- Tarimo & Manwelo (Eds), 2009, *"Ethnicity Conflict and the Future of African States"*, Paulines. Nairobi:
- Murawiec, Laurent, 2008 *"The Mind of Jihad,"* 2008' Cambridge University Press. London:
- Solomon, Robert & Higgins Kathleen. (Eds.). ( 1995). *"World Philosophy: A Text With Readings"*, McGraw-Hill Inc. New York:
- Stevenson, Leslie, 1974, *"Seven Theories of Human Nature"*, Clarendon Press. Oxford:

\*\*\*\*\*