

**University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” of Iași
Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences and Politics**

DOCTORAL THESIS

**HUMAN AGGRESSION BETWEEN NATURE AND
CULTURE**

-ABSTRACT-

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ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of a world where the human aggression phenomenon is constantly expanding and human beings are in a constant "state of failure" (Nikolai Berdeev) it is necessary to achieve an analytical approach that aims to highlight the biological and cultural side of human's aggressiveness, its way of manifestation in the natural and cultural plan and intertwining relations between its natural and cultural dimension.

Concepts that will be considered during my research are those of aggression, violence, war, conflict, nonviolent utopian societies, instinct, tension, cultural pseudo species and sacrifice, all in relation to a new proposed term for analysis, human aggression that enhances or dilutes in the plane of existence through culture. Throughout the paper, the concepts proposed for the analysis of the global phenomenon of human aggression will reveal meanings and significations.

My research method used in this paper is not only ethological, scanning biology of aggressive animal and human behavior, but also the method of analytic philosophy: definition, distinction, clarifying and questioning the concepts involved. Therefore the analytical undertaking couldn't of been developed but in the fields of ethology, philosophy, and sociology, psychology, ethics, bioethics, or of neurobiology.

This study is intended to be interdisciplinary, as a comprehensive analysis of the indissoluble relationship between nature and culture of human aggression which can only be achieved through close correlation of various universes of discourse in several research areas.

In the proposed thesis we consider an interdisciplinary analysis of the possibility in which human aggression occupies the position of the average between the two main variables of life: nature and culture. Research directions will fold around the meanings and significance of the concept of human aggression,

but also the manner in which it is possible to interlace the natural plan with the biological one of aggressiveness. In other words, the versatility of the concept of human aggression allows ourselves to dive into the variety of the fields of aggression manifested in human existence.

Nature and culture will, in the present research, revealing the limits within which it is possible to reveal aggression.

The central theme of the thesis should emphasize, on the one hand, the analysis of the concepts mentioned above, and on the other hand, humans can redeem themselves through culture. The downside to this would be the fall of man in a form of aggressiveness exacerbated by culture. The masks which hide the source of violence are diverse and often record the progress of civilization and more refined forms of practicing bestiality.

The aim of the thesis is to highlight the sense of the evolution of aggression from its strictly biological manifestation to the cultural one, and human inability to justify violent actions seen only through a natural perspective.

Our research will provide an innovative weaving between philosophical papers and other areas of interest for the subject, arguing both, the manner in which the installation of the relationship between natural and cultural manifestation of the above presented phenomenon and the possibility of humans transferring the harmful effects of aggression in a peaceful area, the cultural space.

Structure of the thesis

Our research is divided in four chapters and the manner in which they are linked will highlight human aggressiveness's continuous oscillation between the biological and cultural plans.

In the first chapter, entitled *Diagnosis of human aggression* interdisciplinary perspectives of the subject will be analyzed focusing on a number of theories derived from philosophy: Karl Jaspers, Aristotle, Lucian Blaga, Max Scheler, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, ethology: Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Konrad Lorenz, psychology: John Dollard, Alfred Adler, sociology: Leonard Berkowitz, Alfred Bandura and neurobiology: Farzaneh Pahlavan. It will try to create a scientific x-ray of the phenomenon by highlighting its biological basic traits. In the analysis of human aggression issues I insisted on studies of the ethology of the birth and violent manifestations of

human and animal aggression, making, references to psychosocial theories, e.g. cultural pseudospeciation (Erik Erikson), which underlies realization of human manifestation of demonic potencies.

The second chapter of the research, *Man between Eros and Thanatos*, brings to the fore the main theories of psychoanalysis, who find that aggression in any forms stems from the sexual impulses of man. Not only are the sexual impulses responsible in leading the abuse, but the phenomenon of ethnocentrism may be responsible for crimes against humanity. Other opportunities which denominate the human's evil side could be political programs that have instilled the idea of pure-breeds. Analysis of this sequence of research leaves a number of classic works in the field of psychoanalysis (Freud, Jung) and continues with research in other fields (political philosophy: Erich Fromm, Bertrand Russell, Karl Popper, Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, ontology: Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Baudrillard; literature: Umberto Eco), which reveal the masks under which man's destructive power lies.

Also in this stage of the research the ways in which aggression succeeds in being seen in a positive light and nonviolent through culture will be argued. Cultural censorship of the violent instinct ensures that humans lead a peaceful and nonviolent life and creates nonviolent ways of defusing tension which cannot be denied. Literary works and sports are some of the human possibilities to channel destructive energies and at the same time, humanity is safe from anger, hatred and physical violence that would destroy any nonviolent relation to the society.

Chapter Three: *Myths and sacrificial rituals as ways of transferring violence* and Chapter Four: *Human existence in the empire of nonviolent utopias* of the targeted analytical approach will distance themselves from the natural dimension, purely biological manifestation of human aggression, drawing lines of a refined and elegant type of expressing violence. In these chapters we will parenthesize the natural frameworks in which all of death's impulses enter the great dance of survival. What interests us here is externalizing behaviors and attitudes of human and divine brutality through symbolic forms such as sacrifice and finding symbolic victims, cultural substitutes will be those upon which our bestiality and barbarity may alter without prejudice to the idea of humanity and moral dignity. From the perspective of cultural sublimation of violence, all human misconduct had

justification, the ultimate authority being often, the gods or other supernatural forces.

Sacrifice as an accepted cultural form of liveliness in any destructive tendencies of man, has its origins in a proto-history of mankind. The transition from human to animal sacrifices in rituals of sacrifice is mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, parables and fraternal "disagreements" between Cain and Abel expose the age old feeling of hate translated into crime.

However, once surpassing the biological plane of human existence the idea of violence, as a representative of the contemporary world (biotechnology) is becoming more evident by numerous examples of human actions that are against the idea of harmony and peace. The existence of a peaceful life, governed by moral laws, is a utopian project in today's age. That which quickly allots any problem is the bestiality of human acts dissimulated under many masks.

The fourth chapter of the research *Human existence in the empire of nonviolent utopias* will make the transition from the concrete plan of existence with its dose of aggression to a plan in which violence does not occur. Through a series of utopias, more or less achievable, such as those belonging to Plato, Aristotle, Thomas More, Francis Bacon and Tommaso Campanella, the implementation of city-societies projects where any form of aggression can be abolished by calling either the divine models (Augustine), the political regimes (Plato) and social (Plato, Aristotle, Campanella, Bacon, Morus) or alchemy, witchcraft or various occult practices which will try to abolish any manifestation of human atrocity.

CONCLUSIONS

The topic of human aggression was, is and will remain one of the most interesting topics of mankind. Far from being thoroughly analyzed everything that could be said about what it is, how it manifests in the animal kingdom and the human that hides it or masks under which it hides, ways of sublimating nonviolent aggression, the destructive dimension of human nature will expand its opportunities and improve its weapons, culture being often the perfect ally.

If in the animal kingdom aggression is the fuel that keeps the species alive, at mankind it makes its way into the most

unexpected corners of human intelligence. The difference between instinctive manifestation of thanatic impulses and cultural compulsion lies in the weapons that the two kingdoms have at hand to be able to reveal the dose of violence.

Analyzing human aggressiveness subject extensively, but not exhaustively present research stages the biological need of both animal and human cells to appeal to violence to ensure their existence in time. Group leadership, the perpetuation of the species and providing food are just some of the needs can not be met in nature other than calling for aggression. In humans, the primary forms of manifestation of brutality are molded in the same way of meeting needs, as in the animal kingdom.

The orientation to the Other was done by preserving a not always calm, moral and nonviolent tone, fear, or rather, a reaction of rejection which is not culturally similar to people, turned them into violent beings, ready to unleash all the cunning that they could not directly or indirectly conceal through art and all its cultural products.

For a better understanding of human aggression, the present research has established universes of discourse in the perimeter which has been carefully analyzed as our thesis topic. Selecting the sources of information was a first step in achieving a problematic relationship between argumentative discourse in natural and cultural manifestation of aggressiveness in human species. Analyzing the main interdisciplinary theories of the present thesis, we can conclude that violence is both a manifestation of a survival instinct and a force of expression of a conflict that has its headquarters in human's psychological infrastructure.

Both Freud and ethologists such as Konrad Lorenz and Eibl-Eibesfeldt Irenaus achieved the distinction between instinct and aggressive pulsation. Ethologists considered aggression as an expression of both defensive and survival instincts, while with Freud, thanatic force is the manifestation of destructive impulses aimed at death and suppression of all life forms. However, from the inorganic life is will be born. The eros, as the essence of life, will be able to unleash its energy in the cultural plane. Where the expression of sexual instincts is not allowed, sexuality will be sublimated through cultural artworks. Beyond death impulses and immediate satisfaction of basic needs, human beings will always find an oasis of tranquility in the apparently nonviolent perimeter of culture. While cultural space is apparently harmless, there is always the danger that the person will abuse it in a perverse

fashion, and then release it as destructive energy. Cultural products such as films, literary works or paintings may have harmful effects on the public. This time, aggression would manifest itself in a much more refined, but equally negative way for its receptors.

Because man has overcome his natural and instinctual ways more or less through culture it was necessary to address the ways of human aggression through a cultural approach. Thus, man has found his own ways of diffusing aggression in culturally acceptable forms: art, literature, music, painting, sports, and the list could continue.

War as a cultural form of manifestation of destructive instincts, made the transition from the primary bestiality type, like melee, as it happens in the animal kingdom to the type of conventional aggression, sublimated in community cohabitation space. In this manner, any violent act is justified, and the punishment of criminals is set considering the prejudices brought to humanity. Many political regimes, namely the totalitarian ones created true models of promoting human cruelty, turning people into enemies and also changing any interpersonal relationships. Nazism has turned violence against Jews "the banality of evil" in natural actions in which any small difference, physical or conceptual, was violently corrected and where there could be no change, death was the best solution.

War has emphasized the idea life in a community is not always without violence. Cultural pseudospeciation may itself be a cause for fighting and killing human diversity. Although nowadays there are talks regarding tolerating cultural differences around the globe, the instinct to protect anything that is identical or at least familiar outweighs any work for peaceful settlement of conflicts.

Cultural censorship of aggression, which initially was of natural origin, was able to transform its manifestation effects into creative, nonviolent projects and to be perfectly controlled by what man has created in terms of culture: sports, music, art in general (as non-belligerent forms of manifestation of the need to suppress life compared to war, a different kind of manifestation of aggression with a high degree of destructiveness, but as refined). Culture can be an ally in the struggle of man with his own nature, but abusing it, without reason, is to pervert culture for nature. The nature of man is not dangerous if it is controlled and does it does not cancel the nature of the man if done sparingly. Human intelligence must stand in the service of promoting nonviolent

behaviors and create an ally from the cultural horizon the only one that can make the qualitative leap to another plane of existence.

Since ancient times, humans were concerned in legitimizing violence, calling divinity through ritualistic forms. Thematic rituals will remain as an ordeal in the annals of anthropology as a highly controversial topic. Transmission of violence through its various cultural and social forms can resize the valences that it has. An example in this respect is the sacrifice: it changes its sacred value when violence can not be redirected to other objects or people for sacrifice. Non-differentiation between the status of victims and the executioner will generate the crisis of sacrifice and contamination of the act itself with criminal violence.

Many episodes in history have confirmed the value of sacrificial victims of human and later on animals that have resulted in the release of huge amounts of aggression, which could occur in the absence of any ritual. The Old and New Testament are examples of what they meant by human sacrifice and the substitution effects with those of animal origin. The christianic example gave birth to a new paradigm of thinking about valences for their offerings and ceremonies.

Cosmogonic myths and legendary stories contain scenes of real violence and the effects of gods or heroes cruelty are still felt, even in the collective unconscious of people. All acts of foundation of the universe, regardless of cultural space to which we refer contain scenes which seem extremely cruel, pages out of the most horrific scenarios.

Humans, the only being in the universe that commits intraspecific killing for his own safety, power, fame, social status, but also for sheer pleasure, turns to violence putting it on behalf of physiological needs, but also cultural. Man has developed so much the ability to hide certain intentions that is able to use culture to justify or excuse acts of violence.

Revenge of honor is another topic that touches the act of sacrifice and specific initiated rituals. Islamic, Japanese, and Christian territories are living witnesses of what it means to suffer the retaliation of revenging honor: of a clan, tribe, people or just one person.

History knows no boundaries, and technologies are progressing and violence will take the most diverse forms. By refining the forms of aggression, man became a specialist in concealing the aggressive side of his being. All attacks against

humanity, bioterrorism and destructive use of technology to reinforce the idea that modern man under the illusion of power that he holds, is a modern day Cain that improves pejoratively speaking intraspecific killing techniques. Advancement of technology in all areas can feed or inhibit the thirst to kill, but this should be considered both at the macro – the collective consciousness and micro level – the individual's conscience. Using today's technologies in an abusive manner man turns into a homo pugnax and why not a homo demens, who has all the equipment that can express its evil, thanatic side. Homo faber is no longer inert and completely harmless a man lacking power to fulfill his grand plans, but is an active man, ready to create on earth to that which could only exist in a divine plan.

Wanting to escape the "labyrinth of cruelty", man was interested in creating parallel worlds, utopian social and political projects that will abolish violence through philosophy, religion or science. The subject of creating a perfect society, in which nothing can disturb the harmony and tranquility of life, is critiqued by many objections. The first one would cover the utopian character, unattainable social or architectural plan of where everything is built according to a grand surreal sometimes metaphysical plan. The second objection would mean essentially moral behavior of citizens is consistent with religious precepts; virulent critics list at the scope of these projects to create an ideal state or community, completely nonviolent, which could be completed with other shortcomings.

However, by using methods of analysis and comparison relative to the studied works, there are some ways that might develop into a social, real plan: providing legal frameworks and opportunities for all members of classes sharing a society more so by making use of the existent democratic liberalism, education and awareness of citizens in the spirit of internalizing precepts of religious dogma, using science to optimize individuals living together, paying attention to both body and spirit, the practice of virtue and censorship by moral conscience, and all the conventional mental projects to be enacted.

These "recipes of happiness" are objected to by history and works of philosophers such as: Fustel de Coulanges, Karl Popper and Krishan Kumar. All objections have in common at least two elements: the ideal, transcendent form of government and constitution of a perfect city, and crushing any private initiative, of its citizens. Often, Plato has been accused of a kind of totalitarian visions that requires his city (Popper), or has been,

repeatedly been proven, that too much political pressure on only one social class, will trigger complaints from other classes and thus state violence.

All kinds of utopias such as Utopia (Thomas More), Sun City (Tomasso Campanella) and New Atlantis (Francis Bacon) are hidden mental refuges of the aforementioned philosophers in some "bright", happier cities in which science works together with theology and violence cannot exist. Reason and faith can exist together without causing political or social disorder. Compensatory dimension comes from philosophers fleeing from the real world and taking refuge in a society governed by magic, the occult, but also exact sciences. Violence and human dissension cannot exist in these "dream lands" because every man is born in virtue and moral law. Also these writings state that man is good by nature, but also needs a governor to remember this. Human nature is not bad, in sense of aggressive, but life brutalizes man.

Aggression makes its presence felt from the dichotomy between reason and faith. This is the pressing issue Saint Augustine insists on when speaking about the need for uniting the two types of "cities" in one body. First, *civitas terrena*, as the human body, one that will always be subjected to biological needs and the second *civitas dei*, the soul or mind, the path to communion with divinity. The union of the two instances in the human will ensure safety from any form of aggression. The theme of an alliance between faith and intellectual reason is first encountered in Augustine's works. He is the one who promotes grace and free will as two human attributes that man can use to approach God and can keep away from conflict. The two instances of human beings in the world may or may not conflict with each other: the city of the body, where the man loves himself and only that and the city of God, the soul, the human being's horizon widens its faith. Augustine's language is a metaphorical one, but will emphasize the need of communion between the two instances aspiring one with the other, the belief of union with God. Reason and faith represent in St. Augustine's vision the way to redemption or to a nonviolent world.

The illusion of creating cultural niches in which aggression can be relieved in nonviolent ways deepens more so all the "delights" are offered by scientific progress, eventually, leaving a bitter taste. Happiness is not a natural given gift, but counterfeited in artificial ways by medical technologies, the Thought Police or the so-called second hand Creators. Creation

will also turn against the creator such as a Golem. The main problem arising from the human ability to create is the ethics of his actions in order under which he created his works. The comfort of an overtechnologized world has given birth to golems or homunculus, beasts in human form, but without spiritual attributes. The aggressive artificialisation of human existence has created a new paradigm; a new template from which the next generations will consume their existence.

Man can escape his violent nature through culture, it alone can sublimate brutalisations and the cruelty in human actions towards nonviolent cultural products. However, there is always the danger that man will pervert culture in a way to conceal its destructive intentions, both on him and on those who divide his existence on earth.

With the development of the cultural human creature, the values by which it guides its life could end up having a higher destructive character. Elegant aggression will become a new topic of discussion for researchers of this phenomenon, a niche topic that will target strictly the cultural dimension. Neuroaxiology will become the bridge to launch other types of assumptions about cultural transfiguration of human aggression, forms more refined than those known today.

The whole undertaking of our research tried to emphasize the idea that man as a biological and spiritual being can not deny his aggressive side, but is able to transfer some of its tensions towards the refined skyline of culture. Human aggression is a natural given gift which can soften its effects by appealing to culture. Meanwhile, the studies reviewed provided sufficient evidence to prove that aggression is a cultural construct. Thus, aggression is the average time between the two major instances of human life, nature and culture.

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