

HATING AND DOMINATING THE "OTHER":
PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF PREJUDICE AND RACISM,
WITH HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

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As passionate a matter as racism can be on the streets and in the mind, many discussions of it remain surprisingly dry. One reason for this may be that the topic engenders such strong feelings, is so likely to cause offense, that commentators become cautious. More salient, however, is another aspect of the discussion: while writers on this subject attend to important economic and sociological aspects of the problem, they often give short shrift to essential psychological factors which are closer to its emotional heart. These psychological factors are the focus of this essay.

Following several introductory remarks and questions, I will briefly describe the most central psychological mechanisms involved in prejudice and racism, and then illustrate them with vignettes from a "ten minute tour" of the history of Western Civilization. I will then bring up a few relevant aspects of child development to round out the discussion of both psychology and history.

Introductory Remarks and Questions

I thought that it might be interesting to start by saying that I am a racist. I have several reasons for doing this. First, I thought it might get your attention. Second, and more importantly, is that given that I am a human, there has to be at least a germ of truth to this assertion. Historically, racism has often been studied as a deviation, to be found and scrutinized in certain people with one or another type of psychopathology. But there is a danger in this approach, and that is that it misses the great ordinariness and universality of prejudice and racism, which is the central theme of this essay. Have I had disparaging thoughts come to mind about one or another ethnic group? Of course! I think it is important not to deny this. Racism and prejudice are such prevalent problems because the mechanisms are so universal, and if we are to understand anything about them, it is useful to recognize them in ourselves. (The psychoanalytic tradition, dating to Freud, of attempting to learn from the psychological examination of oneself, has a number of merits.) There is a further point: to point the finger at others, while proclaiming one's own superiority - moral or otherwise - is one of the

chief mechanisms by which prejudice occurs, and thus would be an ironic to perpetuate.

Now by teasing with the idea that I am a racist, I have also raised another matter, and that is one of definition. If the mechanisms of racism and prejudice are universal, and if everyone has bigoted thoughts about others, what is the difference between a racist and a non-racist? Psychoanalysis has shown us that we all have a great mixture of irrational aggressive and sexual thoughts and wishes which are largely unconscious, and over which we have no significant control. There is no unconscious without hate and prejudice. But our behavior we can, with some effort, control. (Clinical psychoanalysis helps to expand the areas of the mind over which we have control: knowing and owning one's feelings helps one to keep them from unconscious expression in behavior.) If one behaves respectfully toward members of other groups and treats them as equals, if one adheres to equality before the law, one is not racist in the everyday meaning of the word. But the distinctions, are not, so to speak, quite so black and white. A person can publicly be non-racist and be racist in the voting booth. A person can have all sorts of more subtle prejudices that he may not be aware of. Am I using the pronoun "he" because it is standard usage or because I am sexist? Is using it a convenience or a perpetuation of a prejudice? Obviously there is a distinction between prejudice and the lack of it, but it should be equally clear that the distinction is often not very distinct.

There is another matter of definition to mention. How do we define racism, and is it the same as or different from other prejudices? Prejudice of course derives from the roots for pre- or advance - judgment. The legal use of the term to indicate improperly influenced judgment is not far from the common usage. Although the term can apply to an individual or a situation, it is of course usually used in relation to groups. And while one can have positive prejudices, the term typically indicates disparagement or hate. Racism, as opposed to anti-Semitism, sexism, homophobias, prejudices against Latinos, Irish, Italians, etc., has its own great historical differences, and is different also for the obvious matter of visible skin color differences. But is it psychologically different? This question has been extensively explored by Elizabeth Young-Bruehl in her recent book, *The Anatomy of Prejudices*. Young-Bruehl reviews the history of the study of prejudices in a remarkably comprehensive fashion. For most of this century, she points out, different prejudices have all generally been treated as equivalent. There were prejudiced people, often having multiple prejudices, or interchangeable single prejudices, serving similar psychological functions for the bigot. Young-Bruehl suggests, however, that there are important distinctions between different types of prejudice in the psychological functions they serve, and between the types of people who tend to hold them. I believe, however, that the similarities of the psychological mechanisms are much greater than the differences, and Young-Bruehl's interesting ideas are beyond the scope of this essay.

One other introductory word about race: does it in fact exist? On the one hand it is obvious; we can all look around and see skin color, hair texture. On the other hand, contemporary biologists tell us that if we think there are distinct biologically significant divisions of the human race, we are deluded. Different human groups, such as East Asians, northern Europeans, or West Africans, may have distinctive surface

features, related in part to their forbears' adaptation to climate, but otherwise the gene pools of different human groups have few significant differences. Moreover, there is a great deal of genetic variability within just about any identifiable human group, which is of course desirable for the health and perpetuation of the population. There appear to be biologically distinct "races" of certain animal species, but not of the human race, which makes the power and prevalence of human racial prejudice all the more both tragic and ridiculous.

Psychological Mechanisms:

We have a lot of Western history to traverse, so it's time to speed ahead. We will briefly review some of the most common psychological mechanisms involved in racial prejudice, again emphasizing their ordinariness and universality. First of all, let's think in terms of biology and evolution. Suspiciousness of others is a common trait, varying between people, but some theorists suggest that within a group it has likely been an advantage for some of its members to possess this trait, and to become, in a sense, the group's guards and scouts. In evolutionary terms, there has probably been a selective advantage to a degree of wariness of others. To what degree is this a constitutional and hereditary matter? We can't measure. We know that in humans, experience and learning are extraordinarily influential. Geese, by contrast, have "built-in" prejudices, so to say. One of the early ethologists demonstrated that if you pass the shadow of a cross over goslings long end first, the goslings are calm, presumably perceiving the silhouette of a goose. Reversing the direction creates the image of an eagle or hawk and causes alarm. This is a far digression from humans, but can alert us to a possible, expectable tendency to be wary of "the other."

The most central mechanisms of prejudice are the externalization, projection, or displacement of some unwanted part of one's mind onto the image of another. The popular term that most closely approximates these psychological processes is scapegoating. The idea of exorcism has some similar qualities. Unwanted feelings, fantasies, and wishes are attributed to demons, which can then be wrenched from the body and soul. What is displaced and projected? Usually unwanted, guilt-inducing sexual or aggressive fantasies. Often there is a clear relation to one or more of Freud's psychosexual phases of development. The hated groups are greedy (oral), dirty or smelly (anal), or phallicly advantaged or disadvantaged - hypersexual or impotent. (Some groups, for instance Jews or blacks, may be seen as any or all of these. Others, such as welfare mothers, may be seen through a predominantly oral lens.) In addition to prejudices with psychosexual origin and connotation, aggression and hate are commonly projected and the hated group may thus be seen as violent, hateful, and dangerous.

Any type of developmental fantasy may lend itself to prejudice: hated groups may represent (in psychoanalytic jargon) oedipal and negative oedipal partners and antagonists, preoedipal figures, sibling rivals. In plain words, the hated party is likely to represent, on an unconscious level, a family figure, and the fantasies about the hated party will draw on fantasies and realities deriving from experience in the family. All sorts of sadomasochistic fantasies may be incorporated

into prejudice; the object is not only hated, but, in fantasy, and at times in reality, abused.

The prejudice serves a psychological function for the bigot. At the most simple level, it is easier to despise a hated feature in someone else than in oneself. Hating it in someone else helps to hide its existence in oneself. As an aside, the famous apocryphal story of George Washington and the cherry tree is of note because young George supposedly accepted the blame for cutting the cherry tree himself and did not - as expected among children - blame someone else. The despised victim is only part of the equation - if he is the lesser then oneself must be the greater, purer, holier, stronger, better. This is important for the individual, and also has a major impact on group psychology: a common despised enemy can foster group spirit, solidarity, and identity. And prejudice, as is well known, must be understood in terms of group as well as individual psychology.

Another major aspect of group psychology pointed out by Freud is regression in groups, in which a degree of mature judgment and autonomy is relinquished in favor of allegiance to the group or its leader, enabling the expression of more primitive and hateful fantasies and behaviors with less guilt, anxiety, and inhibition.

Another individual psychological mechanism that is important to mention is identification with the aggressor. Many an experience as a victim creates a would-be victimizer. The familiar, sexually-stereotyped example of this is that of the man who, humiliated by his boss, comes home and criticizes his wife, who yells at the kid, who kicks the dog, and so on. Identification with the aggressor is an important contributor to the self-hate of many groups who are the objects of hate and prejudice.

Finally, in addition to identification with the aggressor, identifications in general are important. Identification is the psychological process of (usually unconsciously) taking on the qualities of another person, typically an influential person such as a parent. The "received" qualities can include important attitudes and beliefs. There is some truth to the song from South Pacific that "You have to be taught how to hate." In fact any human child is capable of developing the capacity to hate without much assistance, but parents both influence the tendency to hate, as well as the choice of whom to hate. Parents and society may encourage the choice of certain select targets. The "Comms" may be gone, but numerous other culturally sanctioned targets remain. The whole family may be happy to have the hate directed away from the family toward some more distant group or figure.

Western Civ 101

With these concepts in mind, we now begin an extremely selective and rapid tour of Western civilization as a means of illustrating the psychological mechanisms of prejudice and racism in relatively well-known settings. Where else to begin but with our myth of creation, Adam and Eve, which is where the projection and displacement appears to have begun.

First of all, where did Eve come from? She, woman, was born out of man! Utter nonsense! Babies, male and female, come from females, as we all know. Who wrote this, reversing the order of nature and giving

creative, reproductive priority to the male? We are not yet to the matter of blame and prejudice, but we can already see the psychological mechanism of attributing to one party something that is more properly the feature of another.

What happens next? Temptation. Who is to blame? The finger-pointing and displacement begins. Adam says "It was not me. I would never succumb to such; it was Eve." Eve says "Not I, it was the serpent" (which looks something like Adam under the fig-leaf, but keeps from implicating Adam directly). One thing can be said for the snake: at least it doesn't pass the buck. We have here the beginnings of sexism, a powerful oedipal and sexual fable, and as noted, the first attempt to place unwanted psychological material in the person of another. One other thing to note, as we will come back to this point: what sort of God do we have here? A demanding, forbidding, and punitive one. Adam and Eve are evicted from Eden, Eve (and women) sentenced to pain with childbirth and Adam (and men) to endless toils.

The next few pages of the Bible take us through numerous sibling rivalries. One is of particular note in that its influences are perhaps still with us today. Jews trace their descent from Abraham through Isaac, Muslims through Isaac's older half-brother Ishmail. These two were rivals, and their descendants have often, depending on the place and time, been friends or antagonists during the millennia since.

Sibling rivalry may also have influenced the history of the Jews in another way. The early pages of Genesis are filled with thoughts about clans growing into nations, distinct groups. The followers of Abraham, the first Jews, set themselves apart from other groups, as the "Chosen People" of their one God. Did this statement of "specialness" arouse antagonism from other tribes? We don't know, and there is a risk of sounding like blaming the victims for anti-Semitism, but history and the bible are rife with stories of the dangers of elevating one sibling over another. The word "goyim," the Jewish derisive term for non-Jews, means "nations." Evidently it was originally a term for the other tribes. The long history of the Jews as a distinct group is in part attributable to their sense of difference, of apartness. This fosters, and is fostered by, a sense of "us and them." It is hard to imagine an us and them in which the Us don't feel more positively toward the Us and correspondingly more negatively toward the Them.

Taking it a step further, there are a variety of stone-age, relatively isolated tribes whose name for themselves is their word for "people." They are aware of and have contact with other peoples, but these are "Other."

Returning from this anthropological digression to our mad tour of Western Civ, we arbitrarily skip ahead a millennium or two, past ancient Greece, to the time of Christ and of Rome. My brother, novelist, computer software developer, and cultural observer, commented to me years ago how different God seemed in the New Testament, as opposed to the Old Testament. You will recall God's behavior at the beginning of Genesis. He remains, in the Old Testament, a combination of loving and helpful, on the one hand, and viciously punitive when insufficiently obeyed or admired. In Exodus he saves the Hebrews, but when they don't heed him he sets them fighting with each other. In the New Testament, however, the emphasis is on God as loving and forgiving. Then an interesting thing happens: the devil appears. This is described in fascinating detail in a book called "The Origins of Satan" by Elaine Pagels, a professor of

religion at Princeton. The devil had been a relatively minor angel while God had embodied both love and hate, positive and negative. As the image of God is purified, the devil grows in importance and influence, becoming God's antagonist. Good and bad are no longer contained in the same entity, but split into two entities. This of course fosters an "us versus them," we are good, they are evil. The bad is projected, displaced onto another. Simultaneous with this theological change, Pagels describes the processes by which the Jews came to be vilified by the early Christians. Jesus had challenged contemporary Jewish practices and had also antagonized the occupying Roman governors. Pagels shows a pattern within the four gospels that as each is further removed in time from the life of Jesus, it places more of the blame for Jesus's death on the Jews. Each new generation of early Christians has become one step further removed from its Jewish origins, and more inclined not only to blame the Jews, but to suggest that they acted under the influence of the newly elevated Satan. Pagels sees this trend as serving early Christian efforts to consolidate group identity. More important for our present purpose is the opportunity to see a split occur between good and bad with good seen as residing in one group, and bad, or evil, in the other. On a less psychological note, Pagels suggests that a conciliatory posture toward the Roman authorities - and thus a more blaming attitude toward the Jews - was also politically helpful to the early Christians as they attempted to deflect the suspicious, oppressive attentions of the Romans from themselves.

On a similar note of "we are good" and "they are evil," we can skip another millennium, include Europe on our map, and go directly to the Crusades. In this instance the infidels, in the eyes of the church, are not Jews but Moslems, some of the people most crucial to preserving classical learning during the dark ages. Having almost entirely omitted ancient Rome, it seems imbalanced to dwell on the crusades. The main point here, in addition to the obvious and passionate split of good and evil, and displacement of evil onto a distant other, is the hidden influence of sibling rivalry once again stoking the fires of hate and prejudice. Some historians have suggested that the European system of primogeniture, the inheritance by the first born, left a great many frustrated, angry later-born sons, who rather than take up arms against their fathers and older brothers, and lacking their own lands, took their battles elsewhere, to the great misfortune of the peoples of the Middle East.

A few hundred more years takes us to Columbus, and with Columbus perhaps to the beginnings both of modern racism and what might be called "modern" slave trade. In his book, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, James Loewen, attempting to correct many mythic distortions, provides a great deal of information about Columbus. Upon arriving at a land not previously known to Europeans, Columbus would claim it for Spain and read to the native populations in Spanish his requirement that they follow the dictates of his God and Queen, with the warning that if they did not, he would not bear the responsibility for the severe repercussions that he would rightly visit upon them. Columbus regarded these "Indians" of the "West Indies" as savages, which, incidentally, the Indians also thought the Spanish to be. It was the custom of Columbus's men not to bathe, and their odor, amongst many other things, was an early shock to the indigenous peoples. The brutality of the Spanish was absolutely extraordinary, truly gruesome to contemplate. Columbus began to both

enslave and slaughter indigenous peoples soon after his arrival. He enslaved them to mine what little gold there was, for example on Hispaniola. When the gold was insufficient to impress his employers, he brought back slaves instead. When there were insufficient Indians to work the mines and plantations, because so many had been killed, died of disease, or committed mass suicide to escape the brutality, he and the Spanish imported slaves from Africa. When substantial gold was found in central and south America, other European nations quickly emulated the Spanish with equally brutal behavior.

There are at least two important points here for our historical discussion of racism. The first is dehumanization, of which we have not yet spoken. Loewen relates that when Columbus first wanted to impress the Spanish crown with his discoveries, he described the natives as "well built... of quick intelligence...they have very good customs... they have good memories... the king maintains a very marvelous state, of a style so orderly that it is a pleasure to see it." When he wished to justify his brutality, his description of them shifted: suddenly they were "stupid" and "cruel," "a people warlike and numerous whose customs and religion are very different from ours." It is easier to exploit, hate, and victimize, if one's victims are regarded as different, other, and less than human. Columbus's words in this instance are not as terrible as his deeds, but they demonstrate the change in viewpoint serving to rationalize the atrocities.

Another, second significance of Columbus's various actions, is that, perhaps even inadvertently, he helped establish the concept of race in the European mind. Again, according to Loewen, before Columbus, Europeans might be Tuscans or Bavarians, but now, confronted with American Indians and Africans in increasing numbers, they saw themselves more as white Europeans as opposed to darker colored others.

Most important, however, for our purposes today, was the massive extermination of people, enslavement of people, movements of people against their will, brutalization of people, the many effects of which are still with us today. Societies and cultures are like children: their pasts, like parents, have very profound influences.

With Columbus we have crossed the Atlantic and moved directly into American history. At this point, however, rather than looking at historical events per se, let's shift focus to how history is taught. Consider the preceding discussion of Columbus. Who remembers being taught in school that Columbus was anything less than a heroic explorer? Certainly most Americans have been taught that he discovered America. This last idea is preposterous in more ways than one. America had been "discovered" tens of thousands of years before and was well populated long before Columbus's arrival. Moreover, even if we speak of the European discovery of America, Columbus was hardly the first. History is taught by the victors, and it is taught to make them look good. Academics may publish papers in journals, but few publishers will publish textbooks, few school boards will approve them, and few teachers will like them, if the state, and the majority population, with whom most Americans identify, do not look relatively good. It is shocking to learn how tidied up and distorted is the history we are taught. This is especially so with regard to how Native Americans and African Americans are represented.

In introducing *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, Loewen states that:

"African American, Native American, and Latino students view history with a special dislike. They also learn history especially poorly. Students of color do only slightly worse than white students in mathematics. If you'll pardon my grammar, nonwhite students do more worse in English and most worse in history. Something intriguing is going on here: surely history is not more difficult for minorities than trigonometry or Faulkner. Students don't even know they are alienated, only that they "don't like social studies" or "aren't any good at history.""

In other words, there is an insidious process by which majority culture is elevated, exonerated, white-washed, if you will, and minorities are devalued, often in such a fashion that they can hardly see the process. Loewen describes how our children's' history textbooks gloss over a terrible increase of racism in this country following the reconstruction period after the civil war and continuing into the 1920's and 30's. Only two of twelve texts he reviewed explicitly discuss this period of worsened race relations. Six texts describe Jackie Robinson as the first black to play major league baseball, which turns out not to be true! A number of blacks played in major league ball in the 19th century, but were forced out by 1889. The texts suggest steady improvement, which has not been the case. Other interesting and typical omissions include such things as Columbus's role in the slave trade, as noted above; that Woodrow Wilson, who fought heroically for the league of nations, was an ardent racist who segregated the previously integrated federal government; and that earlier in our history, slave ownership influenced not only domestic policy, but foreign policy:

The American revolution inspired Haitians to rise against colonial France. In the ensuing years of struggle, presidents who owned slaves were partial to France and attempted to assist the French. Presidents who did not own slaves assisted the Haitians. I realized while editing this that I did not mention that one of the slave-owning presidents partial to France was Jefferson, whom I've always admired. Was this unessential information, or was I trying to protect the image of a hero, untarnished, at the expense of reality, or to assuage guilt I might feel in identifying with this admired figure, or in reporting terrible failings of his? Was I tidying up history, editing out some important information, disguising racism? (Incidentally, Loewen reports that not one textbook makes a connection between slavery and American foreign policy.)

These examples and questions return us to a couple of matters raised at the outset of this article. One is the subtlety of the definition of who or what is racist. The other is the universality of some of the underlying processes. There is a hidden prejudice of everyday life, and it has profound effects on everyone, especially, of course, its victims. Given the subtlety of much prejudice, clearly some vigilance in self-scrutiny about these issues is essential.

Child Development and History

The whirlwind tour of Western Civ is almost over. Historically-minded readers will notice that we have yet to cover either the Renaissance or the Enlightenment. You may also recall that I said I would discuss certain aspects of child development. For reasons that will become clear, I will discuss these together.

In recent decades several books about the history of childhood have appeared, arguing that it is only in the last few hundred years that childhood has been thought of as a distinct developmental period with its own characteristics. A certain degree of credence for this idea can perhaps be found with a moment's reflection on the European paintings one recalls seeing in museums. Renaissance art frequently depicts the infant Jesus, but few other children. In later periods there are paintings of domestic life, with more children, but initially these children look remarkably like small versions of adults, and only later like children. Why does this matter? It is a question of whether children are appreciated as individuals in their own right.

One way to think about the intellectual history of the last six hundred years is that there is a gradually increasing appreciation of the individual person, significant in and of himself, or herself, and not only as one of the tribe or hive. Historians tell us that the Renaissance view of the world was one in which people were seen as part of a presumably "natural" given hierarchical structure, from God to angels to kings, aristocrats, peasants, to animals. A person had significance as part of this structure, but less so as an individual. With gradually increasing peace, health, and prosperity, increasing value is placed on the individual as such. There are revolutions against the monarchy in England in the 17th century and in France in the 18th. Enlightenment thinking flourishes in the 18th century and profoundly influences the US Constitution, and especially the Bill of Rights. These are the rights of individuals, against those of the state. People are not possessions of the state and the child is now seen less as a possession, and less as simply a little adult, and recognized more for his distinctive self. In this period, children and adults (at least males of European descent) are now increasingly understood as separate, valued entities with their own rights, beliefs, and feelings.

This is all well and good, but what does it have to do with racism? If a society embraces the idea of a pre-ordained, ordered hierarchy, slavery, with slaves at the bottom of the ladder, may seem acceptable. If a person, child or adult, is not important as an individual, sentient being, slavery is then a more tolerable institution. And it was. Europeans enslaved other Europeans, Africans enslaved other Africans, and in Central America, the Aztecs enslaved conquered tribes and used them for human sacrifice. Serfs throughout Europe were more or less owned and controlled by Feudal lords. In the last half-millennium, however, in all of these places slavery gradually became less and less acceptable, and in most places this heinous practice has ceased and desisted. So everything is bright and rosy in this best of all possible worlds? Hardly.

All of this individualistic "improvement" occurred and occurs in the face of an opposite human tendency. Slavery depends on a willingness, a wish, a preference, to dominate another person, and this is a basic human tendency that is not going to evaporate any time soon. There is evidence of every variety. Recent history gives us Hitler, Stalin, Mao, BabyDoc Duvalier, etc., etc. In the very beginning of the Bible, God directs Adam to exercise dominion over all the beasts, fowl, and fish, not to mention his woman. Most fundamentally, fantasies of domination of others are universal. It is not uncommon for relatively, healthy neurotic people to have dreams of bondage or domination. The idea of dominating another provides one of the chief sources of pleasure in sports. Why are we humans so consumed with domination?

We start out as children: helpless, needy, subject to the (hopefully) loving and benign ministrations and domination of our parents. Children are wishful, sexual, aggressive, imperious; Freud used the phrase, "His majesty, the baby." They require others - parents - to help them learn control, and this necessitates a degree of external control and regulation by the parents - to which the child always objects. That is, there is a necessary, inevitable, and unwanted, objectionable experience of being dominated that is a part of growing up in even the best of circumstances. Remember the mechanism of identification with the aggressor, of doing unto others as was done to oneself. The passive, unhappy experience of being dominated is turned to the active one of dominating others. Examples of this process and its rationalization are almost too numerous to mention. "Spare the rod and spoil the child." (We now have incontrovertible, empirical evidence that using the rod spoils the child.) "This hurts me more than it hurts you." "It's for your own good."

The grown child almost inevitably turns his hates and frustrations from his (usually) beloved parents out onto other people and groups in the world, which, we have seen, often symbolically represent his parents, his siblings, himself. As noted above, parents often encourage this. Although the strongest passions arise within the family, both child and parent are often more comfortable when the hate is directed elsewhere. These hatreds of others are rationalized in many ways, and especially by regarding their objects as less than human, worthy of contempt.

We thus have a tension between humanistic trends of Western Civilization on the one hand, and certain limitations of the human species on the other, much as Freud described in *Civilization and its Discontents*.

Young-Bruehl emphasizes the relation of different character types to different types of prejudice, but I am more taken with the following oversimplified proposition as relating to all the varieties of prejudice: The more a child is treated respectfully, as a separate, proto-independent being, with his or her own important feelings, thoughts, and wishes, the more his or her autonomy is respected, protected, allowed to develop, the less likely this child is later to hate and to try to carry out fantasies of domination over others. Conversely, the more a child is treated as a possession, in the service of others, to be used and controlled, the more he is bossed around, treated harshly, hit, criticized, etc., the more likely he is to be interested either in domination of others, or also to tolerate being dominated by others. Progress toward human rights over the last five hundred years has influenced and been influenced by changes in how we raise our children. Our inherent human tendencies toward domination are counterbalanced by humanistic trends in how we raise our children, by the favorable aspects of our intellectual and political history described above, by democratic traditions, legal systems, educational systems, and by our increasing understanding of human psychology. It is important to recognize that this dialectical struggle between contrary tendencies in society mirrors a basic conflict within each person.

A Recent Vignette:

As a safeguard against the tour of Western Civ and the discussion of psychological mechanisms seeming academic, let's turn to the present

period of "history." One of the most central mechanisms, as we have seen, is the externalization of the "bad," setting up an Us versus Them. Consider the following question: What do Martin Luther King and Bill Clinton have in common and Louis Farrakhan and Newt Gingrich have in common? King and Clinton are (We'll use the present tense for King) inclusive in their thinking and rhetoric. "I have a dream" was addressed particularly to blacks, but clearly included everyone. Clinton's 1996 campaign slogan about the "bridge to the 21st century" may have been a silly metaphor, but he was very explicit that he wanted everyone on it. We are all in the same family, the same race. Farrakhan and Gingrich, by contrast, while differing from each other in skin color, are more kindred spirits in their tendency to see the world as divided between Us and Them. We are good, they are bad. The tendency to elevate Us and devalue Them, the tendency toward prejudice, racism, and division is clear in both. Attention to history and psychology, and awareness of one's own history and psychology, changes how one sees, hears, and experiences the present.

Epilogue:

Two familiar quotations exemplify some of the spirit of this essay. The first is from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, written as the hierarchical Renaissance worldview was eroding: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves." The second is from recent times, and speaking of domination, is a play on an old military telegram. A couple of decades ago Walt Kelly's cartoon character Pogo was walking with a friend through the woods in which they lived, and finding the forest littered with trash Pogo says, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

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(Freud, Shakespeare, the Bible, Pogo)