Psychoanalytic Enlightenment and the Greening of Diplomacy

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I feel an immense debt of gratitude to this audience as the keepers and developers of the knowledge and insight into human behavior discovered by Sigmund Freud. Even though my exposure to psychoanalytic literature is limited, I have come to believe that psychoanalysis is the integrator of the social sciences and does form the basis of a philosophical system.

Fine (1977), expanding on Freud's dictum that a normal person is one who can work and love, describes an analytic ideal. This says that "man can find happiness if he loves rather than hates, has pleasure, sexual gratification, has a feeling life, yet one guided by reason, an adequate role in the family, a sense of identity, works, is creative, has a role in the social order, is able to communicate and is reasonably free from psychiatric symptoms" (p. 18). This analytic ideal can be defined as the goal of a full psychoanalysis. But it is also a goal of a global society whose members, in the nuclear age, must strive to meet such a level of balance and integration which would finally inhibit the surges toward group violence and war-making which have characterized human society.

Freud supported the use of psychoanalytic psychology as an instrument for understanding all kinds of human activity in social life in, among other works, The Question of Lay Analysis (1926) in which he wrote:

As a "depth psychology," a theory of the mental unconscious, [psychoanalysis] . . . can become indispensable to all the sciences which are concerned with the evolution of human civilization and its major institutions such as art, religion, and the social order. It has already, in my opinion, afforded those sciences considerable help in solving their problems. But these are only small contributions compared with what might be achieved if historians of civilization, psychologists of religion, philologists and so on

would agree themselves to handle the new instrument of research which is at their service. (p. 248)

In 1971, Mitscherlich delivered an insightful speech entitled “Hostility and Man-made Stupidity” in which he examined interrelationships of human aggressiveness and the socialization process. In using Freud’s instrument of research, he suggested a basis for a psychoanalytic approach to political analysis in international relations and foreign policy problems. Mitscherlich saw three psychic processes at work which interfere with the establishment of peaceful equilibrium among peoples. These are: (1) the process whereby one’s own affects are displaced onto others, be they individuals or groups (we do not hate them; they hate us), (2) the process of projecting inner conflicts (we are not lawless; they are), and (3) the process of denial (we are virtuous, God-fearing people of obvious good will).

It is these unconscious, unself-analytical processes that Erikson (1969) describes in his typically eloquent way in introducing his concept of the pseudospecies to characterize group disdain and hostility for the “otherness” of other groups, tribes, or nations. In Gandhi's Truth, Erikson writes that pseudospeciation:

denotes the fact that while man is obviously one species, he appears and continues on the scene split up into groups (from tribes to nations, from castes to classes, from religions to ideologies) which provide their members with a firm sense of distinct and superior identity—and immortality. This demands, however, that each group must invent for itself a place and a moment in the very centre of the universe where and when an especially provident deity caused it to be created superior to all others, the mere mortals. (p. 431)

Erikson’s ability to use the instrument of psychoanalysis to paint life portraits of individuals and their groups engaged in conflict and in comity, struggling to achieve and maintain their identity, and how under stress, they would literally deny and then erase the human identity of their perceived adversaries, has had a powerful influence on my thinking as a diplomat and a political analyst. It has been my great privilege to work with Erik Erikson in recent years to develop some hypotheses in the psychology of the U.S.-Soviet relationship (Montville 1985).

I have also worked closely on this subject and several others with John Mack and Vamik Volkan, who are, in my opinion, the leading psychoanalysts in theory—building in political psychology. I owe a debt to the brilliant and courageous psychoanalytic anthropologist, Howard Stein. If, as I attempt to describe how psychoanalysis has helped me as a political analyst and student of conflict resolution, I appear to have a useful idea, it will be because my mentors have taught me well. If, on the other hand, I make errors in attribution to theory or scientific evidence or jump to possibly unjustifiable conclusions, it will reflect my inadequacies in applying their insight.

I must confess, however, that I enjoy the freedom I have in not being a psychologist of any sort, in using psychoanalytic theory to understand and prescribe for a political conflict. While a clinician—or any member of a professional peer group—will only reluctantly venture into unorthodoxy, I am relatively safe because my peers in public service are generally skeptical, uncertain, or uninformed about psychoanalysis.

What I call the “greening of diplomacy,” concerns how I discovered theoretical explanations in psychoanalytic literature for political phenomena I had encountered as a political reporting officer at American embassies and consulates in the Middle East and North Africa, and as a political analyst in Washington. In fact, the theory I discuss is what has made sense to me in light of practical experience. I think it is safe to say that the views which follow have been reality tested. A number of these ideas are receiving respectful attention in the Department of State and in the intelligence community.

In trying to comprehend the genesis of political conflict and violence, I have found psychology of the self very illuminating. More than ten years ago I read Gaylin’s (1976) book, Caring. And while there is a tendency among scholars and professionals to disdain popularized psychology, I gladly say that I think Gaylin does a wonderful job explaining to a novice why human beings need to be valued, respected, and loved to feel secure. He also explains why people who have been insulted, attacked, degraded, or have seen their kin-men killed just because of their identities, can be violent and destructive in defiant defense of their identities. Erikson (1950, 1968) clarifies the painful and complicated process of constructing an identity and arriving, sooner or later, at some sense of self—yet how continually vulnerable to life’s vicissitudes is one’s sense of self.

Volkan (1979) and Mack (1979), together and separately, have elucidated the process by which the individual in adolescence acquires consciousness of membership in a broader, politically self-conscious, identity group. The young adult thus grows into his share of the group’s historical memories, including especially its historical animosities and hurts.

As Mack (1983) has written in his richly informative essay “Nationalism and the Self,” the historical experience of common hurts or wounds, usually inflicted by another group, appears to be of central importance in creating a sense of national identity for a people. The late Jeanne Knutson, the hyper-energetic founder of the International Society of Political Psychology, wrote (unpublished) with passionate empathy of the pain of victimhood in groups that had suffered historic outrage and, worse, saw only further outrage promised in the future. Knutson’s conception of victimhood provides a reli-
able standard for political analysis, particularly of long-standing ethnic and sectarian conflict and the roots of ethnic and sectarian terrorism. Her approach was as follows.

Throughout life, human beings experience varying levels of anxiety about their safety and survival. By adhering to the institutions of family, work, and society, people develop tangible and psychological defenses against unexpected negative events in life—sudden death of the breadwinner, criminal assault, accident or disability, impoverishment or war. Individuals have a protective superstructure of belief in safety through membership in a social system, a sense of personal power and of self-worth.

Victimization destroys the defensive structure. It exposes the victim (or victim group) to unrealized conscious anxiety about real threats to its existence. This state of anxiety is extremely difficult to endure, and it produces a toleration of and need for constant defensive action—whether cynicism, militancy, violence, or even terrorism—to assure survival in what is seen as a relentless hostile environment. Victimization has at least three significant components: (1) It results from personal experience. Some episode of physical or psychological violence occurs at the hands of an adversary, which stuns the victim or those close to the victim, creating a powerful sense of loss; (2) the violence against the victim is unjustifiable by almost any standard. The victim is clearly aware that most people would agree that the victim does not deserve the treatment. The victim knows that civil and human rights are being violated; (3) the assault represents part of a continuous threat posed by the adversary group, and it generates a basic fear of annihilation in the victim or victim group.

The third point is particularly important. To cite some of the more prominent cases of continuous fear in victimized groups we note that Basques in Spain fear loss of their language and culture and identity through steady pressure for assimilation—passively or by force—into Spanish society. Armenians, at least subconsciously, believe Turkey's failure to acknowledge what the former consider "genocide" in 1915 and 1916, means that the killing could be rationalized again. Hindu Tamils in Sri Lanka, population sixteen million, fear that the overwhelming majority of Sinhalese Buddhists aims to erase them entirely from the island. Conversely, the Sinhalese fear they could be overrun and destroyed by the fifty million Tamils on the nearby Indian mainland. The Protestants in Northern Ireland fear they will be completely abandoned by London and lose their identity in a tidal wave of vengeful Irish Catholics in Ulster and from the Republic.

Afrikaners believe the world is ready to abandon them to the potentially crushing revenge of South Africa's blacks. And these blacks see Afrikaners as violent, ruthless oppressors.

Palestinians fear Israel intends to ultimately wipe them out on the model of Sabra and Shatilla. Israelis fear the mass of hostile Arabs surrounding them are just waiting for the right moment to push them into the sea. And as a doubly wrenching twist of cruel fate, Israelis also fear the Gentile—really the Christian—world would watch passively, while feigning shocked outrage, as the Arabs completed the "final solution" to the "Jewish problem." This gnawing fear is also felt by Diaspora Jews.

It will be noted that members of most of these groups have engaged in state-supported violence or acts of terrorism. It will also be noted that chronic violence in the Middle East and, perhaps, South Africa is often mentioned as the most likely to precipitate a possible U.S.–Soviet nuclear confrontation.

Victimhood is both tragic and dangerous. It demands intervention on both moral and practical security grounds. But victimhood and the violence associated with it usually defy traditional diplomatic attempts to resolve it. There is a strong case to be made that the sense of victimhood can only be relieved through the experience of profound psychological processes by the victim group as a whole. Here there would seem to be powerful linkages between the acts of oppressors acknowledging their wrongs and asking forgiveness for them, the victims forgiving the aggressors—and we must note that victims may also have committed dehumanizing crimes of violence—and finally both sides completing a mourning of their losses so that a new equilibrium and a true sense of mutual respect and security can describe the relationship. Now, how can we connect security anxiety, uncompleted mourning, and peace-making? All I can say is that there is theoretical work in this area which makes good sense to me.

Volkan (1987) discusses psychological concepts useful in the building of political foundations between nations. He raises the issues of uncompleted group mourning, noting its potential for harmful complications—whether the loss is a person who died, or territory lost to an enemy. The representation of what is lost could be turned into what has been called a "remembrance formation"—one that is realistic, but acknowledged and accepted as having been lost. Volkan writes that when territory or even prestige is lost to an enemy, the group has difficulty developing a remembrance formation. The consequence is that groups, rather than letting go, try to recoup past losses. All of the ethnic and sectarian groups noted above can be said to be trying to recoup past losses.

But to be unable to let go, to mourn, is to be unable to adapt to new realities in life. Volkan quotes Pollock (1977) who writes, "To be unable to mourn, to deny changes, carries great risks to the individual and to the organization" (p. 29). Volkan (1987) concludes:

When changes are not mourned, the inability to mourn and its psychological effects carry on from one generation to the next, like other grievances; children and grandchildren want to recreate aspects of what is lost, and of events pertaining to the loss in order to complete the mourning. This is
potentially harmful, stimulating an unconscious thrust toward political action, a kind of persistent group compulsion toward mastering shared hurts. (p. 925)

Now, are we making an unjustifiable leap from observable symptoms in a human being mourning a lost loved one to the individual or group's mourning over a lost abstraction, such as a nation or sense of freedom? Perhaps. But Freud (1917) himself took the lead out this idea in "Mourning and Melancholia" when he wrote: "Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on." (p. 243)

As I search for connections between the uncompleted mourning process and the persistence of political conflict, I am struck by the relation between the intensity of the grieving process in humans and higher primates and the degree of dependency for significance, security, and survival on the person or abstraction—fatherland, for example—which is lost. Sustained human grief could be linked to sustained anxiety about security and survival (Pollock 1961).

By comparing clinical evidence of humans in intense mourning and the rituals of denial and then adaptation through which humans and higher primates pass, there seems to be a very strong case for the proposition that uncompleted mourning reflects in some way the unresolved issue of whether or not the survivors of the loss can count on a relatively secure, tension-free future.

Now if the abstract losses one can identify in so many ethnic and sectarian political conflicts—for example, losses of territory, or self-respect—can be seen as Freud, Pollock, and Volkan, among others, have seen them, that is, as genuine, profoundly meaningful losses of a sense of permanent, predictable security, then the discovery of ways to complete political mourning is critical to the art of political conflict resolution. A people cannot "let go" of a lost abstraction of the ability to feel safe. And they should not have to "let go" of the hope for a secure future. It would seem almost impossible to reestablish ego equilibrium if one's survival seems threatened.

I believe that based on thorough, objective analysis of a protracted political conflict, it is eminently possible—and morally imperative—to persuade all sides in the conflict that peaceful resolution is possible if it is based on mutually enforced guarantees of security for the victimized groups or nations involved. If security is assured, then mourning of past losses can be completed. The negative, oppressive historic past can be "let go" to be replaced by a new adaptation based on a reasonably confident future.

Now skeptics can be excused if they doubt the day will come when political leaders acknowledge and accept responsibility for their, or their predecessors', oppression of their victims. Even more skepticism is understandable at the thought that these political leaders would be contrite, would ask forgiveness from their victims, and therefore allow the victims to risk giving up their anxiety about their security and survival.

I offer the proposition that the scientific study of human behavior—that is psychology—suggests that tribes and nations can ease or resolve long-enduring political conflicts, characterized by narcissistic rage and victimhood, by working to reaffirm the innate value of their adversaries through acts of respect, vigorous self-analysis, self-criticism, and contrition. There are some examples in the last forty years where victims and oppressors were able to reestablish relationships based on the mourning process just described. The actual initiatives in accepting responsibility and asking forgiveness were not necessarily taken by high-level leaders, but rather by persons who had or came to have the confidence and respect of their leaders.

To me, one of the most dramatic examples of the power of simple appeal for forgiveness came in the context of intense residual hostility between Frenchmen and Germans after World War II. There is powerful irony in the fact that the contrition was expressed by a bona fide French victim of Nazi oppression. But the effect was to penetrate the defensiveness of the Germans who experienced the act and to make a noteworthy contribution to a public environment which facilitated Franco-German reconciliation and which led ultimately to the creation of the European community.

Irene Laure was a participant in the resistance in the south of France and later a member of the Constituent Assembly from Marseilles. She was also Secretary-General of the national organization of socialist women in France. Her son had been tortured by the Gestapo. She had a fierce hatred for Germans and considered them collectively responsible for the horrors of the occupation and the war. In the summer of 1947, Irene Laure went, reluctantly, to an international but unofficial peace meeting which a German delegation also attended. Like many of the French present, she would leave the meeting when a German rose to speak. But she was introduced, at the meeting, to Frau Claritta von Trott, the widow of Adam von Trott, who had been executed by the Nazis after the assassination attempt on Hitler, July 20, 1944. This meeting with a German victim of Nazism apparently helped to close the psychological distance Irene Laure had maintained between herself and the Germans as a whole. The face of the enemy had become complex, human, and vulnerable. After a painful struggle with her emotions, Irene Laure asked to speak at a plenary meeting. She said, "I have so hated Germany that I wanted to see her erased from the map of Europe. But I have seen that my hatred is wrong. I wish to ask the forgiveness of all the Germans present."

According to a historian of the event, the effect on the Germans of Irene Laure's apology was electrifying and utterly disarming (Lean 1985). She later traveled throughout Germany bringing her message of contrition and call.
for future cooperation to some two hundred large public meetings in an eleven-week period. Her audiences included ten of the eleven state parliaments. By all accounts, Irene Laure relieved the highly guilt-ridden and fearful Germans who heard her, and offered them a stake in striving for a sense of European community and acceptance which they believed history had denied them unjustly before, and which Hitler and his regime could have ruled out forever.

If, as the Mitscherlichs have written, Germany has not finished accepting complete responsibility for its aggression, especially the Holocaust, the Franco-German rapprochement clearly helped to get a mourning process underway.

In 1950, on the other side of the world, another event was taking place that seems to have had a significant influence on the completion of mourning and reestablishment of equilibrium in Japan's relations with its previous enemies. On June 12 of that year, Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida received a ten-person delegation of Japanese MP's, provincial governors, and nongovernment leaders about to visit Europe and the United States. "In 1870," Yoshida told the delegation, "a group representing Japanese society made their way to the West. What they brought back changed the whole course of events in Japan. I hope that on your return you too will initiate a new stage in our history."

In Washington, the Japanese called on Vice-President Alben Barkley who invited a Member of Parliament, Chojiro Kuriyama, who was Prime Minister Yoshida's personal representative, to address the Senate. Kuriyama began his talk by saying: "It is our sincere regret that Japan has broken an almost century-old friendship between our two countries. In spite of this big mistake on our part, the magnanimous forgiveness and generosity of America not only allowed Japan to survive but is helping her recover."

The act of contrition caught the attention of the American media. A day after Kuriyama's Senate appearance, a New York Times editorial noted that the Japanese apology came just four years after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and that the mayors of those two cities were in the delegation. And the Saturday Evening Post responded by saying, "The idea of a nation admitting it could be mistaken about anything has a refreshing impact. . . . Perhaps even Americans could think up a few past occasions of which it could safely be admitted, 'We certainly fouled things up at that time.'"

In 1957, then Prime Minister Kishi went on a major fence-mending visit to the Philippines, Australia, and seven other Southeast Asian countries. He was persuaded by some MP's to admit the faults of Japan's past actions in these countries. The following year he sent a message to representatives of these countries meeting in the Philippines saying, "I . . . have experienced the fact that sincere apologies have the power to heal the wounds of the past.

It is worth noting, by the way, that one member of the 1950 delegation to Europe and the United States is [at the time of the original delivery of this address] the current Prime Minister of Japan, Yasuhiro Nakasone (Entwistle 1985).

Shifting now to Africa and the political struggle between white settlers and black natives in Rhodesia, we see another example of contrition which made a significant contribution to the peaceful establishment of an independent, multiracial Zimbabwe. Alec Smith, son of the notorious Ian Smith, last white prime minister of Rhodesia, was a teenage dropout, drug addict, and ne'er-do-well, who, with the help, he says, of a higher power got himself straightened out. Part of his transformation included a recognition of and apology for his socialized arrogance and contempt of Rhodesian whites for the majority native blacks in Rhodesia. In the process, Alec made an alliance with a black Methodist minister, Arthur Kanodereka, who worked with the anti-white guerrillas, and who had been arrested and beaten by white Rhodesian security forces.

Smith and Kanodereka toured the country, appearing before black and mixed audiences, and described a vision of a future multiracial state in which power was shared fairly between blacks and whites. Ultimately, Alec introduced Arthur to his father who said, after the meeting, "If there are more black leaders like Arthur Kanodereka, I could hand over tomorrow." Yet Ian Smith was not quite yet a dove, and Kanodereka, tragically, was assassinated by black militants in 1978.

Still, a seed had been planted in Ian Smith's stubborn mind. And as formal diplomacy continued, Alec figured in what might have been the critical event in the peaceful transition from white to black rule—from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. On the night of the elections that Smith and Britain knew would bring the current Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, to power, the white-led Rhodesian army had planned a coup d'etat, code-named Operation Quartz, to block Mugabe's takeover. But Alec and his black allies managed to persuade Mugabe and Ian Smith to meet in Mugabe's home in Salisbury. At the meeting, Mugabe promised Smith that white rights would be respected; Smith believed him, and the coup was averted (Elliot, in press).

The story has an admittedly fairy-tale quality, but I have read Alec Smith's published account of the event and have met him twice in the last three years (Smith 1984). His father is still politically active in Zimbabwe and, reportedly, still stubborn. But he must be credited with taking a chance many leaders in his position would not have had the courage to take.

It must be noted here that there is a common thread in the stories of Irene Laure, the Japanese leadership—including the current Prime Minister Nakasone—and Alec Smith and his black allies. Each of them had been influenced directly or indirectly by the work of Frank Buchman, the American Lutheran clergyman who had founded Moral Re-Armament. Most of them had had transformational experiences at the MRA conference center in Caux, Switzerland. Here the concept of accepting responsibility for one's flaws and
asking forgiveness of those who have been hurt by one's hostile acts was taught without benefit of psychoanalytic theory. However, it must also be noted that Buchman's ideas on healing interpersonal wounds and resolving interpersonal conflicts have provided the basis for the consistently successful Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve-Step program, and it parallels most family psychotherapy practiced today.

As a final note on the link between MRA's record and the psychology of conflict resolution, which should be of special interest to this audience, the American Psychiatric Association conducted a five-day problem-solving workshop for Israelis, Palestinians, and Egyptians at the Caux conference center in 1983. The Israelis were especially intrigued by Caux and its history, and they invited MRA representatives to visit Israel. It has been at least one visit a year since then.

There is one more example of contrition extended to victims that I would like to mention because it could be a model for the British government, which has it within its power to make a truly important contribution to carrying out a key psychological task in the conflict in Northern Ireland. The example was set by a very establishment Anglican clergyman named John Austin Baker, former sub-Dean of Westminster Abbey and Chaplain of the British House of Commons. In 1979, Canon Baker preached in Westminster Abbey on Britain's "historic sin" against the Irish people and of the readiness of the great majority of the Irish to forgive. After this event, Baker visited Northern Ireland, met many Catholic and Protestant leaders, and returned to London to launch what could be called an exercise in mourning. First, he organized six lectures at St. Margaret's Church in Westminster on all aspects of Ireland and its conflict. In clinical terms, it could be said that Baker took a history of the conflict. Then he arranged for the names of the Protestant victims to be read off at London's Catholic Cathedral and for the names of the Catholic dead to be read at the Anglican Cathedral.

In January 1981 the Canon (now Bishop of Salisbury) was again invited to Belfast to preach at Clonard Monastery (founded in 520 A.D. where for many months Protestants and Catholics had been meeting to strengthen their sense of community. When Cardinal O'Fiaich heard of the trip, he invited Baker to preach at the Cathedral of St. Patrick, the first Protestant clergyman ever to be so honored. Witnesses report that the entire congregation broke into applause at the end of his sermon. The following night, Baker preached to a crowd of one thousand at Clonard Monastery Church. Some two hundred Protestants from the Shankill Road came to this Catholic church, mixing with several hundred Catholics from the Falls Road.

In preparation for his visit, Canon Baker wrote a paper (1981, unpublished), "Ireland and Northern Ireland," that caused a sensation among Catholics. It was photocopied and widely distributed among the Catholic elite and business leadership in the North and South and Irish leaders in the United States. One passage describes the just grievances of Protestants as well as Catholics:

Politicians in England tend to talk as though we had nothing to do with the situation until we were brought in to sort out feuding Northern Irelanders. Exactly what is our special contribution to the mess could provide material for long and acrimonious debate. Two things, however, can be said. First, we encouraged Protestant settlement in Ireland in order to secure the island against invasion by Catholic European powers which would give them an overwhelming strategic advantage against England. We did this by expropriating Irish farmers and peasants, and making over their land to the newcomers. The methods were time-honored; Julius Caesar did the same sort of thing. The policy was deemed prudent, indeed essential. Nevertheless it was an injustice to the Catholic Gaels and a reasonable grievance. But it has also given rise to a less-noticed but equally just grievance on the part of the Protestants. Our intention in putting them there was to create and maintain a Protestant all-Ireland state.

Because our methods were largely compounded of injustice, atrocities and callous neglect, we rendered the enterprise ultimately hopeless. It had no moral foundations, and so, in the end, we were inevitably forced to abandon it. This meant that we were also forced to abandon the friends who had gone there at our behest; who had attempted, no doubt quite willingly in many cases, to carry out our foolish and indefensible policies.

(Baker 1981, unpublished manuscript)

Baker performed an acutely important psychological task in the Irish conflict. He acknowledged English moral responsibility for the just grievances of Irish Catholics and Protestants. In doing so and by praying in holy places, he also participated with Catholics and Protestants in acts of mourning for those who had died in centuries of sectarian and ethnic conflict, including the most recent victims. He, in fact, set an example which may very well have to be followed by the British leadership before the apparently intractable conflict in Northern Ireland can be resolved. Acts of contrition, if this analysis is correct, will also be required of Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists.

At this almost concluding point, I would like to change gears and change roles. I want to continue being an analyst of the roots of political conflict, but I also want to accept the clear implications of the previous analysis and recognize the moral responsibility I have as an individual. In fact, it has been several years since I first realized the meaning for me personally of the kind of analysis I have presented here. What I have lacked so far is the courage of my convictions and a meaningful setting for what paradoxically must be an act of humanity—if the author of such an act can dare define it as such. I want to deal with what is now overwhelmingly
obvious to me the most ignoble, the most painful, and perhaps the most
dangerous of historic grievances—that of Jews against Gentiles, but in fact
against Christians. This discovery has been the result of simple chance on
my part as I have searched over the years for clues to the intractability of the
Arab–Israeli conflict. This search has caused me to understand not only Arab psychology, but also the psychology of Jewishness. In the process
I have come across rare and scattered but stunningly believable testimony by
unusually insightful, if despairing, Jews about the tragic meaning of being
Jewish in a Christian world, which knows not what it has done and continues
to do.

First I would like to take a history of Christian oppression of Jews. It
will be obviously imperfect and mostly symbolic and illustrative. The sub-
ject merits volumes. But Christians need to have some sense of the cumulative
effect of their—our—victimization of Jews in Europe and America.
Christians—and I am a Christian—must know deeply and permanently what
has been done to Jews for almost two thousand years in the name of Jesus
of Nazareth. Some examples:

—The fourth Gospel condemns all the Jewish people for the death of
Christ. The doctrine of collective Jewish guilt was laid down.

—In the era of Christian Constantinople, St. John Chrysostom wrote,
"Brothel and theatre, the synagogue is also cave of pirates and the lair of
wild beasts.... Living for their belly, mouth forever gaping, the Jews
behave no better than hogs and goats in the lewd grossness and the excesses
of their gluttony" (Morais 1976, pp. 87-88).

—It was a common belief in Spain until the Middle Ages that Jews had
tails. The Jew was like a goat—he stinks and has a supernatural and dan-
gerous virility.

—Jews were accused of causing the great epidemic of bubonic plague.
Christians became suspicious when Jews were seen to drink from flowing
streams. The result: a violent wave of pogroms in the south of France,
Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Poland. At Strassbourg, an entire Jew-
ish community was burned to death in a bonfire.

—Martin Luther wrote, "No one wants [the Jews].... This is proved
by the fact that they have often been expelled by force. From France
where they had a downy nest, recently from Spain, their chosen roost. And even
this year in Bohemia, where in Prague, they had another cherished nest,
and finally in my lifetime from Regensburg, Magdeburg, and from many other
places" (Morais 1976, p. 153). Luther preached that Jews are the sworn
enemies of Christianity—to be compared with Satan.

—in the New World in 1654, Peter Stuyvesant requested permission to
expel Jews from New Amsterdam. He wrote "with their customary usury
and deceitful trading with the Christians they were very repugnant... the
deceitful race—such hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ—
be not allowed to further infest and trouble the new colony" (Selzer 1972, p. 10).

Now I do not want to give historic datelines for the modern era—the
nineteenth-century Russian and Polish pogroms, the Dreyfus Affair, the Proto-
cols of the Elders of Zion, Stalin's anti-Semitic purges. Nor will I say any-
thing about the brain-searing pathology of Hitler, who also invoked the
name of Christ in his campaign to exterminate European Jewry. What is
most important is that Christians and other Gentiles—especially Arabs and
Muslims—understand the relentlessness of Jewish oppression of Jews from
earliest times.

Christians must note carefully the imagery used to describe and de-
humanize Jews from the beginning—even by saints: The animal images,
Luther's rootless birds, the deviousness, the sexuality—the bad self-
characteristics that all people fear to have in themselves and periodically
project onto selected outgroups. It is important also to understand when out-
groups are most vulnerable to the dominant group—during times of plague,
revolution, invasion, economic calamity.

But in the case of Jews and Christians it is critically important for
Christians to comprehend and feel the weight of almost two thousand years
of their—our—destructive behavior. We must listen to contemporary Jews
who have had the courage to express their pain and their rage.

The American psychohistorian Henry Ebel (1980), author of the dev-
astating essay entitled "Being Jewish," wrote:

Being Jewish means never to be too surprised when they take your beau-
tiful children and murder them before your eyes just to cause you the maxi-

mum amount of pain.

Everything else is just the same as it always was. The blue sky is full
of fleecy white clouds. The village church smiles in the distance. And there,
in a mess of blood, is all that's left of your pride and joy, whose execu-
tioners leer at your distress. Nor do the nations of the world ever become
quite "civilized" enough to stop generating delegate-groups willing to enact
that scene on their behalf...

Being Jewish, and therefore utterly tabooed by the "blood" in your
uniquely precious/horrible veins, is so obviously the world's worst trauma.
It means that you are indelibly related to the ethnic group which the world
has selected out to embody, in allegorical form, the principle of complete
rejection... It means that the Good Times are when all the others are
temporarily on vacation from the role of executioner... The Gospels set
the stage for the subsequent malignant dialogue between Jew and non-Jew,
in which the very being of the former represents a challenge to the being of
the latter; and vice versa. One or the other must be right... Historically,
therefore, Jew and non-Jew represent dynamic tasks for each other. Each
is eternally proving something to its antagonist. And both look forward
to the future time when the proof will be, so to speak, final—a messianic conclusion that will represent a definitive revelation, as to which of the two gamblers made the right choice. (p. 71)

Ebel writes with eloquent and unrelenting despair. Can Christians understand the force of his words—of his message?

Another Jew, an Israeli political scientist, Ofira Seliktar (1984, unpublished), writes of the Holocaust as a mystical event.

The Holocaust presents the Jews in Israel a problem—the inability of cognitively understanding the tragedy. The problem of anti-Semitism has always been a puzzling cognitive phenomenon to the Jews. The Holocaust, more than any other violence committed against the Jews is less explicable. The Israelis do not view the Holocaust as only a German atrocity committed against the Jews, but rather a culmination of centuries-long persecution of the Jews. Since the Holocaust is perceived as being outside the normative syntax of human relations which cannot be explained in rational terms, it is regarded as a mystical event. This view contributed to the current phenomenon in Israel of mystification of the persecution urge of the Gentile world toward the Jews. Accordingly, the Holocaust is the crucial but not the only indicator of the mystical and congenital spiritual deformation of Gentile society. Totally unrelated to what the Jews are or do, they are singled out to stay apart, condemned to an eternity of almost cosmic loneliness by the unaccepting Gentile world.

Again I ask, can Christians hear and understand these words? Can we finally and permanently see—as psychologists and as laymen—what the negative Jewish-Gentile symbiosis represents in moral and psychodynamic terms?

I have been personally mortified and aggrieved to learn over the years what suffering has been experienced by a people who in true Christian belief must be considered precious—as all human beings are—in the eyes of God in whose image man is made. But I have also been paradoxically encouraged to learn that Christian oppression of Jews—as unprecedented historically as it has been and still could be—is but one of hundreds or thousands of cases of pseudospeciation—in Erikson's (1969) terms—of the victimization and dehumanization of one group by another—blacks by whites in America and in South Africa, Greeks and Turks in Cyprus, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, Tutsis and Hutus in Burundi.

If psychoanalytic enlightenment means what I understand it to mean, there is no longer an excuse for pseudospeciation. The degradation of one group by another is not only immoral, but also anti-intellectual and scientifically indefensible. Being so, dehumanization morally and intellectually compels a form of therapeutic intervention by local, national, and international authorities to quell outbreaks of dehumanization in ethnic and sectarian conflicts.

If there is a “greening of diplomacy,” it means that strategies of conflict intervention and resolution are being developed and discussed by responsible diplomatic officials and unofficial but enlightened citizens in many countries of the world. Sometimes unofficial diplomatic—or peace-making—interventions, what I have elsewhere called Track Two Diplomacy (Davidson and Montville 1980–81; Montville 1987)—seems appropriate. But at key points, national and international authorities have to take responsibility for the formal protection of the basic right to life and developmental potential of all human beings on the face of the earth.

There is no excuse for not going forward with this vision. Thanks to psychoanalysis we now know too much about the dark side of humankind to avoid actively confronting it and defending against it. This knowledge must become part of the world's conventional wisdom. Psychoanalysts and psychologists must work vigorously to teach this knowledge widely.

Earlier in these remarks I referred to a personal moral responsibility I have recognized as a result of my study of psychoanalytic theory applied to political conflict resolution. I shall deal with that responsibility now. I ask as a private, individual Christian, the forgiveness of the Jewish people for the hurts inflicted on them by Christendom. I ask to be permitted to mourn Jewish losses with Jews and then work in brotherly alliance with Jews and Arabs to mourn unjust hurts suffered by some Arabs as Jews fleeing Christian brutality in Europe established a homeland in Palestine and ultimately the State of Israel. And I ask to work with Jews and Arabs to establish a relationship which assures a secure and just future for them and their children. Finally, I thank psychoanalysis and those who husband it for the intellectual liberation and moral guidance they have provided to me and to the suffering but hope-filled human species.

References


