

Hegemony and hate

Most of us are capable of hate but we are often also curiously preoccupied by those we hate. This comes to a head when people seek vengeance for some slight, often setting aside personal goals to do so. The preoccupation, though, is an intellectual one, as hated people are often kept at a physical distance and, even when they are physically present, hate blocks the interbrain connection and the connection is cognitive rather than effective. We cannot feel, indeed it enrages or disgusts* us to feel, as the hated person does.†

Oftentimes, we may feel that we would go mad if we did have to connect with a hated person. This may in part be because forgiveness is often an intermediary step in contemplating a situation from the point of view of a hated person.‡ Hate is created by demonizing the other person, and that means considering that they have nothing good to justify their hateful actions. If one can bring oneself to consider that there may have been some justification, the hate begins to dissolve.¹⁷ The common knowledge that one shares with valued others may militate against letting go of hatred, because to do so might be seen as ‘letting off’ the hated person. Altruism may induce a person to continue to suffer the bad effects of their own hate to preserve the greater good of the knowledge that justice is upheld.

* Which may be partly determined by gender.

† Conversely, if we can do that, our desire for revenge diminishes (Berry *et al.*, 2005).

‡ To cite just some of the evidence: Fatfouta *et al.*, 2015; Lichtenfeld *et al.*, 2015; Mansfield, Pasupathi, and McLean, 2015; Nateghian, Dastgiri, and Mullet, 2015; Okimoto, Wenzel, and Hornsey, 2015; Zheng *et al.*, 2014. These studies also stress how difficult forgiveness is, partly because restitution is not seen as being enough and partly because to forgive is to forget. Forgetting, whilst it may improve health, may be seen as failing to get justice.

Morality, demons, and beasts

Holding on to suffering in commemoration of past harm, of which holding on to hate is one example, is an example of a narrative that sustains hate. Demonization is another.¹⁸ For a very long time, human beings have explained harm coming to one person or to groups by attributing this to demons. Demonic possession is possibly the oldest explanation of psychopathology and is still widely held in Africa and other parts of the world.¹⁹ Witchcraft is the other explanation, and witchery too continues to be an explanation of deviant behaviour. Demonization is also a way that followers turn on and displace their leaders.²⁰

Demonization of offenders increases the public's desire to punish them retributively.²¹ This is most likely because of common knowledge, which seems to be widespread, that demons exist, that they are evil, and that evil is contagious. So humans cannot, and indeed should not without imperilling their own morals, consort or connect with demons. Demons must be cast out of individuals, as the *Bible* has Jesus casting out the demons, and of society. Psychiatrists and psychologists have updated this demonology by postulating that types of people exist who cannot empathize and consequently act in a deranged or demonic fashion. There is also the presumption, as there often is when a person is said to lack empathy, that it is equally impossible to empathize with them.

I have been considering demonization of individuals by other individuals or by groups. But groups may also be demonized, leading to the disconnection of that group and all its members from the main group.* This may have the

* There are many examples of this – the demonization of: political groups in Thailand (Sripokangkul, 2015); criminals of colour in the US (Smiley and Fakunle, 2016); and opponents by the US (Ivie and Giner, 2015).

paradoxical effect of increasing the connections within both groups by increasing the power of their leaders or their regnant ideology, that is the ‘common knowledge’ that each group takes to be uncontestably true even though each of the new groups may have a different ‘common knowledge’.

The demonized group may retaliate against the hegemonic group that disconnected from them in the first place by counter-claiming that it is they, the hegemonic group, who are demonic.

Casting another person or group as demonic is a moral judgement. Rejecting a group or an individual as immoral justifies, according to some, hating the immorality and, by extension, hating the demonized person or the demonized group.²² Group morality may be determinative of the group’s identity. Groups that differ ideologically and that consider the other group’s ideology hateful are not just disconnected, but are also committed to maintaining that disconnection in order to safeguard their own identity.*

Dehumanization

Demonization is, for obvious reasons, a strategy that is particularly attractive to religious groups. Exclusion of heterodox groups has, over the centuries, resulted in fragmentation of the great monotheistic religions,[†] sometimes leading to persecution or wars, but the gain has been a renewal of religious zeal within each fragment. What unites the members of each fragment is a reaffirmation of their shared narrative concerning their identity and also an increased

* Participants in laboratory experiments who are reminded of their moral failings are more likely to avoid looking at the eyes in photographs of angry faces (Van Dillen *et al.*, 2017).

† Norenzayan (2016) provides a detailed review.

interbrain connection with their leader and with each other. Shared hate of the out-group unites,^{*} but so does terror of the leaders if there is a fear that you or your family might be placed on the hate list, too.

Demonization is just one of the ways in which an individual or a group can be disconnected from humanity. Groups may be denied an interbrain connection with the hegemonic group because the latter believes that the excluded are slaves, robots[†] or ‘mechanisms’,²³ sub-humans, or animals, as well as devils. One of the easiest ways that disconnection can be maintained on an individual level is to have a rule about gaze avoidance. Slaves, or even the courtiers of despots, were not allowed to raise their eyes to their masters or mistresses, and the latter would avoid looking into their slaves’ eyes, too. I already noted that not looking at followers is a standard expression of dominance by leaders, but forbidding slaves not to turn their back on their ‘owners’ is an indication that they are even less than followers, and in the eyes of their ‘owners’ that they are even less than humans.

When the rule is not to look at the dehumanized, direct gaze has a special interrogatory function. This is not to share a connection, as it is expected that the dehumanized person will not look back, but to re-establish dominance. In primates, staring down a challenge is generally a signal that dominance has been re-established. In human beings it is also a means

* There is a considerable literature on conformity, dissent, and social deviance, which overlaps with my treatment but from the point of view of more traditional psychology. There is considerable evidence that dissenters are expelled from groups in order to maintain group positivity (Jetten and Hornsey, 2014), which directing negative feelings towards excluded others – the scapegoat effect – will do.

† Although robots are traditionally included in the list of infrahuman species, they, like animals, are increasingly considered to be potentially capable of agency and of feelings (Coeckelbergh, 2016). So it may not always be ethical to kick them.

for the starrer to obtain information about the emotional state of the excluded person, notably self-conscious emotions such as pride or resentment, which would indicate the possibility of future challenge. Remorse or contrition are, on the other hand, often expected when punishments are given, and their absence may extend the punishment.* Gaze may be withheld from people who are considered inhuman because they are assumed not to be capable of self-conscious emotion.†

Two recent reviews²⁴ consider the steps that enable each of us to be able to dehumanize others.‡ Disgust seems to pave the way for dehumanization,²⁵ but an important factor also seems to be the belief that as neither animals nor robots have emotions (I am here quoting the belief, not asserting that animals do not have emotions nor that robots might not develop them), human beings who are robotic²⁶ or animalistic do not have proper, self-conscious emotions[§] and are therefore unable to feel what happens to them or be aware of it. I stress that these provide us with exculpatory narratives for the harm we do to people from whom we disconnect, and that it is not they who lack feelings or awareness but that our disconnection from them prevents us from having the interbrain knowledge of it. Even when a group accepts collective responsibility for harming excluded members, this has the effect of increased

* Dehumanized people are typically assumed to be less sensitive to pain by those who dehumanize them (Riva, Brambilla, and Vaes, 2016).

† See Martínez *et al.* (2017). Even if a person is not considered sub-human but only lower in status, various studies have shown that higher-status individuals may consider lower-status colleagues less able to experience human emotions (Iatridis, 2013).

‡ Note that dehumanization of individuals does not always result in exclusion from an in-group (Renger *et al.*, 2016).

§ See Haslam *et al.* (2008) in which the authors seem to be referring to self-conscious emotions, although this is not specifically mentioned in the paper.

connectedness within the group, sometimes even leading to glorifying malefactors within the group* but dehumanizing the excluded members further,²⁷ suppressing the possibility of an interbrain connection with any individuals that we should meet from that group.

News media are one means of disseminating common knowledge, and they have an ambivalent role in the relations between in-groups, to which they belong, and out-groups. It has been argued that they moderate violence²⁸ but they also dehumanize.²⁹ Just occasionally, media may depict ‘counter-stereotypes’: out-group members who seem like in-group members in their behaviour, attitudes, or emotions. Contemplation of counter-stereotypes is uncomfortable, leading to surprise and ‘expectancy violation’ but also a reduction of dehumanization of the excluded group.[†]

In- and out-groups

My gorge rises to imagine a woman deliberately executed by her son in a public square.[‡] I feel a visceral sense of disgust – and recognize this to be due to the third, insular-involving,³⁰ pain empathy network that, with the addition of negativity, results in abhorrence of the people committing the act. I am inclined to attribute the atrocity to the crazed nature of Daesh as an organization, but I reflect that in Daesh’s interpretation

* See Leidner *et al.* (2010). One could say that the group members become more connected to the perpetrators in sustaining the common knowledge that the group was right to act as it did. These members therefore become temporarily hyperconnected like leaders. Their position is unstable, unlike true leaders (Flinders and Wood, 2015).

† See Prati, Crisp, and Rubini (2015). A similar effect can be produced by not reducing the categorization of an out-group to a single dimension (Prati *et al.*, 2016).

‡ An event that was described in Chapter 3.

she had committed blasphemy for which some Hadith specify death. I also need to remember that the news medium reporting this has selected this piece of news to showcase. Their argument was probably that it would create greater connection with their audience – translated as viewer numbers to their funders – but it is also a reflection of the viewers' desire to be given information to reinforce their prejudice about Daesh.*

Vilification of out-groups rarely happens out of a clear, blue sky. Connections between people are not all or nothing, although they do vary from high bandwidth[†] to no bandwidth. For individuals who deviate from group values, disconnection from the group may be gradual and the individual may hasten the process from their side. Sometimes, this happens because a person starts to see themselves as less than others,[‡] but other times it may be because they feel increasingly vilified by the members of what was their in-group previously.

In-groups

Once in-groups become established and stable, there is less need of leaders. Interconnections can become stronger between members of the in-group, and the homogeneity of the membership increases interbrain bandwidth between members. This increases the possibility of mutual joy but, regrettably, shared joy does not spread so readily as shared

* Providing reasons to reinforce prejudice is a popular strategy. Harper (2014) discusses a notorious case of arson in a similar light.

† There is no common or garden word that conveys the amount of information traffic in a communication channel. Close connection implies spatial proximity. Regular connection is simply a count of the number of times the connection is used, not how much information passes.

‡ Renger *et al.* (2016) call this 'self-dehumanization', although they justify this by suggesting that there are universal characteristics of being human and that any deviation from these makes a person less than human.

distress. In-groups, though, want to maintain this stasis and the hyperconnectivity that leads to it. New ideas do arise spontaneously in in-groups, but radical ideas are often suppressed if they are perceived as an ideological threat when the group is already under threat from an out-group.³¹ Groups that are open to new connections become transformed into conservative groups that reject radical ideas and are threatened by new extrinsic ideological challenge.³² This may contribute to the finding that periods of liberalism and well-being in groups and societies are interspersed by periods of fear and xenophobic conservatism. Individuals when threatened by out-groups do not retaliate as individuals, but when it is their in-group that is threatened they will fight back.³³

Justice, obedience, honour, and duty

An external threat to an in-group, such as a threat to its core values, threatens each individual member's connection with the leader, or leading ideology, of the group. I have argued previously that there are similarities between attachment to a child and attachment to a leader. It is a matter of common-sense psychology that a threat to a mother with an infant can trigger aggression – even the boldest of sheepdogs will think twice about tackling a ewe with lambs at foot. So, if I am correct, it might be supposed that the reaction to a challenge to a follower's attachment to a leader might be similarly extreme and, consequently, a person's reaction to the fundamental beliefs of their in-group being challenged might also be vehement. A recent study suggests that this is the case, although it attributes this vehemence to challenge to 'protecting the aspects of our mental lives with which we strongly identify, including our closely held beliefs'.³⁴

We justify this aggression sometimes by invoking cultural concepts, part of our common knowledge, that give us a sense of moral purpose. We speak of honour or duty. Oftentimes, we omit to notice that in going out to fight with the leader of an out-group, having cast them as an oppressor, we are leaving behind family and friends who might suffer from our absence. Yet, common knowledge has it that this is justified – or so our own leaders urge us – not just to ‘protect ourselves’ but also to protect our ‘way of life’ that is our ideology. I am not going to argue for or against this as a justification. I do accept the premise that absorbing or merging two groups that are each constituted around a strong ideological identity will result in a perturbation in the connections between members of each group and lead to an increase in terror.

Wars may also be justified by war leaders on the grounds that they are the only way to liberate the out-group from its despotic leaders if we, the in-group waging the war, expect the group that is apparently ripe for liberation to have the same defining ideology as ourselves: that the leader is a despot, that they are being denied fundamental human rights, and that they should be able to choose their own leaders. We do not ask them first if they want to choose or what they want from us. We assume that our common knowledge – our ideology – is the truth even though, in many cases, the cousins of the people we are ‘liberating’ have experienced discrimination and stigma in our own countries, to which they moved in order to improve their living standards. Were we to doubt the enterprise once our leaders have put it to us, we would be failing in our own patriotic duty, perhaps even be traitors.

Again, I am not denying the possibility that malignant leaders can instil such obedience in their populations that the

only means to remove them is by the invasion of a foreign army. The removal of the Angkar by a Vietnamese army may be a case in point. But removing a leader also removes the focus of the shared connections that hold that group together. Without them the group members need to find other bases for connection or else terror supervenes. Those new connections may define very different groups that may turn out to have unexpected properties, as the coalition armies that toppled Saddam Hussein have discovered.

An example from Lodz

Table 6.1 shows data from a comparison of three Jewish ghettos created by the Nazis during the Second World War as a preliminary to the population being moved to concentration camps.* The first column shows the city and the second whether or not an uprising occurred. One occurred in Warsaw, one was planned in Vilnius, and none occurred in Lodz. I have argued in this chapter that three factors might be relevant to a possible uprising that is an attack on the out-group (German occupation forces in this case). An attack is most likely if the leader or a leading idea of the in-group is under threat by an out-group. But the position of the incarcerated Jews was one of extreme fear, and many of them, including the leadership, held out for appeasement – for obedience to the out-group. The Nazis effectively isolated Lodz but not Warsaw. The message that the Nazis passed to the ghetto leaders was that everyone would be moved to work camps. But in Warsaw the young people knew that Jews were to be exterminated and they challenged the policy of appeasement, arguing that their defining ideology was defining one's own fate and not hoping

* The data are taken from Einwohner (2014).

for salvation.* So many fewer Jews in the Warsaw ghetto supported pacifism, and none turned traitor on the rebels. In Lodz, it was quite different. There was uncertainty about the Nazis' intentions, and it was not realized that they had adopted an extermination policy. The official leaders preached obedience to the Nazis, and the residents went along with it. In Vilnius, the knowledge had eventually got through and been believed, but it was too late for the policy of appeasement to be reversed.

Table 6.1 *Factors affecting armed resistance to Nazis*

	Uprising	Leadership	Communications outside the ghetto	Uncertainty about Nazi intentions	Obedience to leadership
Warsaw	Yes	Official leaders divided	Yes	No	+
Vilnius	Planned		To a degree	Yes	++
Lodz	No	Official leaders united	No	Yes	+++

Source: data from Einwohner, 2014.

These terrible but fortunately exceptional happenings underline the impact of group life on individuals. They must also give us pause when we consider pacifism and building bridges – or making connections – as the answer to all social fragmentation. Sometimes fighting the Other, the out-group, reflects rigidity, stigma, and fear, and sometimes it represents survival instinct, a correct recognition of the destructiveness of the out-group, and fear.

* For example in the film *Uprising* released in 2001 and directed by Jon Avnet.