

Events interpreted through the models of other people built by your ToM usually turn out to be the most satisfactory ones for occasioning emotions.

Emotions cannot be divided strictly into positive and negative, because all emotions must have a fast-paying reward component in order to have their characteristic vividness. Some emotions are usually aversive because initial attention to them leads to longer-term inhibition of reward, but even fear and grief can be cultivated in ways that make them pleasurable, for instance, in horror movies and tear-jerkers. Anger is often called negative, but it shares many psychometric and neurophysiological properties with the more obviously positive emotions (Lerner et al., in press). I agree with Nell that cruelty need not involve anger (sect. 3.4), but I have argued that, like anger, it often becomes preferred despite its spoiling effect on other rewards because it repairs a felt vulnerability (Ainslie 2001, pp. 183–86). As with anger, there are people who cultivate cruelty habitually, presumably in default of richer sources of reward, but occasional cruelty seems to be common to everyone. It is the commonplace examples that best differentiate negative empathy from Nell's examples of predation: the pleasures of seeing the boor get his comeuppance, the driver who cut us off stopped by the police, and the pretensions of the poseur punctured, as well as less respectable examples like *schadenfreude* and our minor persecution of people whom we hope we do not resemble.

What sometimes impels us toward cruelty? Because sympathy is a mental response quickly rewarded by emotion, it is hard to bring under voluntary control. But there are people with traits that we fear in ourselves or who might exploit such traits, sympathy with whom might let them weaken us or even enchant us. In the absence of more direct controls, cruelty toward these people might be the handiest way to reduce our sense of potential seduction. That is, sympathy with the thief or heretic, with someone who has a sexual taste we are afraid we might develop, with a painfully naïve younger sibling who has traits we have barely overcome, with the rejecting lover we can't get over or the needy lover who threatens to become dependent, with any object of envy, even with someone whom we are conscious of having wronged—sympathy with any of these people might threaten to weaken us. A solution that hedonically pays for itself in the short run is to attack positive empathy with negative empathy, “set affection against affection and master one by another: even as we used to hunt beast with beast” (Francis Bacon, quoted by Hirschman 1977, p. 22). The capacity to do this undoubtedly comes from a more elementary process, perhaps the sheer arousal occasioned vicariously by anyone else's strong feeling—as in the fascination of a fight or car wreck, perhaps by the inherited preparedness for predation that Nell suggests. However, because of its tendency to spoil other sources of reward, it is apt to be cultivated only by people with a need to suppress their sympathy.

#### NOTES

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1. This was not just Euripides' imagination. I professionally encountered the case of a man who, when his wife served him with divorce papers, killed their children and himself, “to give her something to think about.”

## A murky portrait of human cruelty

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**Abstract:** In this commentary, I review diverse lines of research conducted at both the macrosocial and microbehavioral level that

dispute the view that cruelty is inherently gratifying. Expressions of pain and suffering typically inhibit rather than reinforce cruel conduct in humans. With regard to functional value, cruelty has diverse personal and social effects, not just the alluring benefits attributed to it.

In the target article, Nell brings an unusually broad perspective to bear on the possible origins of human cruelty. He reports that, despite the cultural evolution over the many millennia, human cruelty is still overwhelmingly present in the contemporary world. The cited examples of contemporary cruelty highlight the need for further specification of the defining criteria for what belongs in this category. Boxing may be construed as an attenuated form of cruelty, but why does motorcycle racing qualify as a vestige of the pain-blood-death complex? If psychic pain is a modern proxy of physical slaughter, does cruelty essentially become a boundless category?

There is a difference between behavior motivated and reinforced by conditioned pain-based gratifications and by its functional value. For example, motorcycle racing can bring monetary prizes, social status, and a sense of self-pride for a race well run. But what do these rewarding benefits have to do with cruelty and pain gratification? Empirical evidence indicates that cruel behavior can be more readily modified by varying its functional value than by relying on inherent affective gratifications of pain cues (Bandura 1973).

The cited support in the target article for the upper stages of the theory of human cruelty, which are amenable to empirical test, is largely in terms of biblical quotations, anecdotes, descriptions of ancient Greek practices, medieval carnivals, and arena spectacles in the ancient Roman era. Except for passing comments, surprisingly little attention is devoted to the third stage of cruelty. This stage requires the most detailed theoretical specification because the link from gorging excitedly on prey in the pain-blood-death complex to the exercise of social power is the most enigmatic.

The support for the sexualization of cruelty at the hunter stage is essentially metaphoric and anecdotal. As evidence for the fusion of sex and aggression, Nell reports that !Kung hunters use the penis as the metaphor for their hunting bow. He refers to a hunter who claims that thoughts about the kill produce the best sex, and a Vietnam veteran who found killing to be erotic. No evidence is presented, however, on whether these experiences are anomalous or normative ones.

In commenting on the “beauty of war,” Nell cites the example of a military pilot mesmerized by the beauty of surface-to-air missiles. One can find support for almost any view by careful selection of cases. The vast numbers of soldiers who experience the hell of war and suffer posttraumatic stress disorders receive no mention. The infliction of death and destruction remotely by satellite and laser-guided missiles actually creates problems for Nell's theory. People behave more injuriously when they do not see and hear the pain and suffering their acts cause. Faceless hardware wars heighten destructive conduct by eliminating the restraining effect of human suffering.

Findings of sexual arousal at depictions of rape, as measured by a penis transducer, further dispute that cruelty is inherently erotic. Rapists are sexually aroused by depictions of pain and suffering of a rape victim, whereas non-rapists are aroused by consensual sex but are turned off by sexual cruelty (Abel et al. 1977). Verification by selective examples of cruelty elevates atypical reactivity to universal proclivity.

At the macrosocial level, Nell greatly exaggerates the prevalence of human cruelty. There exist wide intercultural differences representing both warring and pacific societies with large intracultural variations and even rapid transformation of warring societies into peaceful ones (Alland 1972; Bandura 1973; Gardner & Heider 1969; Levy 1969; Sanday 1981). The Swiss used to be the main suppliers of mercenary fighters in Europe. As they transformed into a pacific society, their militaristic vestige is evident only in the plumage of the Vatican guards.

For ages, the Vikings plundered other nations. After a prolonged war with Russia that exhausted Sweden's resources, the populous rose up and collectively forced a constitutional change that prohibited kings from starting wars (Moerk 1995). This political act promptly transformed a fighting society into a peaceable one.

According to Nell, cruelty is "strongly male-gendered." This, too, is an exaggeration. Most males do not go around mugging people, and a good number of females are child and spouse abusers. Meta-analyses reveal that the gender difference is much smaller than commonly believed and further diminishes with age, under conditions of provocation, and in the presence of aggressive cues. (Bettencourt & Kernahan 1997; Bettencourt & Miller 1996; Hyde 1984). The theoretical challenge is to explain the substantial diversity within gender groups, which far exceeds the difference between them.

The cultural evolution of social roles, norms, and sanctions has long stripped barbaric cruelty of social and reproductive benefits. This evolutionary social transformation in the coevolution process requires theoretical specification. Attributing the shift toward more humane conduct to the development of "walls of shame" does not provide much theoretical guidance for deeper inquiry.

At the microanalytic level, the findings of experiments in which the intensity of victims' suffering and pain are systematically varied show that expressions of pain typically inhibit rather than reinforce aggressive conduct (Baron 1971a; 1971c; Geen 1970; Milgram 1969/1974).

Nell refers to the large audiences for violent entertainment as further evidence that people seek gratification from watching cruelty inflicted on others. In Nell's view, the rewards of cruelty explain the attraction to media violence. However, the widespread belief that violence is a draw is disputed by empirical evidence. Television programs that trade on violence rarely appear in the upper ranks of popularity. As one television executive explained, "There is one maxim that is always true. The network with the most comedy shows is the dominant network." Diener and DeFour (1978) tested the relation between level of program violence and its popularity as measured by the Nielson index of viewership. Program violence was unrelated to popularity,  $r = 0.05$ . Uncut versions of violent programs are not liked any more than the same programs with most of the gratuitous violence deleted.

Nell mentions the infliction of severe pain on oneself as a case of major puzzlement to philosophers and psychologists alike. He reasons that as both aggression and sexual activity activate the brain's reward system, the underlining motivation for self-infliction of pain is the fusion of sex and aggression. Empirical research has identified some of the conditions governing this perplexing behavior. For example, self-inflicted pain serves a self-protective function if it averts more painful treatment by others (Bandura 1986; Stone & Hokanson 1969). Under these conditions, self-punitive behavior is adopted and maintained because it is the lesser of two evils. If preventing the external painful threat requires ever increasing intensities of self-punishment, it can escalate to the level of the avoided threat and even be performed persistently, through lack of reality testing, after the external threat no longer exists (Sandler & Quagliano 1964). To observers who witness the seemingly senseless self-inflicted pain, without knowing its functional origin and supporting expectations, the behavior appears deranged or driven by some obscure masochistic pleasure.

A substantial body of research demonstrates that large-scale inhumanities are heavily rooted in ideology (Bandura 1999; Haritos-Fatouros 2003; Reich 1990; Zimbardo 2004). Extensive training and a multitude of social structural influences are needed to produce cruel perpetrators. A good part of this socialization for cruelty is designed to disengage moral self-sanctions from inhumane conduct (Bandura 1999). Through selective moral disengagement, people who behave compassionately in other areas of their lives can perpetrate ruthless inhumanities on disfavored groups.

## Cruelty as by-product of ritualisation of intraspecific aggression in cultural evolution

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**Abstract:** There are few commonalities between intraspecific aggression and predation and few convincing arguments for the conceptualisation of blood and pain as rewards for predation. Not cruelty, but ritualised intraspecific aggression is the predominant mechanism of accretion of social power and this, not cruelty, is what bestows reproductive advantages. Enjoyment of media cruelty is not reinforced by "emotional circuits" adapted to predation, but represents transient relief from culturally determined inhibition of aggression.

Although in predation unspeakable suffering is inflicted, this does not mean that the prey's suffering is enjoyed by the predator. McDougall (1924), for whom instincts were central to behaviour, argued comprehensively against hedonistic theories of behaviour. The "prey's terror and struggles to escape" (target article, sect. 1.1.1), acting as an incentive stimulus, may certainly lead to greater arousal and increase the predators' determination to kill, but "pain" and "blood" are unlikely to represent rewards for the sake of which the animal kills, not least because they do not arrest the striving of the animal. "[H]unters may inflict pain on the prey beyond that which is instrumentally necessary" (sect. 1.1.3, para. 2) because predation is an intrinsic instinctual drive that – once set into motion and energised – has to run its course (according to drive theory), as opposed to it being something done for the sake of enjoying a reward (hedonism) or instrumentally to achieve a certain end (teleology).

Dopaminergic transmission from the ventral tegmental area to the nucleus accumbens is activated not just by stimuli related to predation but a range of motivationally meaningful and salient stimuli that require behavioural reorientation and sustained effort (Horvitz 2000; Parkinson et al. 2000). Dopaminergic activation invigorates incentive motivation and drives appetitive approach but is unrelated to the experience of reward itself (Berridge & Robinson 1998; Horvitz 2000; Ikemoto & Panksepp 1999). Its occurrence during predation does therefore not indicate that "predation is a powerfully rewarding experience even before satiation occurs" (sect. 3.4.5, para. 1).

The hunter is in a "ritually heightened state" during the night after the kill and elaborates in detail on his experience in the presence of others – not necessarily because of his "high arousal at the time of the event" (sect. 4.3) but in accordance with his enjoying the admiration of others (pride) and his potential for rise in the group's ranking order. If there is *enjoyment* in hunting that is not socially mediated, then one should consider the possibility that it represents the sense of mastery arising from the successful solution of a challenging problem rather than "blood lust." Thus, the motivation for hunting may not at all include enjoyment of cruelty or a desire to inflict suffering.

Little justification is given for the notion that predation derives from intraspecific resource competition, or competitive aggression. These behaviours are elicited by different sets of stimuli, are accompanied by different affective states ("quiet-biting predation" vs. "aggressive rage" [sect. 1.1.3]) and find their resolution in the enactment of different states of affairs. Intraspecific aggression can indeed be "marked by intense excitement that appears indistinguishable from that during predation" (sect. 3.3) but – in the animals' natural habitat – it does not lead to bloodshed or death in most cases (Lorenz 1963/2002). Its evolutionary purpose is to effect a distribution of territory and access to resources among individuals of the same species that is advantageous for survival of the species as a whole (Lorenz 1963/2002). In higher vertebrates, intraspecific aggression regulates rank order in groups and expresses itself in ritualised ways in a wide range of social behaviours (Lorenz 1963/2002).

human cruelty, why should we think that this causal influence is the *main causal factor*? Why is it not just one factor among others?

2. I am unhappy with Nell's *atomism* about the phenomena of cruelty. The worry applies equally to human and animal cruelty, but we can make the point most vividly for human cruelty. The point is one that Nietzsche makes (Nietzsche 1886/1973, sect. 259 and elsewhere). Nietzsche would ask: To what extent is human cruelty a necessary part of a syndrome in which other apparently different phenomena are necessarily involved? Nietzsche thought that a world without human cruelty would also be a world without many things that we do or should value. In particular, he thought that the barbarism of human cruelty is holistically intertwined with many of the highest achievements of "Western high culture." To simplify, Nietzsche would have said: No cruelty, no creative genius. For Nietzsche, the urge to human cruelty is irretrievably locked together with many admirable things in human life; creative and destructive urges are necessarily linked so that one cannot have one without the other. (Freud's later view was different because he separated creative and destructive urges, and he thought that one or the other was usually dominant [Freud 1930/1994]; for Nietzsche, by contrast, the two urges are necessarily tied together.) So my second question to Nell is: Why the atomism?

3. Although the phenomenon (or phenomena) of human cruelty may have animal origins, it is overlaid and transformed by cultural and ideological meaning; so it is not clear how far we are entitled to think of animal and human cruelty as instances of the same phenomena. This worry is partly, but not wholly, a pedantic one about what we are to mean by the word "cruelty." Let us start there, however. Cruelty is surely not merely "the deliberate infliction of physical or psychological pain on a living creature" (sect. 1). A doctor might deliberately inflict physical pain on a patient in the course of an operation, and a therapist might inflict psychological pain in the course of therapy that is intended to help a patient. Doctors or therapists might even take delight in causing pain if they think that it means that the cure is working. However, the doctor or therapist does not pursue or take pleasure in pain for its own sake; rather, the pain is thought to be a by-product or necessary means to what they do want for its own sake. Nell seems to recognize this, but only when we are already quite a long way into the target article; and he simply puts such cases to one side (sect. 2). But it is unsatisfactory simply to exclude these kinds of cases by fiat without modifying the definition deployed elsewhere. One cannot carry on working with the unsatisfactory definition, which does not fit the human phenomena that we call *cruel*. This matters because Nell needs a notion of cruelty that applies to both human beings and animals and which will allow him to draw conclusions about human cruelty from evidence about animals. I am not saying that this cannot be done, only that caution is in order – great caution. A proper conceptualization of human cruelty is essential to drawing any such conclusion. So, my third question for Nell is: What definitions of cruelty does he propose that we operate with?

4. I am not denying that it is possible, and perhaps plausible, that our animal natures are part of the explanation of human cruelty. But there is an enormous danger that the social or religious significance of human cruelty, in the *minds* of those who perpetrate it and suffer it, will be overlooked or underestimated. It is not clear how much we can learn from evolutionary theory alone when we consider the great human significance of blood, and therefore of the spilling of it. Consider bullfighting and fox-hunting. In both, the pain-blood-death scenario of the animal is invested with a complex array of meanings by the (human) participants. (See Hemingway 1932/1996 on the meaning of bullfighting; and see Scruton 1998 on the meaning of foxhunting.) And consider Christianity, in which one person's pain-blood-death scenario is invested with huge metaphysical, moral, and social significance. Indeed, the fate of the entire

cosmos is sometimes supposed to rest on the pain-blood-death scenario of one man: Jesus. And believing in that significance is supposed to have the power to deliver profound spiritual and metaphysical "salvation." Perhaps the meaning of Jesus's pain-blood-death in Christianity has more to do with suffering than cruelty. Nevertheless, it illustrates the transfiguration of pain-blood-death by complex meanings. There is a general issue lurking here about the relation between the human and social sciences, on the one hand, and disciplines such as biology and neurophysiology, on the other. Consider eating or sex: It is true that both animals and humans do it. But human beings invest these activities with social, moral, and religious significance, and they surround the activities with complex rituals. Human beings transfigure animal phenomena by investing them with meaning. It is not clear how much of the original animal phenomena will be recognizable in the sophisticated human phenomena. So, my fourth and last question for Nell is: Given the layers of meaning that, for perpetrators and sufferers are part of what human cruelty involves, is there enough in common between human and animal "cruelty" to forge a strong explanatory link between them?

## Author's Response

### Cruelty and the psychology of history

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**Abstract:** This response deals with seven of the major challenges the commentators have raised to the target article. First, I show that the historical-anecdotal method I have followed has its roots in sociology, and that there is a strong case for the development of a "psychology of history." Next, the observational data suggesting that intentional cruelty cannot be restricted to humans is rebutted on the grounds that cruelty requires not only an intention to inflict pain, but to do so *because* that pain would cause the victim to suffer – which requires a theory of mind. Third, in the light of the commentaries, I recognise that not only predation but also intraspecific aggression contributes to the development of cruelty. Fourth, I contrast nativists and environmentalists, the former regarding cruelty as a universal human capacity and the latter holding the view that cruelty is acquired through social learning, and argue that there is an otherworldly quality to the environmentalist view. I then show (the fifth challenge) that the target article does generate testable hypotheses. Sixth is a consideration of the implications of the target article for the re-admission of the concept of evil to the psychological lexicon; and seventh, a consideration of the commentaries which note that the cultivation of compassion is a tool for the prevention of cruelty. The last section of the response replies to questions of detail and rebuts some misrepresentations of my argument.

Publishing in *BBS* is not for the faint-hearted. It has forced justification of what had seemed to me to be self-evident (as with my historical-anecdotal method), reconsideration of what had appeared to be strong lines of argument (as with recognising the centrality of intraspecific aggression for the development of cruelty); allowed me to follow the encouragement given by commentators in elaborating half-articulated issues (as with the pull of evil); and

produced new approaches to the primary prevention of violence – which had been a principle motivation for soliciting commentary.

### R1. A psychology of history

The historical method of my article has been roundly criticised. My arguments are based “on a flood of examples implying universality in humans” (**Schuster**); my evidence “is largely in terms of biblical quotations, anecdotes, descriptions of ancient Greek practices, medieval carnivals, and arena spectacles” (**Bandura**); half of the references “are works of art, moral philosophy, anecdotes” and contain “antique historians, poets, and religious texts,” and “only about 20% are empirical studies,” complains **Kotchoubey**.

My “anecdotal” method, which is theory building by the accretion of behavioural specimens, is well-known in sociology: the behavioural histories of Ariès (1960/1962; 1981) and Elias (1939/2000) proceed through the analysis of historical documents that range from myth and legend to manuals of table manners or the conduct that befits the bereaved, and from these documents a psychology of history is constructed. Psychologists, on the other hand, though attentive to the (very brief) history of psychology, have created no psychology of history, and do not regard the range of values or emotions that were proper to an iron age hunter, to audiences at the Roman arena or at an animal baiting in early nineteenth century England or America, as significant areas of psychological enquiry. These values and emotions are in fact important to psychology because, in order to determine which behaviours flow from the core of human nature, remaining stable across historical time, and which are transient, this historical method, the construction of a psychology of history, is the only available tool. There is no pre-existing body of empirical work on cruelty, so a research agenda must be created. I have done so by means of anecdote: Each of these historical vignettes, separately or together, has the potential to generate testable hypotheses, and, as many of the commentaries show, has succeeded in doing so. This analysis is thus “a promissory note to be cashed out through future research” (**Panksepp**).

### R2. Theories of mind, or, are animals capable of cruelty?

I preface this section with an account of a field observation by Michael Wilson (personal communication, April 24, 2001) that relates to territorial aggression in the Kibale Forest Reserve in 2000: An adult male chimpanzee had been attacked by nine males from another troop on a border patrol and held down by all four limbs. All the wounds were ventral, inflicted by bites and tearing with the hands. The trachea had been torn out, and the testicles were ripped off and found nearby. The next day the attackers returned and were seen beating on the dead body.

In this light, **van den Berghe**'s assertion that “almost every claim for human behavioral uniqueness has bitten ethological dust” is telling. Similarly, **Behrendt** points to the capacity of macaques to learn how to avoid punishment from other members of the group, and that

unprovoked aggression to group members in animals is analogous to cruelty in humans. **Dallman** observes that I have boxed myself in by specifying that cruelty is only a human endeavour, ignoring “a considerable literature that documents ‘cruelty’ in subhuman primates and other mammals.”

I am not persuaded. The question is whether the intentionality that is evident in these and other examples, or that chimpanzees are capable of social manipulation (Byrne & Whiten 1988), amounts to a theory of mind (ToM) that enables these demonic males to not only formulate an intention to inflict pain, but to do so *because* that pain would cause the victim to suffer.

**Ainslie** and **Panksepp**, both reflecting on cat-and-mouse play, share this reservation: “since a real Tom has no ToM, he is presumably not imagining his victim’s suffering, much less trying to induce it,” writes Ainslie; while Panksepp observes that an animal’s ability to reflect on other minds is rudimentary, and its behaviour reflects aroused action tendencies that are not reflectively guided. So, the objections notwithstanding, I hold to the view that animal “cruelty” is more parsimoniously to be interpreted as an extreme form of aggression rather than cruelty. For this reason, I do not think that behaviours such as animal neglect or hoarding (**Herzog & Arluke**) are cruel: They certainly cause suffering, but the intention is absent.

### R3. Predation, intraspecific aggression, and cruelty

The commentaries in this group have made me rethink the exclusivity I accorded to predation as cruelty’s precursor. Thus, **Zangwill** accepts the predation-cruelty link, but challenges its exclusivity, suggesting that predation may not be the main causal factor, but one among others. I agree. There are likely to be multiple evolutionary pathways leading to cruelty. **Potts**'s comment that something more than the rewards of a predatory animal is needed to explain the scale and universality of human cruelty links with **Potegal**'s suggestion that this something more may be intraspecific aggression (IA), which has deeper roots in animal and human evolution than predation.

A number of commentaries link aggression and cruelty (**de Aguirre**, **Kosloff**, **Greenberg**, & **Solomon** [**Kosloff et al.**], **Kotchoubey**, **Mouras**, **Ruocco & Platek**), suggesting in effect that cruelty is a special case of aggression; as, for example, **Panksepp**, who writes that cruelty’s neuro-causal underpinnings might lie in “intense human and animal aggression.” **Behrendt** argues that ritualised intraspecific aggression, not cruelty, is the principle means for the accretion of social power. **Kosloff et al.** go further, claiming that my definition of cruelty is virtually identical to psychological definitions of aggression, that is, behaviour that has the intent to harm another. To say that this is “virtually identical” with my definition of cruelty is inaccurate: The deliberate infliction of pain on a living creature certainly has the intent to harm, but to conflate cruelty with aggression is not helpful for the study of cruelty as a specific subtype of aggression. There are, however, implications for prevention in determining whether or not there is an aggression–cruelty continuum and what this might be in

behavioural terms, as with the link between cruelty and aggressive-sadistic personality disorder (SPD) proposed by Ruocco & Platek.

#### R4. Nativists, environmentalists, and otherworldliness

There are sharp divisions between the *nativists*, who regard cruelty as an innate, universal human capacity (**Dallman, Kraemer, Stein, Tiger**, and, indirectly, **Herzog & Arluke**), and the *environmentalists*, who see it as a behaviour acquired through social learning (**Bandura, Behrendt, Haritos-Fatouros, Kosloff et al., Tapper**). This debate has profound implications for the prevention of cruelty.

##### R4.1. Nativists

The nativist view was elegantly put a century ago by William James, whose intuitions about the instincts deserve to be better known by evolutionary psychologists: Those who reason from above downwards, he writes, as if by inference and associations,

have missed the root of the matter. Our ferocity is blind, and can only be explained from *below*. . . . The boys who pull out grasshoppers' legs and butterflies' wings and disembowel every frog they catch have no thought at all about the matter. The creatures tempt their hands to a fascinating occupation, to which they have to yield. (James 1890/1998, p. 414)

There is empirical support for this assertion: **Herzog & Arluke** note that childhood animal cruelty may be more common than is usually recognized, with one study reporting that two-thirds of male undergraduates had participated in animal abuse, while **Kraemer** echoes James: "in their play with toys, siblings, friends, and pets," even infants show that they are readily capable of inflicting pain on others, and continues, "Curiosity may be one driver – a wish to find out how much damage the victim can stand, or simply to dismantle it and see what it is made of."

**Dallman** suggests that cruelty may be a by-product of the need to reduce arousal after the high stress of predation, and return to a sustainable state: "this may occur in both animals and humans by employing aggression [and] real or potential cruelty, to available conspecifics" that reduces the level of stress-induced glucocorticoids.

**Tiger** writes that a species committed to predation would clearly have the required emotional and physiological correlates, with neurophysiological factors underlying our "chronic interest in accident [and] death. . . . A large precinct of the academy is devoted to claiming that cruelty and its cousins exist mainly because a few bad people contrive to dragoon many people into bad schemes." **Stein** agrees, writing that cruelty and evil "cannot merely be relegated to those who are 'abnormal' or otherwise marginal."

##### R4.2. Environmentalists

**Bandura** is representative of the environmentalists, writing, for example, that "extensive training and a multitude of social structural influences are needed to produce cruel perpetrators." Thus also **Haritos-Fatouros**, who

holds that human behaviour is also greatly influenced by cognitive processes, and by the resulting situations produced – but goes on to say (as her co-author **Zimbardo** has shown; cf. **Haritos-Fatouros & Zimbardo 2005; Zimbardo 2003**) that "torturers do not have to have a certain kind of personality, only exposure to certain kinds of psychological, social, and political conditions," which is squarely nativist (see sect. 6.2 of the target article). **Tapper** acknowledges that predation may help account for the prevalence of cruelty, but is too restrictive: Cruelty also draws on other reinforcers, many of which may stem from resource competition.

**Ainslie, Behrendt**, and **Kosloff et al.** propose a variety of cognitive processes to account for the reward value of cruelty. **Behrendt** writes that enjoyment of media cruelty is not reinforced by "emotional circuits" adapted to predation, but represents transient relief from culturally determined inhibition of aggression. Similarly, **Kosloff et al.**, citing their terror management theory, suggest that "cruelty stems from the desire to defend one's cultural worldview and to participate in a heroic triumph over evil." **Ainslie** also suggests that cruelty might be an anxiety reduction mechanism: "There are people with traits that we fear in ourselves. . . . [and] cruelty toward these people might be the handiest way to reduce our sense of potential seduction."

Finally, there is **de Aguirre's** pathologising view that sees cruelty as a symptom of psychiatric illness, with aggression and cruelty as its symptoms. This fits with a long psychiatric tradition of medicalising problematic human behaviours such as aggression, violence, and cruelty (see, e.g., **Filley et al. [2001]** in which I am a dissenting voice), thus removing them from the proper ambit of the social sciences (see the views of **Stein** and **Tiger** in the preceding section).

##### R4.3. Otherworldliness

I am troubled by the otherworldly quality of much of the foregoing, as, for example, **Ainslie's** contention that psychological cruelty is the only kind seen in everyday life, or **Rowan's** that sadistic cruelty is a rare occurrence. Whether or not cruelty is a universal human propensity, the evidence from the historical record – from the International Court of Justice in The Hague and, everywhere in the world, from hospital emergency rooms and mortuaries (where I have had the misfortune to spend rather too much time: **Brown & Nell 1992; Butchart et al. 1991; Nell & Butchart 1989**) – is that cruelty, often tipping into sadism, makes a large contribution to the sum of human and animal misery; and that this cruelty is perpetrated, as I attempted to show, by manifestly normal and decent people who have not been the subjects of intensive learning or socialisation processes in order to become cruel. Rather, an opportunity or provocation was there, and with no training, this decent person did appalling things. Psychologists and sociologists who argue for elaborate training or an evil predisposition as a precondition for cruelty fail in my opinion to give sufficient weight to this real-world evidence.

Cruelty is no less deserving of careful scientific study than substance abuse or aggression: If my central assertion, that a capacity for cruelty is a universal human propensity, is disproved, then so much the better. But the

research needs to be done, and to treat the topic as an unwelcome intruder to the behavioural science agenda is a disservice to the victims of cruelty.

## R5. Hypothesis testing

I am puzzled by the charge (**Kotchoubey, Schuster**) that my theory lacks testable hypotheses: I haven't counted, but as **Haritos-Fatouros** kindly remarks, there is "an abundance" of these. The two pillars of the research programme I proposed are to listen to the voices of perpetrators, daunting though this programme is, and, using these materials, to develop a Cruelty Readiness Questionnaire (CRQ; sect. 6.4). **Panksepp** writes that "once we have a good Cruelty Readiness scale, we surely will find genetic factors that facilitate cruelty."

**Van den Berghe** notes cruelty's seemingly negative correlation with age because of its apparent linkage with testosterone, sex, and dominance and suggests a test of this hypothesis. I am also grateful to **Schuster** for proposing additional hypotheses, among them "to measure and validate the kinds of behaviors that can serve as markers for positive affect associated with acts of cruelty," and to determine whether conditioned pain-blood-death (PBD) stimuli in an animal can provide reinforcement that is additional to the primary reinforcer.

## R6. Evil and its pull

**Zangwill** asks, Why the atomism? Why do I treat cruelty in isolation, ignoring its centrality to the human condition? Well, let's take the next step and relate cruelty to its superordinate category, evil (see also **Stein**) – a term that is absent from modern psychology, though it should not be. Though I avoided using the word *evil*, many passages in the target article point to the contribution cruelty and evil have made to culture and history, though not to the sum of happiness. So I don't believe that I have been atomist, and again, with approval, cite William James:

May not the claims of tender-mindedness go too far? . . . Is the last word sweet? Is all "yes, yes" in the universe? Doesn't the fact of "No" stand at the very core of life? Doesn't the very "seriousness" that we attribute to life mean that ineluctable noes and losses form a part of it, that there are genuine sacrifices somewhere, and that something permanently drastic and bitter always remains at the bottom of its cup? (James 1907/2000, p. 129)

To go further along the road to which **Zangwill** has pointed: I tried to indicate in my article that it is impossible to understand cruelty without acknowledging its seductiveness and the strength of the pull we all feel (but shrink from acknowledging) to the "other side," to darkness and evil. Taking **Ainslie's** notion of "negative empathy" a step further, there is a need for a "negative psychology" as a balance to the mandatory optimism of current Western (and especially American) psychology that holds to Enlightenment notions of an inexorable march to perfection, and blocks serious empirical research on, yes, evil, and refuses to acknowledge that this dark study is in fact a human welfare imperative. So, I couldn't agree more with the preambles to Zangwill's questions 3 and 4.

In this context, **van den Berghe's** notion of thanatourism is provocative because it opens the way to some thoughts about how evil creeps in at the back door when it has been locked out of the front: I agree that beneath the "memorialisation" lurks the *frisson* of approaching a scene of pain and bloodshed. Thus in the 1830s, in the first decade the American Abolitionism, "the gruesome tribulations of the body" (Clark 1995, p. 465) became a staple of antislavery literature: "Speakers [at antislavery rallies] often righteously denied any intention to 'harrow up' an audience's feelings before going on to dwell enthusiastically on atrocities" (Clark 1995, p. 467). So, for the respectable citizens of the nineteenth century, as for those who flocked to the exhibition of horrifying torture instruments that toured Europe from 1983 to 1987 (Held 1985), these atrocity tales served as crypto-pornography, disguised by an overlay of moral fervour. *The Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs* by the Roman priest Antonio Gallonio, published in Italian in 1591, is a hagiography that went through many editions, of which the strangest was its revival as a sadomasochistic cult book in 1980 by a pornography publisher in Los Angeles, who had it illustrated by Charles Manson, leader of the "family" of serial murderers that killed Sharon Tate (cf. Gallonio 1591/1989). Good citizens can comfortably go to bed with Held or Gallonio because there is no moral taint – as with thanatourism.

## R7. Compassion and prevention

**Swain** reviews the neurochemistry of maternal deprivation in rat models from infancy to adulthood, raising the possibility that early trauma may shape long-term mental health in humans. He writes that experience-dependant chromatin plasticity offers a hope that older children and adults, already damaged by child neglect and abuse, might be treated by targeting these molecules; more radically, he believes that cruelty would be prevented through the elimination of child abuse. Likewise, **de Aguirre** addresses the neurobiology of maternal care and its impact on adult behaviour. **Ruocco & Platek** recommend that rehabilitation professionals be aware of the specific neurocognitive deficits associated with antisocial personality disorder (APD) and aggressive-sadistic personality disorder (SPD) and address the ways in which they affect treatment and social reintegration.

**Panksepp** speculates that the wide psychological scope of dopamine-driven exploratory behaviours may explain why juvenile play-fighting and inter-male aggression "can be as rewarding as predatory stalking and chasing," leading to the suggestion that childhood rough-and-tumble play, under empathic supervision (which links with **Tappe's** observation that school aggression may be reinforced by onlooker responses), could be a means toward the nurturing of more prosocial brains. This is in effect a call for the cultivation of empathy (**Potegal**), which is in turn a manifestation of compassion. Similarly, **Dallman** advocates formal programs that foster affiliative behaviour that "might, if widely available, result in reduction of the amount of pleasure seeking directed toward cruel behaviors"; **Fox** glosses compassion to mean loving-kindness, "the desire to see the other flourish," as in the humane education movement, which

aims to enhance children's natural tendency to compassion; and **Potts** observes that if cruelty is linked to the evolution of male coalitional aggression, anything enhancing women's role in society "is likely to promote a ... less cruel society."

I agree with **Potter** that shame is an inappropriate method for cruelty prevention and respond that I did not advocate its use, but rather, a reinforcement of the "automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control," described by Elias (1939/2000, p. 368). Potter goes on to ask whether prevention would be served by listening to the voices of perpetrators: It is certainly true that those who do terrible things misrepresent their motives to themselves and others. But the probe questions I have suggested are not about motives, but gratifications. Though torturers may also block access to the emotions they experienced, this approach cannot be dismissed a priori until there has been a serious attempt to interview perpetrators under conditions of clinical confidentiality and empathy.

## R8. Rebuttals

**Ainslie** doubts if human hunters are rewarded by the suffering of their prey: suffering is an emotive word, and it diverts attention from the question I attempted to answer, which is whether hunters are rewarded by the *death* of their prey – which is necessarily accompanied by blood and pain. I believe that they are – though in hunting, pain, blood, and death are the accompaniments of a different goal-directed activity, which is the death of the prey for nutrition or as a trophy. In cruelty, the goal is pain in itself, for which this evolutionarily old set of reinforcers, the PBD complex, is available. Ainslie also asks whether cat-and-mouse play is cruel, or a challenging game: In terms of my contention that Toms do not have a ToM (to borrow his word-play), this game cannot be cruel (it is not, by the way, a game that is restricted to cats: I have watched a puppy batting a beetle from paw to paw, letting it escape, and pouncing again to continue playing).

**Bandura** asks why motorcycle racing is a vestige of the pain-blood-death complex. I could equally have cited any number of spectacles in which the risk of injury or death is present: Circus high-wire and trapeze acts without a safety net are paradigmatic of the audience appeal of entertainments over which injury and death hover. And the functional value to the competitors of winning prizes has nothing to do with my argument, which is about the audience appeal of life-threatening displays.

I agree with **Bandura** that the third stage of cruelty requires the most detailed theoretical specification, which, within the *BBS* space limitations given, it gets. So I don't think he is correct in saying that I give surprisingly little attention to the social uses of power; nor do I think that the link from predation to cruelty is enigmatic. I don't think that my argument for the beauty of war can be taken as a dismissal of its horrors and the psychological scars it leaves; but it is also necessary to acknowledge that entire populations can be seduced by the glamour of war. With regard to the gratifications of remote killing, which Bandura doubts, a missile designer once showed me a video of a rocket homing in on a drone and exploding:

His pleasure was tangible. Similarly, newspaper accounts of pilots interviewed on their return from high-altitude bombing missions in the Persian Gulf, in which the bomb damage is unseen, speak with exultance of "being effective." Anecdotes, certainly – but again, there is a clear need for research on the psychology of remote killing.

Finally, that cruelty is male gendered (**Herzog & Arluke** observe that animal cruelty is a predominantly male enterprise) does not mean that all males are cruel or violent all the time, as Bandura seems to suggest, or that women are incapable of cruelty; and I don't think that my text suggests either of these outcomes.

I agree with **Behrendt** that pain and blood are unlikely to represent rewards for the sake of which the animal kills. My argument is that pain and blood become attached to the gratification of feeding, and provide some of the reinforcers needed to sustain the heavy time and energy demands of predation.

**Kotchoubey's** intemperate commentary is remarkable (to quote from his epigraph) for its fury, and repeatedly misrepresents my argument. I didn't suggest that hyenas and lions were cruel or that they "torment" their victims, and I can't follow how he has arrived at this serious misreading of my text despite my definitional restriction of cruelty to hominids. His rebuke that the papers by Haney et al. (1973) and Milgram (1969/1974) are not "examples of empirical work on cruelty" is another misreading: the text there is that these papers show the ease with which situations can overwhelm values and, therefore, can elicit cruelty in otherwise decent people. Why is Milgram's work unrelated to the theme of the target article? – on the contrary, situational press is central to my argument. I am not offended by the suggestion that I am an armchair philosopher or that I write *belles lettres* (which is elegantly aesthetic literature), but I certainly am offended by the accusation that my article is "propaganda": In what cause does Kotchoubey think I might be disseminating deceptive or distorted information?

His most egregious misrepresentation is of my paragraph on the dangers of studying cruelty. The comparison with Freud is apposite, because a universal potential for cruelty in the twenty first century, like infantile sexuality in the nineteenth, is a taboo subject. But how **Kotchoubey** gets from this parallel to the absurd conclusion, quite unrelated to my text, that I am pre-emptively devaluing any criticism of my work, is beyond me. The evidence, if any is needed, is in the number and vigour of the commentaries, including his own.

The most interesting aspect of **Kotchoubey's** commentary is the dichotomy he sets up between science and cultural analysis. Indeed, he is paradigmatic of a hard science approach, arguing that only the evaluation of empirical results can "describe the truth about cruelty," or, presumably, any other psychological topic. This is a view explicitly rejected by *BBS*, which in its publication criteria includes articles "dealing with social or philosophical aspects of the behavioral and brain sciences." I don't believe that that a dogmatic empiricism, reminiscent of the excesses of behaviourism, is appropriate to psychology, which stands with one foot in the laboratory and the other in phenomenology (the investigation and description of the plenitude of conscious experience). Any value my article may have derives

from the vigorous pursuit of a historico-phenomenological approach.

As an executive of a humane society, **Rowan** is in a strong position to comment on my animal-baiting materials. However, I would urge caution in generalising from the findings of the South African study that sadistic cruelty was rare: Organised dogfights in empty swimming pools and incidents of animal torture are reported from time to time in the South African press, but take place behind a veil of secrecy that is not penetrated by animal lovers or humane societies. The true extent of sadistic cruelty to animals may be greater than we would like to think.

I am puzzled by **Zangwill's** objections to my definition of cruelty, and suspect that he may have left his argument unfinished. His first objection is that one cannot exclude certain cases by fiat, as, for example, in medical treatment. But surely it is in the nature of taxonomies not only to define, but also to exclude? He goes on to write that my definition does not fit the human phenomena we call cruel because I need "a notion of cruelty that applies to both human beings and animals." This is not so, because I have carefully excluded animals on the grounds that they may be aggressively but cannot be cruel.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful to the very many friends and colleagues who have, since 1995, reviewed (and listened to) earlier versions of this article, and to the *BBS* referees and commentators (in particular to the referees who became commentators), for helping make the target article – which now incorporates their reviews – and this response what they have become.

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[The letters "a" and "r" before author's initials stand for target article and response references, respectively.]

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