Chapter 2
God and Ontological Anxiety

With the disappearance of the tail in the evolutionary process along with the gradual appearance of greater cortical development, the thinking brain became also an ontological one. That is, Homo sapiens of course retained its animal concern with survival but added to its existential awareness, that of an expectation and tension about death. And from this knowledge and expectation of the certainty of one's ultimate demise was born what became known as "ontological anxiety," defined as an existential concern regarding one's "being" (Kellerman, 2009a)—a concept philosophically discussed by Kierkegaard and also psychologically elaborated by Rollo May (1950, 1983).

Ontological anxiety is considered to be an anxiety or tension generated because the sense of one's ultimate survival possibility is instantly translated by the thinking brain into one's ultimate survival impossibility. It is simply the prospect of one's death—the ultimate disempowerment.

As awareness of the inexorable march toward the end of life gradually dawns more and more on the individual, (i.e., becoming gradually more conscious and therefore better articulated to the self), the issue of one's ultimate disempowerment creates a perpetual ongoing tension in the personality. The hard-core psychological principle that causes this perpetual tension can be stated as: *Disempowerment, or helplessness, always (without exception) generates (or gestates) anger*. Since anger is an inherently assertive response, then when one is disempowered, frequently the only way to become reempowered is by being angry. The reason for this adamant connection between disempowerment and anger is that the human psyche will not tolerate any sustained disempowerment.

It should be noted, however, that while sometimes anger will be expressed openly, and at other times mediated by socialization factors, anger will be suppressed (amorphously sensed, or only partially conscious, or repressed entirely—out of any conscious awareness). Nevertheless, and presumably, the psyche is considered satisfied even with a psychological reempowerment that is repressed and unconscious. It is the sense of reempowerment that contributes to the person's overall feeling of security and peace of mind. It is apparently what the psyche wants; that is, in reality, of course, wishes are not always realized, but in the psyche, no wish will be denied. The psyche insists only on security and empowerment, and to this end the psyche

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may be said to calibrate judgments of the brain in the skull as well as the brain in the gut. The psyche regulates an amalgam of survival mechanisms consisting of powers of cognition, instinct, emotion, and intuition, and therefore in a psychological sense, the psyche is entirely governed by wish-fulfillment needs. In the end, the psyche can only accept security and empowerment.

Death

Along with the need to achieve with peace of mind—homeostatic sense of security, a consequent expectation of safety, the fervent hope of emotional tranquility, and one's need for ultimate fairness as well as a gyroscopic sense of stability—people are faced with the implicit contradiction of such ongoing peace-of-mind hopes with the existential sense that there is really no option, that one is ultimately finite, and in the corporeal sense, quite finite.

In this regard, earlier forms of life can also be ontological; that is, primitive animals too are always alert to dangers and become protective when their survival is threatened. And this is true even of the amoeba. If the particle ingested by an amoeba is experienced as noxious the particle will be immediately ejected. It is this one-celled organism's tropistic survival mechanism that "knows" what to do. Other typical instinctive or unidimensional tropistic behaviors designed for survival purposes are those that are implicit as simple fight/flight behaviors. That is to say that to survive, and depending on the threat to such survival, some flee while others fight. In any case all forms of life may be thought of as existential in their experience of the here and now. However, ontologically speaking, it seems that only humans can precisely perceive, and be exquisitely aware of time elapsing toward the end, toward death. With most humans (but certainly not all), the inexorable end is usually not managed with equanimity, and yet, it seems that no one can escape it.

Or can we escape it?

And so, as with the need for empathy and feeling of gratitude for being understood, and cared for by an assumed greater power, the human thinking brain needed to construct, and in fact did construct something outside of the box—something new and extra that could possibly be a promise of sustaining the self indefinitely into the future. In this sense, being sustained indefinitely into the future essentially means there is no end. The sense of it is that this sort of unended future is more fair than the "end" would be.

Enter, God!

The Box

In order to solve a problem, sometimes mathematicians find it necessary to construct something hypothetical (some factor or variable) outside the parameter of the given problem in order to solve what needs to be solved within. In other words

they construct a variable outside of the box in order to solve the problem within the box.

In our discussion, God becomes the factor outside of the box in order to solve the problem inside. And what is the problem that needs to be solved inside the box? The answer is that the problem inside the box, in our corporeal lives, is how to give ourselves some relief from the ontological anxiety (anxieties) of our lives that plague us all of our lives—the quintessential one of course pointing to what is usually considered the key existential issue—our individual demise—death.

With a convinced sense of, and belief in God, people can sometimes feel spared from intense existential ontological death anxiety, or at least feel assisted in managing such anxiety. Thus, the literal definition of death generally accepted by most people assumes rather a different meaning. It can be said that even with the idea of corporeal death as it is cognitively understood, this idea of corporeal death perhaps on the one hand can be somewhat denied or on the other hand, even better integrated in the personality (in one's thinking) primarily because comfort derives from the special experienced affiliation with God. In such a scenario, and for the believer, the end can subjectively become something quite other than the "end."

Thinking in evolutionary terms, not only is the process of what follows (the future) but phylogenetic beginnings are inevitably considered as well. And when endings are considered, ontogenetic process (from origin to development) is correspondingly also implied, so that "end" means "end." Therefore, in considering the past moving into the present and then into the future, a question can be posed: How did it happen that the evolutionary trajectory went from the anatomical tail to the thinking brain, enabling the human to manage death by at the very least, and for many God-fearing people, perhaps even neutralizing the phenomenological dread of such an idea?

The upshot is that the God variable can be useful when anxiety regarding "the end" is consciously experienced. Yet, at death's door, whether this variable actually helps becomes an issue of individual personality difference. However, before considering how the God variable influences individuals, let us look at how we got from the tail to the brain.

How Did We Get From the Anatomical Tail to the Thinking Brain?

Here we are holding in abeyance the consideration of an actually existing God, and rather considering phylogeny (evolutionary development) as well as ontogeny (human development), in trying to understand what happened in evolution to take us from more instinctive behaviors of animals (even those without any significant brain structure) to higher-order animals who live in groups with rituals and cooperative behaviors (and of course greater brain development), and finally to humans with a developed cortex, a thinking brain. This human brain is a highly cognitive one; that is, such a brain can accomplish all sorts of fantastic thinking feats. And despite the human capacity for primitive behaviors, nevertheless, simply because humans can

create complex thinking edifices, we then attribute such positive qualities to people, and relegate pejoratives to the behavior of animals.

The idea of rituals in animal groups is quite fascinating because the group becomes a cohesive one in which all of its members "know" where they are and what their function is in the group, or their position in the group's hierarchy. For example in bee or ant colonies, the entire functioning of the colony is akin to what can be considered a virtual brain that determines the distribution of labor and power—who does what in the colony and why. Similarly in apes or even in dolphin troops, distribution of roles enables the group to become adaptive which of course increases its survival potential.

In a wide variety of groups, with respect to the behavior of group members, researchers have consistently seen phenomena best described as "reciprocal altruism." This reciprocal altruism is behavior among members that says: "You help me, and I help you, and because of this reciprocity, we survive better." It is what Wright (2009a), in his book, *God in Evolution*, analyzes with respect to the appearance or emergence of God in evolution generally, and in human affairs specifically, and it is what Natalie Angier (2011) refers to in her review of the "fairness" issue as a genetic tropism.

It is evident that such ritualistic organizations of individual animals in groups with each member "knowing" its role and function, rather gradually becomes a "precursor functionality" in the evolutionary march toward the development of the thinking human brain. In this sense, we may begin to see the outlines of a way to understand this evolution. In general terms correlations obtain with respect to the tail, group ritual, and the thinking brain—designed in evolution for survival—for peace of mind, safety, tranquility, and from signal behavior to language.

At this moment in the development of the human thinking brain, we arrive at the nexus, the point at which our thinking capacity is able to either apprehend or create the greatest power, the God power; the one that for many people can provide the needed empowerment and peace of mind. And all of it presumably develops because of the ubiquitous need to adapt to environmental circumstances—meaning that the "Power" has been found, enabling the conquest of all uncertainty (and certainly the conquest of the looming dangers of the here-and-now world). It is an issue that highlights the importance of understanding why or how belief evolved. The possible answer concerns the ability of the thinking brain to accommodate the individual's needs as well as for that brain to create other thinking avenues—even those for which the thinking target was not designed. This idea of the thinking brain as directed toward targets of consideration and ultimately to permutations of thinking can be applied in other ways as well.

Therefore, to the question of why belief evolved, essentially there are two basic theories: the first is termed the *byproduct theory* (Gould, 1991); the second concerned what has been called the *adaptational theory* (Sosis & Alcorta, 2003).

The Byproduct Theory—Here, belief evolved out of a spandrel. Henig offers the standard example of byproduct theorists—to wit: blood cells transport oxygen throughout the body but there is no advantage in the blood's red color. Redness becomes a byproduct of blood containing hemoglobin.

The Adaptational Theory—Here, belief is based upon primary benefits to the person due to the possible survival advantages of, for example, religious belief.

Correlation and Causation

Of course the origins of God-belief and worship are not rooted in with any profound theological tracts and exegeses. Tracing it back to hunter/gatherer societies and even further back in time, we know that the thinking brain developed gradually and that at its dawning, it was in high probability a syncretistic thinking brain—that is, the kind of thinking that confuses correlation with causation and in fact considers correlation and causation convenient to believe as synonyms, and even for all intents and purposes to be the same. This sort of primitive thinking is characteristic of a search for meaning as a way to feel better organized, and less fearful. Most of all such primitive thinking represents the kind of thinking that generates the wish for empowerment. And the wish for empowerment existed for the emerging hominid at an ontogenetic time, and within the context of a carnivorously dangerous environment—one that necessarily was experienced in a steady-state of conditioned or anticipated disempowerment.

This syncretistic brain, again, defined as one that equated correlation with causation can be understood by any simple scenario. For example, an earlier ancestor awakens to a bad dream while simultaneously seeing and hearing storm clouds in the distance so that one's rather fragile lodging is potentially threatened. At this point the temporal association of the bad dream with the onset of storms becomes: storms as a result of the bad dream, or the other way around. And from such primitive correlational thinking, a simple synapse to idol worship is born—the Rain God, the Sun God, and so forth. Such thinking in the form of worshipping a "Power" would then tend to diminish tensions associated with vulnerability and disempowerment because recourse to such a superior power, to God, might provide relief.

Furthermore, psychological experiments have shown that we all remember unfinished tasks more vividly than we remember finished ones, and perhaps similarly, we remember things that went bad more readily than we remember all the good things (Zeigarnik, 1927/1967). And of course, at the dawn of Homo sapiens emergence, the primitive mind would most likely also have been subject to this same phenomenon of remembering the bad events more readily, which in turn surely had adaptive advantages. It is akin to the child touching the hot stove and then always knowing not to go near it.

The problem was that at such an early time in hominid evolution very many things were unfinished and untoward experiences including feelings of dread were most likely the rule. With such a prevalent under-powered condition of life the need for idol worship or fantastical constructions that offered some measure of solace and peace of mind would have certainly, in our putative, erstwhile, and syncretistic ancestors, lobbied for space in the psyche—in one's fantasy life, and wish-system. It is also the wish for a more fair existence in the absence of disempowerment.

Cognitive Tools

With respect to the issue of the evolution of cognition in the developing Homo sapiens brain—progressing from correlational thinking to the compelling rational causative thinking of modern man, as well as in the organization of memory in modern man—we begin to see that what eventually surfaced was an assortment of cognitive tools, the most important of these being what became known as: *agent detection*, *casual reasoning*, and *the overall theory of mind*. These cognitive abilities enabled the individual to gain a greater ascendancy with respect to survival.

1. *Agent Detection*—In agent detection, the individual assumes a presence rather than deny it. Henig's example (2007) is of a caveman who sees something move. This caveman instinctively and reflexively "knows" that it is better to assume danger even if in the end it was just a leaf rustling in the wind. This point is also referred to by Hazelton and Nettle (2006) as "error management theory." Henig makes the point by indicating that if it was a hyena, then the caveman's survival potential would be reduced. Henig further asks: "What does this mean for belief in the supernatural? It means our brains are primed for it, ready to presume the presence of agents even when such presence confounds logic." Such agents belong, so-to-speak to the byproduct theory; that is, that belief in the supernatural is a byproduct of another hard-wired brain event. According to Barrett (2004), and in this same vein, religious agents are either people with superpowers that are synthetically endowed with the power to answer requests, or can have disembodied minds, or that can control us in the real world emanating from some other dimension.
2. *Causal Reasoning*—It is normal and natural for the human brain to be entirely reflexive and even helpless to a compelling cause and effect logic. Even in ancient times, effect was always searching for the cause and so as Henig says: "The ancient Greeks believed thunder was the sound of Zeus's thunderbolt."
3. *Theory of Mind*—Again, with respect to byproduct theory, a number of authors can be represented by Bloom (2004) who states: "… it is a short step to positing minds that do not have to be anchored to a body. And from there, it is another short step to positing an immaterial soul and a transcendent God."

With the development of these cognitive tools even remote ancestors (not too different from modern man) could make survival thinking more hopeful, and by high probabilistic implication they also surely needed moment to moment respite from all the ongoing anticipatory real dangers. Of course we eventually get to "modern man" (that quintessential oxymoron; that is, in view of vast human derived brutality, greed, terrorists, genocides, and so forth, then if it is "man" how can it be "modern"?). So, in examining historical sequence, we can see that idol worship has been discarded for the certainty of one God (or maybe two or three depending on the particular religion, orientation, or culture).

The anthropologist Scott Atran is also cited by Henig as positing the concept of "evolutionary misdirection." Atran (2002) states the spandrel eloquently: "Evolution

always produces something that works for what it works for, and then there's no control for however else it's used."

Thus, it seems that we all have an innate ability for belief but apparently it is culture that forms the content of that belief—or as Barrett (2004) tells us—that the content can be: "whether there is one God or many; whether the soul goes to heaven: or, whether the soul occupies another animal after death." For some, such belief in a soul, heaven, and God concerns what these others consider a nonbelief; that is, atheists decline and actually repudiate what they define to be otherworldly notions—considered to be ideation based entirely on impulse and opinion with no basis in reality.

Thus, the "ending" dimension to life that becomes the province of termination—actually the curtailment of life—becomes for believers a transformation of the dance-of-death in favor of a more transcendent belief which as a peroration could be considered a Godsend. As implied, the corollary question relates to the nonbeliever insofar as a new question asks: How does this issue regarding the discontinuance to life—its cessation—impact atheists?

Ontological Anxiety and Atheists

Are atheists not concerned with death? Are they not worried about it? Do not they need the same reassurance concerning either an afterlife or some sort of even a proto-fantasy of a sustained existence? It might be said that generally atheists feel God is a "going concern" so long as people understand Earth to be the center of the universe. However, atheists generally see the Earth as another point in the cosmos, more or less simply related to all other points (Pinker, 2002). In addition, not all atheists are the same. And, further, there are some who, in place of a belief in God focus on a vast unity of the universe of which they are a part; in such cases anxiety about the ending of one's existence, at least ostensibly, does not seem to gain significant currency because of this sense of being a part of it all. Thus, for such people, it also may be an affiliative reassurance through a connection with Nature along with a respect for Nature that offers at least some peace of mind, though fatalism may also play a part.

Fatalism is for some a compelling philosophical stance that many atheists assume, and such fatalism naturally evokes a "come-what-may" attitude. It is the psychological equivalent of an ego-less condition. It is the understanding or belief that no one is special in the sense of being a God, or being favored by a God—and since the point of it all is that really no one from above is looking after you, then correspondingly the best one can do in life is to do the best you can—and that's it. After that, nature takes its course.

In the sense of this sort of fatalistic (although not necessarily negative) attitude those atheists who are clear about their fatalism are not likely to suffer from ontological anxiety, or perhaps do not suffer with significant ontological anxiety. Contrary to popular opinion, even in a fox hole, such people are most often, and in the vast majority of cases, not praying to God, and further, at death's door they are

not likely to convert—they just move into the end. This relationship with the "inevitable" is not to say that atheists ignore the inevitable and do not at all fight the "dying of the light." Atheists like believers experience the same resistance against termination. Dylan Thomas locates this fight in all people. However, at the very descriptive end, the atheist narrative reflected in a communion with (or belief in) nature, and the narrative characterizing the belief of God-fearing people are distinctively different in philosophy although similar in effect; that is, they both offer the promise of easing death fears. Or, perhaps, it is more hypothetically accurate to say that atheists are allegedly not at all afraid of death; of course, "allegedly," becomes the operative term.

With respect to ontological anxiety, atheists are more focused on the Darwinian instinct for survival rather than on a so-called God gene so that the attitude of fatalism frequently becomes the balm ultimately enabling presumed better management of the "inevitable." Atheists usually do not equate "the end" with any excessive or extravagant definition of unfairness.

In the instinct for survival, in the organization of human psychology, and in the essence of the human psyche, are contained mechanisms that enable worshipful people to believe in a God, and such mechanisms also generate additional mechanisms that in turn switch-off such belief–possibility so that to atheists, denying what is tangible in place of a belief in the intangible—especially with respect to a belief in a supra-natural God—is not possible. According to atheists, worship of a God requires such mechanisms as denial of reality, suspension of disbelief, projection of one's needs onto a supra-human figure/object, and then identifying and affiliating oneself in a like-minded community of believers either worshipping alone or together, and in either case, in communion with God.

To theists, the atheist position is as inconceivable as is the atheist's questioning of how believers can believe. However, whatever the belief, the entire issue of believing in a God or as some believers would define it—as finding the existing God—can be analyzed within the context of epigenetic considerations—that is, the context of understanding behavior based upon genetic givens in relation to environmental conditions that can either invoke these givens, or fail to do so.

The Epigenetic Human

The question is: Are we solely genetic beings? The answer is gradually unfolding to reveal that the human being is rather an epigenetic creature. It is currently fairly certain that genetic endowment—directly from birth and even during gestation—is encountered, even challenged, by environmental demands. Fraley, Brumbaugh, and Marks (2005) make the point decisively: "The framework of evolutionary psychology dissolves dichotomies such as nature versus nurture, innate versus learned, and biological versus cultural." These authors also state that environmental pressures are effective at the phylogenetic level (in the process of biological evolution) and are even manifested ontogenetically (during the lifespan of an organism).

And this raises the question of our moral metal. That is to say, is being "good" inborn, or is being "bad" inborn, or is it more complex than that, meaning that there really is a cause and effect interaction between genetic givens and environmental influences that unfold during development? The answer to this age-old question is now, because of epigenetic understanding, finding its context. And this context includes environmental experiences that have the power to potentiate various genetic givens, and that these genetic givens await their environmental influences in order to be awakened—actually activated.

This epigenesis issue brings us to environment, environmental demands, and the influence they have in how we ultimately and derivatively feel and behave. Scott (1980) proclaimed that with respect to the creatures inhabiting it, the environment contains challenges or even "functional requirements" confronting all life "for the purpose of adaptation and survival." And Plutchik (1980, 2001) spells out in great detail the phenomenal idea, also supported by Scott, that there exist common and identifiable adaptive behaviors found at all phylogenetic levels—from amoeba to man!

These adaptive behaviors are considered prototype behaviors (basic categories from which derived behavior is modeled). In pointing out and enumerating these adaptive prototype behaviors, Plutchik elucidates the principle that the context of an organism seeking survival gains increased survival probability through an adaptive quest for a safe environment. This search for a safe environment is accomplished in a number of prototypic or typical ways. These typical ways involve behaviors that facilitate the organism's need to gain equilibrium through the ability and motive to explore even its microbiological world. For example, these prototype behaviors include the facility to engage in behavior of incorporation (taking in), ejection (excretion), avoiding predation (protection behavior as in fleeing), becoming immobile, or instituting stopping motion in the moment of unexpectedness or momentary disorientation, or attacking a barrier to a goal. In the face of pressures to adapt, the idea of "minding" (Wyers et al., 1980) pertains to the need that all organisms have to maintain equilibrium. The biological process in evolution relates to development governed by survival pressures and so even in the struggle to maintain equilibrium evolution manages to progress despite continuous intervening stages of evolutionary disequilibrium.

Although the assumption that an understanding of survival mechanisms in the form of prototype behaviors can be utilized to support the evolutionary biological theory of life (as for example, in the psychoevolutionary perspective regarding the discovery of God), nevertheless, Rizzuto (1996) insists that there is another perspective to consider (other than biological adaptation) when discussing belief in God—that is to say, if not an understanding of the discovery or even origin of God, then at least an understanding of the belief in God.

Rizzuto, points out that psychologically, the issue of God's presence serves the purpose of ensuring psychic equilibrium; that the agency of God helps the individual retain some modicum of love in the face of untoward experiences as for example, in the experience of abandonment. Also, this same agency of God helps to sustain one's dignity and hope when life does not cooperate with one's wishes

(especially when conditions become intolerable). And Rizzuto further points out that for many people, God is also a companion.

It can be seen that in the psychoevolutionary sense, a thinking brain in concert with environmental demands and challenges leads to the person's constant growing edge of adaptation in a never ending wish for greater equilibrium. And this issue of adaptation also raises the implication of whether for the sake of adaptation, the natural selection of evolution "wants" us to be good in the same way that the presence of a God would, by implication, also "want" us to be good? In this respect it could be hypothesized that natural selection as the evolutionary engine has indeed selected us to be good—that is, to do good things unto others even without the remaining "… as we would have them do unto us." This ending may imply that natural selection favored being good (cooperative behavior creates better adaptation), nevertheless, this "goodness"-inheritance, awaiting its complementary environmental stimulus (in order to become activated), depends rather heavily on early historical experiences in life (influence of ontogenesis), as in a child's need for care, and corresponding loving behavior from parental figures.

The So-Called Evil Gene and the So-Called God Gene

This epigenetic complex of the child's need and the corresponding ontogenetic appropriate care given by parents is what is defined as early and continuing good nurturing and parenting. It is accepted as a premise that children who have been loved, understood, and well nurtured grow up with overall good intentions toward others and without so-called evil behavior—that is, this epigenetic process occurs correctly when appropriate environmental stimuli are present in order to enable developmental tasks to be achieved at age appropriate phases of development. It is when bad behavior is everywhere in evidence that a belief in an evil gene is contemplated, and further, such bad behavior invites the belief that an actual evil gene exists. The truth is, or the hypothetical truth is, that there is no such thing as an evil gene! The evil of behavior and underlying intention can be understood to be a result of an obvious epigenetic failure in development; that is, it can be hypothesized that with respect to cruel or delinquent behavior, the calibration of genetic givens with appropriate environmental stimuli (as well as time of response) did not coordinate well, or at all, or that because of some genetic anomaly the person is born with an absence of whatever is biologically required to restrain impulse. In such a case it is the untoward amount of impulse that increases the probability of inappropriate behavior, not an evil gene!

When a child feels unloved, emotionally abandoned, or even abused, the "goodness" intended by natural selection because of adaptational considerations of such "goodness" cannot be normally crystallized, and therefore in the present evolutionary state of human society (a society that again, makes necessary the pronouncement of the oxymoron, "modern-man"), the adage about treating others in a positive and supportive manner actually does need the reminder, "as you would want to be treated."

Because of the frequent disconnect between proper parental guidance and subsequent normal child development, in their day to day lives, people need assistance in asserting and practicing a moral, ethical stance, thus making the particular suffix "as you would want to be treated," a necessary and even highly practical precept. More specifically, apparently, because of the rather primitive existing understanding by vast numbers of parents regarding developmental issues of childhood, and the colossal underperformance of what should be good parenting, it becomes evident that even though we know that "goodness," kindness, altruism, and cooperation are all ultimately better able to facilitate adaptation, we also know that reminders for such "goodness" are most definitely needed, and so the suffix "… as we would have them do unto us" becomes highly important in the struggle toward more decent behavior, and subsequently, in the unfolding of a more decent society.

It seems, at least hypothetically, that human nature "wants" to be good. And that such nature is only bad when the individual, during development, experiences varieties of depredations such as isolation, or serious emotional deprivation, all the way to abandonment (physical as well as emotional), and abuse. In such cases, one's wishes and impulses are not at all cohered and/or controlled so that adaptive socialization becomes contaminated and essentially arrested. In the absence of proper parenting, or even in the absence of any parenting, the chief emotions associated with the impulses of personality will be those that sample the aggression dimension: at the less intense range, annoyance and irritability; at the middle range, anger and indignation; and, at the greater intensity—rage, fury, and wrath. The point is that when one's wishes are almost never addressed, when one is almost never understood, and when one is unloved and uncared for, then the hard-core psychological result will be the continual expression of aggression, anger, and rage, and any variation of what becomes unrelenting claims of injustice. And none of it has anything at all to do with an evil gene. This idea of an evil gene or a jealousy gene is also contraindicated by Confer et al. (2010) in a discussion of adaptation and evolutionary psychology.

What this means is that even though "goodness" is apparently highly selected in evolution, nevertheless, the person still has the potential to be negatively inclined ("bad") because of the absence of necessary environmental stimuli that trigger genetic markers to produce the epigenetic natural result of "goodness." And such contamination constitutes the recipe for what is usually discussed as "bad behavior" leading some to believe that an evil gene in fact, exists. The question then can be asked as to whether a God gene exists. And the answer is that such a so-called God gene probably goes by another name. And this other conception representing a God gene (in the genetic makeup of the individual) can be referred to as "survival instinct."

Because of our survival instinct born of existential fragility (in addition to the apprehension and fear that people have of the "end"), a common solution is to seek emotional balance, and safety, and because such things are never easy to secure and rather always subject to unforeseen circumstance, what is generated instead is what we are referring to as ontological anxiety. It is an existential tension about keeping the physical corporeal self whole, and the emotional self, safe—especially in the face of an unsafe and clearly unfair world.

Such prospects leading to physical and emotional safety as well as overall peace of mind require an empowerment—one that can be relied upon. Such empowerment is, of course, the belief in an all powerful and in most cases, forgiving God. For so-called lower forms of life this existential sense of insecurity and the corresponding instinct to protect against the presence of predatory intensions relentlessly lurking in the environment prompts the animal to utilize its tail (among other anatomical and sensory organs) as the eye in the back of the head—as anticipatory protection. In higher primates, identifiable ritual may share the analogous homologous function of the tail because ritual will assure a cohesive and relatively peaceful society with good adaptational possibilities, as well as reasonably ensuring a protective perimeter, a more secure circumference of the group.

With Homo sapiens, it seems that belief in God serves the same purpose. Interestingly, nonhuman animals will usually concern themselves with the vicissitudes of survival but minus nefarious wishes that human beings exhibit, unless a so-called nefarious wish increases advantage. But of course, other than predatory hunger-seeking targets or instinctive species to species antagonism, nonhuman animals do not become serial killers. In humans, such nefarious wishes and associated behavior that people demonstrate are acted out in what is defined as evil behavior, and this sort of so-called evil behavior is not in the least, and strictly speaking, not even at all related to objective normal survival needs. Rather, such skewed and abnormal behavior is all designed to also satisfy survival wishes, but of a perverse nature—whether or not in the presence of any type of God. As stated, this kind of delinquent behavior can be attributed to failed epigenetic connections; that is, environmental stimuli did not calibrate well with genetic givens.

And here is the logical paradox and psychological conundrum: People can and do participate in nefarious acts that have nothing whatsoever to do with survival, while at the same time such people even can be quite devout and very strongly believe in God. A prime example arguably might be the most destructive spy/mole in the US history—the FBI high ranking agent, Robert Hanson. The question is: How can that happen?

Which Are the More Powerful, Psychological Mechanisms, or God?

The question of which is the more powerful, psychological mechanisms, or God (meaning any definition of an objectified God or one defined by man), ultimately has relevance also to alternate propositions or questions. These are

1. Did God create man in His own image?
2. Did man create God in *his* own image?

Let us begin to examine these alternate propositions by looking at the case of Robert Hanson who is considered by many to be the person who perpetrated the worst intelligence disaster in American history.

Hanson was an FBI agent, who for over a 20 year period, used his insider knowledge to transfer highly classified documents to the Soviets—doing it for financial gain and because he was angry about not being sufficiently recognized for his ostensible talent and presumed value within the FBI. His clandestine transfer of information caused a series of infamous murders of American "assets"—counterespionage agents stationed abroad. He was finally discovered and being spared the death penalty, was given a life sentence. The staggering fact was that Hanson was a devout parishioner of the highly conservative Catholic organization, Opus Dei, and no matter the extreme points of view of Opus Dei, nevertheless this organization is not known for any viewpoint condoning serial killing.

The question arises of how a God-fearing conservative Catholic could at the same time be a person who would bring harm to others. Psychologically this can be explained by the idea of "compartmentalization" wherein two opposing viewpoints can be contained in one person, that is, the clean-cut All-American, God-fearing Christian, Robert Hanson, and simultaneously Robert Hanson, FBI spy/mole responsible for the deaths of many people, who compromised his country, acquiring a reasonable degree of wealth because of it—and then went to church!

And thereby also exists the explanation for that other creature of horror, the BTK serial killer, Dennis Rader, who was for 30 years a member of the Christ Lutheran Church, serving as President of its Congregational Council. In one compartment of his psyche, Rader took pleasure in strangling women to death, while in the other compartment, and simultaneously, he participated in sustained devotional supplication at his church.

Several questions can be posed in light of these paradoxical details. For example, is the psychological defense mechanism of compartmentalization (implying also the presence of other accompanying constituent personality defense mechanisms such as repression, regression, splitting, and denial) more powerful than the influence of God? Plain and simple, which is more powerful? It seems that Hanson and Rader, as proclaimed God-fearing men were completely compelled by a perverse psyche and not by the influence of God. In their cases therefore, psychological mechanisms were more powerful than God's influence. In other words, due to incessant and tyrannical inner impulses, these men were not amenable to God's influence.

Second, can we assume that the early developmental history of each of these men was characterized by experiences of deprivation, emotional privation, and absence of "goodness," and/or safety? And, third, is it possible to say (in a counterintuitive sense) that doing the wrong thing was exciting and valued because it actually provided comfort by giving each of these individuals a sense of achievement as well as the triumph of a comeuppance toward specific others who did them wrong—symbolic though it all may have been?

Therefore which is a more powerful, psychological mechanisms, or God? If God made man in His image, then God should be more powerful. However, it can be seen that in these cases psychological mechanisms trumped the so-called power of God so that it seems rather that it was man who made God in *his* image—a result of the psychological mechanism of projection; that is, projecting onto another qualities from your own wishes that for all intents and purposes usurp the personality.

An additional question becomes: What was it that caused these men (Hanson, Rader) to need the comfort, or excitement, or feeling of triumph leading to their nefarious activities, while simultaneously seriously worshipping God? It could just be that this kind of despicable behavior required, for these individuals, a furtive art. For such individuals, a church involvement coexisting with pernicious behavior becomes a form of expurgation of wrongdoing. Along with a need for the expurgation or sanitization of evil deeds exists the final touch of art related to such heinous behavior—meaning the reason(s) for the evil deeds which perhaps exist as unconscious motives. These treacherous and murderous acts become a final solipsistic curtain call—in church no less—for a job not only well done but artfully crafted with the savage and unspeakable scene left so that its creator remains anonymous. Therefore the art of it all is not only simply artful but also smarter—much smarter than us all. The evil, foul, malevolent, and depraved behavior which such individuals generated is almost certainly considered by such miscreants as choreography.

Thus, here we see a countervailing infusion of predilection; that is, we see a paradox of the coexistence of evildoing and worship of God. Such countervailing inclinations invoke inquiry into what such people who are pious supplicants (engaged also with serial killing) understand to be the type of God they count on. Of course this becomes a larger inquiry into the entire taxonomy of the classification of God with respect to God's nature; that is, what is God like? Is God powerful or not? Does God want to be powerful? Is God as powerful as a person? Does God care about people or not? Is God only interested in good communion? Is it an intervening God, a non-intervening or impartial God, or is it an irrelevant God? And further, is it an inexistent God? And even further, did God create man in His image, or did man create God in *his* image? And then actually finally, is God beyond knowing?

In the following chapter, these issues of identifying implied prevailing and characteristic approaches to understanding God, and the possible nature of God, shall be further examined.



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