

The Limited Mind: Psychology as a Means to Understanding Conflict. Why Fear Is Driving Humanity...

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Global Research, July 09, 2019

Theme: [History](#)

I have previously written many articles describing one or more aspects of the dysfunctional nature of the typical human mind, together with an explanation of how this came about and what we can do about it. See, for example, many of the articles republished in [‘Key Articles’](#) and the source documents [‘Why Violence?’](#) and [‘Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice’](#).

I have also explained that it is this dysfunctional psychological foundation that generated the behaviors, as well as the political, economic, legal and social institutions (such as capitalism), that are driving the multifaceted and existential crisis in which humanity now finds itself.

Moreover, on that basis, my own focus has significantly evolved from the research and nonviolent activism that occupied me for several decades to now include an ongoing effort to have this psychological dysfunctionality addressed as a central feature of our efforts to understand and transform dysfunctional political, economic, legal and social institutions as well as to understand and end war (including the threat of nuclear war), the environmental crisis (including the climate catastrophe) and all other ongoing conflicts that bedevil humanity.

You may believe that psychology is unimportant to your understanding of conflict or that it is the realm of specialists but, in fact, it is crucial to any deeper and complete understanding of the origin and unfolding of our crisis and it is far from complicated simply because any psychological dysfunctionality can be explained in straightforward language which is readily understood by most people. For a sample, try [‘The Disintegrated Mind: The Greatest Threat to Human Survival on Earth’](#).

But because only the rarest psychologist and psychiatrist understands human psychology – as I have explained in [‘Defeating the Violence of Psychiatry’](#) – most of the literature on psychology and psychiatry is virtually incomprehensible, not to mention inaccurate. This lack of understanding has four immediate and disastrous outcomes.

First, it leads to groups of psychological symptoms being linked together and then given an arbitrary label (so that the fields of psychology/psychiatry can sound as if they know what they are talking about while excluding those who do not comprehend their jargon).

Second, it provides cover for the pharmaceutical industry to profit massively from the manufacture and sale of drugs that theoretically suppress key symptoms of, rather than cure, the psychological dysfunction that has been ‘diagnosed’.

Third, it precludes accurate diagnosis and treatment of any dysfunction: obviously, if a problem is not understood it cannot be responded to powerfully so that the issue is resolved. (Of course, it is more profitable for practitioners and the pharmaceutical industry if any dysfunction is not resolved but simply requires ongoing – that is, endless – ‘therapy’/drugs.)

Fourth and most fundamentally of all, it limits the domain of what is considered psychological dysfunctionality to those with ‘identifiable’ mental illnesses. But psychological dysfunctionality goes well beyond those considered to have a mental illness and is simply an outcome of the fact that mental health, like physical health, has many dimensions that require appropriate attention for the human organism to function optimally.

So, beyond the many examples I have offered previously in the articles I cited above (and others not cited but also available on the [‘Feelings First’](#) website), I would now like to describe further common examples of psychological dysfunctionality that are impeding both activists and those they are trying to mobilize in the effort to save Earth’s biosphere and avert human extinction, particularly given the timeframe in which this must now happen. See [‘Human Extinction by 2026? A Last Ditch Strategy to Fight for Human Survival’](#).

As a result of the ‘socialization’ (more accurately labeled ‘terrorization’) to which all children are subjected throughout their childhood and adolescence (which involves inflicting unending ‘visible’, ‘invisible’ and ‘utterly invisible’ violence on them during these periods) – see [‘Why Violence?’](#) – the typical young human being obediently (or, often enough, unconsciously) acquires the set of attitudes, beliefs and values (as well as the consequent behaviors) that are approved by the significant adults (and predominant institutions) in their life. These attitudes, beliefs and values, however, are often so deeply entrenched by the (unconscious) fear that holds them in place that they are never subjected to serious scrutiny by the individual: whether functional or otherwise, they are accepted without question and, over time, acquire the status of ‘incontrovertible fact’ (as the individual perceives them).

The most obvious (and highly negative) consequence of being terrorized into accepting the attitudes, beliefs and values of the significant adults (and predominant institutions) around them is that the capacities to analyze a problem or conflict (often including its roots in the nature of their society), to seek out relevant (and perhaps complex) evidence to understand the issues arising from it, to plan a strategy so that underlying drivers of the problem or conflict are addressed in-depth and to then behave strategically (often in concert with others) to achieve this outcome are simply never developed beyond the most superficial levels (sufficient, say, for a socially approved career, whether trade or professional).

As a result, the typical human being is simply going through the routine of ‘growing up’ (which also critically involves being further terrorized into becoming a submissive citizen and worker/soldier at school for a decade or more: see [‘Do We Want School or Education?’](#)), choosing post-secondary education and/or an approved job doing what someone else tells you, and then doing that job (or an equivalent) for decades (usually having a partner and children in the process and perhaps some hobby as well).

Fundamentally, humans are terrorized into taking on the ‘socially-constructed delusional identity’ that their society imposes on them and then calling it ‘me’. Their personal life journey is now so utterly obliterated from their awareness that the idea of seeking out their own unique destiny never even occurs to them. Of course, some people (in industrialized

societies at least) are compensated for their sacrifice: wages, entertainment, travel and other trinkets. But, for most, these trinkets are given in sparing quantities and for many others around the world (in deliberately 'underdeveloped' countries), not at all.

Terrorized into believing that this is all that life has to offer, only the rarest individual aspires to more. Endless consumption of goods and services (no matter the quality, beauty or functionality) – see [‘Love Denied: The Psychology of Materialism, Violence and War’](#) – at the expense of the Earth, becomes the reason for living. Because life itself no longer has meaning.

So here we are, a human population that is so devoid of self and planetary awareness that we are on the brink of precipitating our own extinction. Do you really believe that this is where we would be if we were all psychologically functional? Manipulated and controlled by an unaccountable global elite that is utterly insane – see [‘The Global Elite is Insane Revisited’](#) – using its many agents, including governments, to easily deceive us into consuming ever more in pursuit of capitalism’s ‘God’ – endless economic growth (that is, corporate profit, power and privilege) – the bulk of the human population submissively unaware (except of the latest scandal or sports result) and most activists (who purport to be trying to do something about the perilous state of the world) incapable of thinking, planning and acting strategically to struggle for outcomes that are so desperately needed. See, for example, [‘Why Activists Fail’](#).

So what can we do?

Well, given that the enormous psychological dysfunctionality of most humans is the primary driver of our accelerating rush to extinction – again, see [‘Human Extinction by 2026? A Last Ditch Strategy to Fight for Human Survival’](#) – I encourage you to seriously consider incorporating strategies to address this dysfunctionality into any effort you make to improve our world.

For most people, this will include starting with yourself. See [‘Putting Feelings First’](#).

For virtually all adults, it will include reviewing your relationship with children and, ideally, making [‘My Promise to Children’](#). Critically, this will include learning the skill of nisteling. See [‘Nisteling: The Art of Deep Listening’](#).

For those who feel psychologically capable, consider campaigning strategically to achieve the outcomes we need. See [Nonviolent Campaign Strategy](#) or [Nonviolent Defense/Liberation Strategy](#). The global elite is deeply entrenched – fighting its wars, exploiting people, destroying the biosphere, invading/occupying resource-rich countries – and not about to give way without a concerted effort by many of us campaigning strategically on several key fronts.

If you recognize the pervasiveness of the fear-driven violence in our world, consider joining the global network of people resisting it by signing the online pledge of [‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’](#).

But if you do nothing else while understanding the simple point that Earth’s biosphere cannot sustain a human population of this magnitude of whom more than half endlessly over-consume, then consider accelerated participation in the strategy outlined in [‘The Flame Tree Project to Save Life on Earth’](#).

Or, if this feels too complicated, consider committing to:

The Earth Pledge

Out of love for the Earth and all of its creatures, and my respect for their needs, from this day onwards I pledge that:

- 1. I will listen deeply to children(see explanation above)*
- 2. I will not travel by plane*
- 3. I will not travel by car*
- 4. I will not eat meat and fish*
- 5. I will only eat organically/biodynamically grown food*
- 6. I will minimize the amount of fresh water I use, including by minimizing my ownership and use of electronic devices*
- 7. I will not buy rainforest timber*
- 8. I will not buy or use single-use plastic, such as bags, bottles, containers, cups and straws*
- 9. I will not use banks, superannuation (pension) funds or insurance companies that provide any service to corporations involved in fossil fuels, nuclear power and/or weapons*
- 10. I will not accept employment from, or invest in, any organization that supports or participates in the exploitation of fellow human beings or profits from killing and/or destruction of the biosphere*
- 11. I will not get news from the corporate media (mainstream newspapers, television, radio, Google, Facebook, Twitter...)*
- 12. I will make the effort to learn a skill, such as food gardening or sewing, that makes me more self-reliant*
- 13. I will gently encourage my family and friends to consider signing this pledge.*

Conclusion

There is a great deal wrong with our world, which continues to get worse every day. And, as should be obvious from my argument above, if we as a species do not start to remove the (largely unconscious) fear that limits our minds and governs our behavior, we will continue contributing to this predicament rather than resolving it.

I am well aware that this point is not where the typical individual wants to start and that is assuming the point is even understood. After all, because most fear is unconscious, it is easy for people to fail to identify their own dysfunctional behavior (or to rationalize it by believing in the 'importance' of what they do). So while you may like to believe that we do not have to 'start' with this point, collectively speaking, we cannot ignore it either, if human survival is our aim.

The key issue is that for our strategy to mobilize people in this great struggle for survival to be effective, we must also be mobilizing parents, teachers, religious leaders and other adults to reconsider and profoundly revise their relationship with children. This is because every child who is not dysfunctionalized becomes a powerful agent for change. If we do not do this, we will continue to undermine the overall struggle, even if we precipitate some interim victories along the way.

My own preoccupation is ending violence, averting human extinction and building anew and

sustainably our relationships with the Earth and each other. What about you?

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