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The Ape of Sorrows

Excerpt 1

... one key question which has rarely been seriously broached, namely what *is* human? We can't say that he is just another primate because he isn't. But his differences don't lie in matters of eye socket and frontal lobe. The fact is that his independent thinking doesn't stick out like his nose (as compared with a gorilla's). Least of all can you find it in a fossil. So the whole bone-yard yardstick of trying to find humans in fossils is out of true. If bones could talk, of course, it would be different, because language indicates the mode and intensity of the thought. But language is like perceiving, it's something bones don't do. And the human primate was and is different from other primates *solely in his manner of perceiving*.

Man's frontal-lobe system and his tongue are highly developed. His *gyrus supramarginalis* (meaning "a fold above the edge") in the left inferior temporal lobe of the brain is unique, being connected with *speech and perception*, and this sharply differentiates him from the lemur, the gibbon and the gorilla. But this is only because of *the specific manner in which he has used his mind*. And the only way we can possibly trace his existence in the past is by asking questions about how he used his mind, and finding out how such a mind could have come about, and, since that mind is a strange and haunted one, what strange and haunting circumstances made it

Excerpt 2

Of all the words in modern vocabularies one dominates and that is enemy. I am going to adapt something Freud said about phobia: the wonder isn't that we are enemy-fixated but that we are ever anything else!

The enemy is the one who always stands in our light. Get him out of the way and the light shines on us. Actually, we invent him. After all, no creature is born with this name. But fiction or no fiction we must get rid of him in order to see the light.

The enemy idea was brought to sophistication in medieval speculations about the devil (diabolos, in Greek) — that principal one, Satan (from the Hebrew, meaning enemy), Beelzebub (Hebrew for the fallen god of the flies) and all kinds of subsidiary demons (daemon, Greek, meaning half-god) and fallen angels who peeped out of the habitat in animal form and would devour you without so much as a thank you. The enemy was the infidel, the heretic, the pagan, the sinner, the witch, even a pot of ripe plums and your lust for them. Good things could become enemies. Cleverness was a snare of pride. Charity was changeable for vanity. Ardor in prayer could address itself equally to Old Nick, who was all too pleased to satisfy self-seeking penitents.

Life was based on the enemy. The enemy kept you from becoming bent. Thus it was that killing became essential for the uncovering of the light. In crusades, persecutions, witch burnings, the razings of heresy-infected villages the enemy was dealt a series of Last Blows which would secure the true, clean dispensation everyone was waiting for. But the offending victim always popped up again even from the headless, the charred, the quartered, the disembowelled, the racked-to-death---just as he does from the radiated, the bombarded, the fire-bombed today.

If enemy hovers so ubiquitously in the human mind, is so much at the edge of every half-thought it is because it means 'that which is preventing me from getting forward'. So enmity can't be switched off. You must be prepared for it not only in the wars that make your cities shudder and fall and necessitate less formal funerals than are normal (bulldoze them into holes) but when arms have been laid down and the soldiers gone home. Then the trivial murders begin — the group rapes, the random atrocities, the domestic outrages. The enemy is now parents, males, females, lesbians, homosexuals, whites, blacks, Muslims,

Jews, Christians, children, orientals, westerners, there being no category of human, no thought, beyond the haunted brain's capacity to demonize. It is a double process. The self which demonizes another into enemy has already turned itself into that enemy's victim, which adds to the smart, then the smart adds to the anger, and fist-fights, strangulations, the cutting of throats begin to crowd the imagination, though the enemy may be a neighbor tranquilly cooking soup and unaware of any enmity whatever.

Nearly all cries for freedom are for freedom from brain ghosts, those persistent ones which don't walk away when they're dead.

If the Jews and Bolsheviks and gypsies didn't look like fellow humans to the guards of the death camps it was because their perception of them already contained the Final Solution, namely saw them as the last obstacle. Just a little effort to overcome the first squeamishness was necessary, in the knowledge that after this gas chambers would no longer have to figure in life.

I mention the victims of the Final Solution again not because they have been the only enemy in history but because their case is at the very hub of human dementia.