

Human Beings: The Omnicidal Species. There is Nothing They Won't Kill

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Human beings comprise an omnicidal species. Apparently there is nothing they won't kill. Yet some claim to value life and say that all lives matter. But if all lives matter, Palestinian lives matter, Syrian lives matter, Iraqi lives matter, Afghan lives matter, Libyan lives matter. If all lives matter, Osama bin Laden's life mattered. So did Al Awlaki's and his fifteen year old son's. So did Gaddafi's and the lives of every member of the armed forces who died on a Middle Eastern battlefield, including the Americans who died there. But they are dead now, gone forever, and George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and all the neoconservatives who advocated going to war in Iraq to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring nonexistent weapons of mass destruction murdered them as surely as Dr. Palmer murdered Cecil the lion.

A few weeks ago, my wife came in from the back yard yelling, "John, John, a snake. There's a snake in the back yard. Get something to kill it. Kill it."

I was in no mood to do any killing and didn't have anything handy to kill it with anyhow so I calmly went outside to have a look around. Sure enough, there it was. A beautiful, completely benign, about 18 inches long, orange and black, western ribbon snake sunning itself.

Not only was there no reason to kill it, there was no reason to even disturb it. Yet in the interests of domestic tranquility, a little nudging induced it to slither into some underbrush and disappear. But my wife had really wanted it dead even though she's a kind compassionate person who generally loves animals. She contributes to local animal shelters and is always horrified when she hears stories of animal cruelty. Neither she nor anyone else I know would have considered killing that snake animal cruelty. Why? Was it because of the story they all were told when they were young about Eve's tryst with a serpent in the Garden of Eden or because of a wild imagination based on ignorance of what snakes might be capable of doing like swallowing the whole house, for instance? I don't know.

A few days later I read about a hiker's being mauled by a bear in Yellowstone. A sow was spotted and although no one had witnessed the mauling, the assumption was made that she was the mauled. She was captured and put down. Why? For having offended human sensibilities? She may not even have been guilty, and no other bear in the park could have been prevented from mauling anyone because of her death. Her killing had no purpose whatsoever. It was purely gratuitous, an act of vengeance.

Then the news of Dr. Palmer's killing of Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe hit the air. Palmer, an exceedingly rich American wanted the pleasure of killing a lion so he could hang its head on a wall. He wanted a trophy! He claims to have done no wrong but he tried to hide the killing.

Cecil's collar was hidden in a tree before his head was removed for mounting. It was all perfectly innocent, of course. Except for Cecil's special status, being a lion with a name and a collar, Dr. Palmer, the lion slayer, would have been delighted with the kill. I suspect a celebration would have been in order.

Of course, a vast difference exists between people like my wife and Dr. Palmer. My wife would be horrified at the thought of mounting even a beautiful dead snake on the wall of her living room, but Dr. Palmer would be delighted with it. Yet Dr. Palmers are not rare. In my neighborhood, a barber has a shop adorned with mounted fish all of which he has gleefully murdered. They were beautiful fish. Why would anyone want them dead? And Sarah Palin posted a video of her shooting a superb elk to demonstrate how firm she would be dealing with the Russians had he been elected to the office of Vice President. What shooting a clueless elk standing still in a clearing on a hill says about how aware Russians armed, hidden, and willing to shoot back would react eludes me.

When Osama Bin Laden was assassinated by navy seals, the President and his advisors, keeping track of the event electronically, are said to have cheered when the fatal shot was fired. But is there any essential difference between their glee and Dr. Palmer's when he killed Cecil? I don't know. Readers can judge for themselves. What kind of human being is cheered by a killing? Perhaps a very normal one.

Maybe a psychological malady exists that describes such people—Dr. Palmer, the barber, and all the President's men. Do they all suffer from some gross inadequacy that causes them to over compensate by killing animals that pose no danger to them? If there is one, psychologists certainly don't emphasize it. Are normal people natural killers and are the healers deranged? Is the Grim Reaper a member of this species? Is there anything human beings won't find a way to kill?

Think about it? Life is an oxymoronic activity. Some living things must kill other living things to endure. A mathematician would recognize that as a *reductio ad absurdum*, an absurdity that cannot be sustained. But few human beings are mathematicians. Some killing may have to be done to subsist, but gratuitous killing does not.

People sought ways to kill bacteria that are deadly. Antibiotics were discovered. A good and necessary thing. But immediately people began feeding antibiotics to chickens, cows, horses, none of whom exhibited any signs of being infected. Whether bacteria were benign or malign made no difference. People were going to kill them. And ways of killing other things have been developed too. There are herbicides, fungicides, pesticides, insecticides, every kind of cide. There are bullets, bombs, missiles, hooks, snares, traps, spears, and nets to kill animals and sea life of all kinds. People also kill each other and even themselves. Children kill parents, parents kill children, neighbors kill each other and strangers, strangers kill strangers. Is there anything human beings won't kill?

Apparently not. Scripture exists that describes the killing of even God. Worse, humans glorify His murder by hanging amulets of an effigy of the God hanging from a cross around their necks. Is this essentially different from hanging the head of an animal on a wall? Why do these human beings glorify the murder of God rather than His birth or resurrection? What does the fascination with death consist of? Human beings seem to enjoy and be entertained by it. (Bill Nye the science guy who searches for life forms in the sky—why? Do you want to kill them?)

Since long before motion pictures and television, a literary genre called the murder mystery has entertained people. These people say they enjoy solving the conundrums. But writers can concoct similar conundrums about things other than killing. But no robbery mysteries exist. No who started the nasty rumor mysteries exist either. The killing seems to be a necessary ingredient of the story. Why this fascination with death? Why are people so quick to turn to killing?

Yet despite this ubiquitous killing, a group exists that calls itself pro life. It seeks to stop the aborting of fertilized human fetuses but gives no evidence of any concern about the killing that goes on around them every day. These people claim to value life. Mike Huckabee, in reacting to the Black Lives Matter movement has said “white lives matter; all lives matter” but he doesn’t mean it and neither does anyone else in the pro life movement. They don’t seem to understand that if all lives matter, Palestinian lives matter, Syrian lives matter,

Iraqi lives matter, Afghan lives matter, Libyan lives matter. If all lives matter, Osama bin Laden’s life mattered. So did Al Awlaki’s and his fifteen year old son’s. So did Gaddafi’s and the lives of every member of the armed forces who died on a Middle Eastern battlefield, including the Americans who died there. But they are dead now, gone forever, and George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and all the neoconservatives who advocated going to war in Iraq to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring nonexistent weapons of mass destruction murdered them as surely as Dr. Palmer murdered Cecil. They cannot avoid the guilt.

No person express how much s/he values life by trying to save the nonexistent lives of the unborn but by how the living are treated. The living are not being treated well when the homeless go unsheltered, the hungry go unfed, and the sick go untreated which may explain why those interred in cemeteries are commonly described as being in a better place. What a bitter judgment that expression is on the quality of the human condition. We all ought to be ashamed!

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