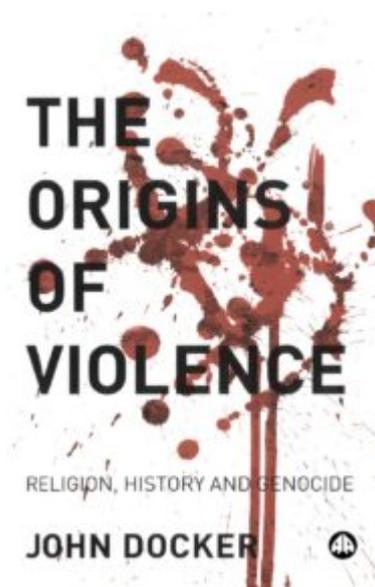


THE GENOCIDAL SPECIES: BOOK REVIEW OF “THE ORIGINS OF VIOLENCE” BY JOHN DOCKER

“We are nasty, cunning and indeed dangerous predators. We seek to conquer and dominate everything, even the mind.”

(Restoring The Mind, 2008)

I am feeling reluctant to subscribe to the idea that the history of humanity is the history of violence. In my view, the glass is half full. As social beings, we are compassionate, altruistic and are resiliently benevolent, not only towards fellow beings but also towards other species. This, however, does not mean the human species is not the most deceptive, cunning and ruthless genocidal killers. We have the most powerful brain amongst all species and we are by far the most superior of all species in our humaneness and in our genocidal behaviours.



History shows that genocide and tyranny have always been an indispensable building block of all major empires. Despite their claims to the contrary, empires become genocidal as soon as they start on the path of colonisation. Genocide can be interpreted as a process of removal of the population and colonisation of the area by the oppressor's own nationals. Maybe, this is the purpose of wars, to uproot people? According to John Docker, the author of *The Origins of Violence, Religion, History and Genocide* (Pluto Press, 2008), 'genocide', derives from the Greek word *genos* (tribe, race) and Latin *cide* (as in tyrannised, homicide, fratricide).

Genocide, Docker says, has "two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor." This is what happened in Australian and North American lands. The profound difference between the colonised and colonisers could not be more transparent than in the apartheid state of South Africa. Now we are witnessing similar genocide in action on television screens "the never-ending cruelty of Israel's oppression of the Palestinians." Ilan Pappé once wrote that "the Israelis, seek always to establish a 'metaphorical palimpsest': 'the erasure of the history of one people in order to write that of another people's over it'."

What is genocide?

Genocide, Docker writes involves "a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of life of a group. Such actions involve considerations that are cultural, political, social, legal, intellectual, spiritual, economic, biological, physiological, religious, psychological and moral. Such actions involve considerations of health, food and nourishment, of family life and care of children, and of birth as well as death. Such actions involve consideration of the honour and dignity of

peoples.”

The oppressed are usually either killed or put in jails, for long periods without trial, especially those who resist the colonisation. In Australia, there was policy to take away the children from the aborigines and use them as slaves, disguise as civilising the natives; in other cases “*taking away continuing opportunities of procreation.*” The fate of the Indians in the Americas was not much different.

Doing God’s work

In my 2007 article, I argued that “*we have an innate tendency for building empires, magnificent, powerful and bigger empires. An empire is paramount to human life.*” Furthermore, that “*an empire represents our inner desire for the ideal self. Whatever we want to achieve within us, we also wish to achieve in the outer world; an empire is nothing more than a mirror image of the endeavour for self-actualization in the outer world.*” Docker highlighted a different perspective, a darker view, the problem he believes “*building an empire involves expropriating other people’s territory and enriching yourself at their expense. Aggressive generals are held to be the embodiment of valour and excellence. Teachers of philosophy give the cloak of tradition and authority to folly and crime.* (Philus in Cicero, *The Republic*, Book Three).”

Historically speaking colonisers have always seen themselves as history’s true heirs, and hence focused on superseding. The USA is the largest empire in the history of mankind, built on land that originally belonged to the native Indians using the slaves from Africa. As for the white colonial settlers, like the empire builders before them, they saw themselves as “the chosen people” doing God’s work. Docker points out that this myth of “chosen people” is a recurring theme in history. The

white settlers had no remorse whatsoever about the culling of the heathens (natives), whether they be Aborigines in Australia or Indians in the Americas or even the Africans.

The author points out that the *“international law has been, and in some respects still is, conceived and continuously refined not to protect the colonized from conquest or colonization or empire or war but rather to regulate conquest and colonization and war amongst the powerful nations at any one time.”*

Ancient Europeans, such as the Athenians and Romans also saw themselves as superior from those over whom they ruled as colonisers. Bible too tells stories of the chosen people. It seems every rising power has to inject this false belief in their subjects for some reason, that they are the chosen people and are blessed by God or the gods. However, as Docker explains *“the view of oneself as chosen is always precarious, because chosenness may be claimed by another group, looking to other gods. It may be felt that people are only chosen for a while, that they may fall into divine disfavour, and God or the gods may elect another people to be sanctioned as chosen. In world history, there is constant competition amongst groups to be chosen and be known as chosen.”*

In modern times, we have the [Zionist](#) Israelis claiming to be the chosen people. Docker is unconvinced and does not shy away from telling the harsh truth. In his view:

“The Zionists, who created the modern state of Israel in 1948 and who since that time have dominated Jewish organizations and community thinking across the globe, did not take away from the Holocaust a historical lesson that different

peoples should live in amity, share a polity and learn from each other, be cosmopolitan and international. Nor did they become interested in nonviolence, as in Gandhi or, in Jewish tradition, Josephus. They did not look back to Moorish Spain, to the living together in the one land of Jews, Muslims and Christians, as an inspiring example of what a society could ideally be. To the contrary, the Zionists have kept on working towards achieving a European nationalist and settler-colonial ideal that they had conceived in the 1890s: they have kept on working towards genocide of the Palestinians, to subjugate, reduce, displace, expel and kill them whenever and wherever within Palestine-Israel they can, in order to replace them with their own colonial settlements and exclusive society. They refuse to the indigenous of Palestine, the Palestinians and Sephardim and Oriental Jews, equality, dignity, sharing, interaction, mutual respect. The Zionists, since the 1890s, have seen themselves as European culture-bringers, before whom the rights of the indigenous peoples of Palestine are of no account."

One would argue that the occupation has slowly eroded the humanity of the Zionist oppressors. This means that there is a price to pay for building empires. The price is the health of the soul. Socrates the famous Greek philosopher warned against the corruption of the soul. For when the soul becomes corrupted, we lose the sense of right and wrong; justice becomes just an empty and meaningless word, especially when it comes to the oppressed then it is defenestrated altogether.

The author prudently affirms that the main danger to human life comes from other humans. *"The same peoples can be alternately barbarous and civilized in their attitudes and actions; so-called ordinary or normal people, commit genocide and massacres."* This means that violence is part of human life, *"rather than violence being abnormal, it is an intrinsic*

characteristic of human activity."

In Docker's view, Gandhian thought provides hope for the world. I disagree with his conclusion; I feel it is in our nature to be violent, yet at the same time, we are inherently merciful and humane. We utilise politics to divide us and thereafter unleashing fury and savagery as if our humaneness is only skin deep. Once all is over and done with, we return to religion to unite us, heal us and protect us from our demons. Religion plays an important part in healing as we seek repentance after the madness has ceased. It is likely that one of the reasons for a high number of PTSD related suicides among western military veterans is secularism.

As Rumi says we are born of love. Our most dominating feature is love for life. The army is only violent during wartime. Our powerful brain pushes us to seek dominance over anything and everything. It is in our nature to compete and to challenge. Human life thrives on competition and challenges. However, there is one power that is more seductive to us than everything else; the power to be creative and to [restore the mind](#).