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## The Basis of the Nonkilling Belief\*

*A base da crença do não-matar*

**Resumo:** Este ensaio não é mais do que uma chamada a todos os humanos a implicarem-se ativamente na responsabilidade de proteger a vida humana em todas as ações, palavras e pensamentos. Não há mais alto apelo moral pois a moral, na sua definição fundamental, implica a vida e a sua proteção. Parece que na gestão das relações humanas pensamos e comportamo-nos de forma como se a moral fosse dependente da nossa habilidade de planejar e coreografar o perigoso comportamento assassino –talvez para matar a outrem ou para nos suicidarmos.

**Palavras-chave:** não-matar, vanidade, humildade, matança programada/coreografada.

**Abstract:** *This essay is nothing more than an appeal to human beings everywhere to take active responsibility to protect human life in all thoughts, words, and deeds. There is no higher moral calling because morality implicates life and the protection of life in its most fundamental definition. It seems that in the management of human affairs, we think and behave as though morality is dependent on our ability to plan and choreograph dangerous killing behavior – perhaps to outkill someone else or to purge ourselves from our own lives.*

**Keywords:** *Nonkilling, vanity, humility, programmed killing, choreographed killing.*

*Nonkilling philosophy is the notion of always acknowledging, accepting and supporting the need and the right of every human being to “be”, to exist, to live, reflected in all thoughts, words, and deeds.*

This nonkilling belief centers in the protection and promotion of human life in its fundamental state of being. Since there is a notion afoot in the world that organized, choreographed and programmed human killing achieves some worthwhile purpose, such as the promotion of life it-

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\* Prof. Glenn D. Paige, author of *Nonkilling Global Political Science* (2002) has been my great inspiration for this effort. The work would not have been possible without ideas that he and so many others had developed, often through great suffering. I am indebted to the wisdom of Prof. Bill Bhaneja, Senior Fellow, University of Ottawa in helping me to refine the ideas and thoughts communicated in this work.

self, of personhood, there is a driving force entailing danger to life that creates a conflict of existence. In this conflict of existence, the notion that human life is a disposable commodity torments the world.

It seems almost as if many human beings – whether or not they really like the idea, think about shedding human blood much as the natural phenomenon of shedding one’s skin every week and its replacement by new skin. We do not think much, if anything about it. Yet shedding human skin is a medically known and documented phenomenon. Nonkilling philosophy seeks to explore this notion of shedding human blood and attempt to alleviate its dangerous consequences to life. Nonkilling philosophy is a system or body of thought, stemming from the belief that human society can and should be relieved of the moral and intellectual shackles of the notion of killing as a natural, accepted state of our being.

#### THE KILLING CULTURE AND A LETHAL PARADIGM OF THOUGHT

Nonkilling belief recognizes the notion of killing as a natural and accepted state of our being and as a delivery system of human oppression and suffering where such oppression and suffering need not exist and should not exist. Such a notion expresses a futility in the core of being. This attitude of naturally degraded and destructive thought accepts oppression and deals in oppression. It is attitude and thought reflecting an unhealthy accommodation with evil and death as though moral decay, poisoning and pollution of life is the human lot and worse still, something to actively participate in and be an agent of.

This accommodation with destruction and death is a state of slavery, of bondage, oppression, and evil triumphant in its gross negativity. It is anti-life posing in a twisted way, as conduct promoting life. I intend to give the lie to that notion, to articulate thought that will influence a paradigm shift that will draw us away from the killing system of being as the human lot.

In a number of articles and essays that I have written from 2002 when I began actively writing my thoughts on nonkilling at *Anis-Online*<sup>1</sup>, I have sought to deal (perhaps better to say “struggled with) the contemporary problem of preventing or ameliorating the effects of lethal war.

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<sup>1</sup> *Anis Online* “is a journalistic art website in German, English, French and Arabic. Its web address is <<http://www.anis-online.de>>. Anis Hamadeh’s insights about Palestine/Israeli human rights issues conveyed to me the human desperation for relief from the oppressive state imposed by the killing paradigm that dominates human thinking about security problems.

I initially addressed the problem of preventing war between the United States and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq noting that the political arguments for and against the war tended to perpetuate, affirm and reaffirm the evil both sides claimed to be fighting against. The Administration argued it was attempting to eliminate a danger to life and the anti-war movement tended to argue for a solution that would allow Saddam Hussein, a long time oppressor of his own people, with a history of starting lethal wars, to remain in power, and thus save lives.

Both sides advocated what in reality was a deadly trade, U.S military and Iraqi deaths in a regime change transaction or a continuation Iraqi deaths from Saddam Hussein and possibly sanctions while international deaths would at least be deferred or perhaps never happen. At least it would not be deaths at the hands of the US military. One could see the pressure for war was so overwhelming that the demonstrations of millions of people could not prevent it. The just war and national security interest arguments on both sides were inadequate to address the problems that had been building in US relations with Iraq for many years. The argument was either containing Saddam or getting rid of him since 1991.

*The nonkilling paradigm shift is the overriding importance of protecting and securing human life without qualification or reservation of rights against life*

By combining the killing and the rumors of WMDs, the Bush Administration began to build its case for war. The anti-war movement tried to use the same paradigm to say that the circumstances were not appropriate for a killing military war. The problem with such a position is that the anti-war factions were in the same paradigm of thinking with the pro-war camp - and out of the circle of power in decision-making. The implied paradigm is that people could and would and should be program- killed under "appropriate circumstances". Where there is a will, there indeed may be a way to pull it off. The paradigm shift is the notion that human safety is so paramount in human thinking that the world community combines to isolate, minimize and prevent any kind of programmed killing on any level using creative human solutions and all reasonable necessary pressures.

*The killing culture is an agency of evil thriving on Man's disillusionment with Man*

It is not that human beings who engage in and support killing activities are evil or good. People are not good or bad people. People are simply living out their lives, behaving in peaceful and dangerous ways. Our attitude

of accepting killing hides behind the fundamental assumption that a living human being is the source of human problems when the behavior is really the behavior of agents and agencies of something else –deadly evil- in a process that leads to killing –nothing more. Thus, it is attitudes that drive deception – in which people are deceived into behaving in ways that are dangerous to themselves and dangerous to others. This conduct and the attitudes that drive this conduct are what require the urgent attention of human societies and individual human beings.

Throughout life, human beings are changing and evolving in their bodies and in their behavior. Our activities throughout life manifest this characteristic of life. We change and adjust, sometimes effectively and efficiently, sometimes inefficiently, ineffectively. We either guard against danger or embrace it as we might embrace a lover. We are especially vulnerable in our lives, looking to ourselves and relying on and being satisfied or disappointed in ourselves and disappointed in others for the ups-and- downs in life.

#### VANITY VS. HUMILITY

We need to be acutely aware that there is a thin, hazy line between humility and vanity in human behavior. Humility implicates modesty and respectfulness, critical qualities in human survival. According to *Microsoft Encarta 2004 Dictionary*, it comes from the Latin *humilus* or lowly, without pretensions and *humus* (earth). The underlying idea is “close to the ground.” By contrast, the word *vanity* derives from the Latin word *vanus* meaning empty –empty of significance, futile, and worthless. It has come to signify excessive pride– perhaps a notion of exaggerated self-importance that leads to danger.

We should perhaps examine these two poles of attitude when we deal with the notion that human beings can or should or actually do adopt or support policies of programmed and choreographed killing of self and killing of others. Are we magnifying danger to ourselves and to others because we are deceived into empty, vacuous activities supporting our notion of ourselves as persons? Can we really honestly see ourselves as persons in modesty and respectfulness, and without pretensions in adopting and supporting programmed and choreographed killing activities?

How do we really know what side of the line we are standing on? How can we judge others, whatever our opinion of the appropriateness of their killing behavior, without endangering ourselves and endangering

others by inflating ourselves as we would a balloon, magnifying delusions of our own selves into the realm of vain self-importance?

The ultimate question is, from a nonkilling perspective, can, should, and how do we help ourselves and our fellow human beings to develop and maintain safe behaviors implying respectfulness and modesty in that realm of behavior we associate with humility.

If indeed the Bible says that the meek will inherit the earth, what is the heritage of vanity? This is the issue pointedly addressed in an English language translation of the Q'uran, Surah 47, verses 1 through 5 attached to this essay. These verses discuss the rules of war affecting behavior in combat urging combat against unbelievers with the aim of subduing instead of punishing the enemy. Punishment, should it exist, lays within the more than capable hands of Allah, in Allah's beneficence and mercifulness.

Because programmed and choreographed killing implies punishment, we should examine killing in the context of such lawful killing as capital punishment practice in human justice systems. In these "justice" systems, we draw a factual conclusion that a person is guilty of a crime and draw a further conclusion that we can punish this person by forcibly separating him from his mortal life, such as by firing squad, lethal injection, electric chair, burning at the stake, etc.

I remember once reading in *Microsoft Bookshelf* a long time ago that the Spanish inquisition sought to get around a moral problem of church sponsored killing regarding heretics. The Church reasoned that the heretic had taken away his own life by choosing heresy and the civil authorities were engaging in a mere formality in the execution - burning at the stake. Similarly, I once heard American conservative radio commentator Rush Limbaugh remark that Timothy McVeigh, the infamous Oklahoma City bomber of 1995 forfeited his own life by blowing up the Mura Federal building with a truck bomb killing 168 men, women and children. Yet, does this "reasoning" really work to enable us to maintain our personal and spiritual balance in humility - or does it give us an inflated notion of our own importance through our professed beliefs - religious, legal, political or otherwise?

When we burn and kill heretics, arsonists, murderers, traitors, individuals or entire ethnic groups on notions we have the right or the command from God or man or some law to do such things, we should reflect on how easy or how difficult is it to maintain any sense of stability in our own persons. This is because we may now implicitly or explicitly be taking up the heaviest of burdens, a burden of privilege, of right, of duty, with all the

importance and solemnity we may attach to it, somewhat like Rudyard Kipling's *White Man's Burden*, best shouldered by the ultimate creator.

Kipling's poem from *The Five Nations* set forth in *Microsoft Encarta* seems to capture the vanity with all the implied futility and emptiness implied in the effort to build up our persons on the backs of the frailties, mistakes, and imperfections we perceive in others:

Take up the White Man's burden  
Send forth the best ye breed  
Go, bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child.

We need to ascertain whether we are magnifying dangerous evil bound-up in notions of our own importance such that empty desolate vanity takes over and rules our lives.

#### CONCLUSION

For all these reasons, I urge serious reflection on the notion of programmed and choreographed killing and its utility as an institution, a cultural tool, or a psychological panacea for our problems in life. It is one thing for killing to result from dangerous activity. It is entirely another thing for people to support a danger to their own persons and others in the pursuit of vain notions of a personal being and the worth of such being.

If killing has any place at all in human affairs in this mortal world, it is in the notion of people that we take risks to our lives in the process of growing, changing and developing as people. There is no need to promote killing and related dangerous activities as ends in themselves so we may eliminate people. There is no legitimacy in empty and vain behavior. Rather it is an expression of futility, of wasted effort because our mortal lives do end at some point in this mortal world. Morality demands that we do not promote destruction and killing as a way of life.

We need to appreciate the fact that we do have lives and that those lives have meaning and purpose. Who are we to judge that their purpose is stillborn, that they have no value; that their value lies in our own ful-

fillment engineered through their destruction, such that we can terminate them prior to the exhaustion of their natural life spans?

There is no doubt that our choices can and do have deadly consequences. Yet we cannot presume that we control the consequences of our behavior. Therefore, our aim should be to guard against danger in the choices we make –in the way we treat ourselves and treat others, with humility, reverence and respect– a response to the needs of others that we ourselves have and need from others.

Nonkilling implies faith in and hope for every human life that exists, has existed in the past and will exist in the future. Nonkilling implies humility because it expresses respect for life in all its strength and in all its profound fragility in this mortal world. Nonkilling is down to earth because nonkilling supports the earth, supports life, and acts to prevent or ameliorate or remediate danger to life. It is a credible alternative to the futility of killing culture. Nonkilling is love personified.

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