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The Most Harmful Human Flaw Is Our Pack Mentality

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Most human violence and misery is attributable to a single flaw deep within the human species: group allegiance. We formulate “packs,” or groupings, and then elevate their respective importance with lies and self-praise, and then seek domination of — or even the complete elimination of — perceived rival packs.

The appeal of group loyalty and commitment to one’s own pack is the root cause of most evil that humans perpetuate on each other, if not on the world and its future altogether. These group identities exist in varied forms — with nation obeisance the most severe. Here, we create [extreme allegiance](#), and sometimes a hatred of a substantial number of our counterparts elsewhere as well. But nations are not the only such grouping.

First, consider religion. Most religions are not founded on notions of discrimination against (or cruel treatment of) alternative theories of creation. The originators of the Muslim faith, or those of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity or Judaism, did not advocate intolerance and cruelty to others — whatever the involved grouping. Jesus of Nazareth hardly focused on the denigration of other moral leaders, or on cruelty to anyone. Most leaders and founders of religions internationally were similarly open-minded about the name-labeling and allegiance of those they sought to teach. The categorical rejection of any grouping based on religious ties is hardly part of sacred practice.

A second human pack-grouping is race or ethnicity. There may be [differences](#) between the many ethnic variations of humanity, but DNA technology indicates they are not overwhelming. There is far more commonality among ethnic variations than there are differences. But human packism has taken a large toll in irrationally distinguishing among them. As with racism traditionally, the distinctions are most often the result of disadvantages suffered from financial or weaponry advantages of one group vis-à-vis others, with exaggerated and sometimes libelous labeling used to justify the victimization of others.

Third, consider [gangs](#). Stimulated by societal rejection, poverty and uncertain paths to success, such packs form and then engage in criminal and violent behavior — especially with regard to other gangs. These are groupings where “machismo” is transcendent and where those exercising cruelty to others can often involve people similar in age and ethnicity.

Fourth, sexual orientation. Some persons identify with the other gender or have an attraction to their own. Assuming these preferences are not imposed forcefully, why do we care? There is simply no reason. The nonsense about “woke” culture (whatever that means) underlines this manifestation of human evil. Certainly, such choices are best not imposed by others. They’re also best not mandated by the state — which has many more relevant duties to occupy time and resources.

Fifth are the nation-states mentioned above. This may be the most severe, irrational and damaging packism of all. There is nothing sacrosanct about the nature of national boundaries or traditions. But we appear to have a major [movement](#) to worship our own grouping and to denigrate others — and there indeed may be many features extant among them worthy of rejection or even of revulsion. But nations are packs based largely on the ability to enslave or kill other groupings. Indeed, historically, it can be invoked based on mere differences without significance, or upon ambitions to destroy and conquer. One would be hard-pressed to find a rational basis for the vast majority of wars and resulting deaths. And this form of pack-grouping now threatens the entire planet given [irresponsible energy policies](#) and [sufficient nuclear arms](#) to eliminate most human beings. Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine is a current manifestation — among many.

Interestingly, one area exists where people seem to be able to function constructively in groupings: sports. My St. Louis Cardinals should win every game, but I have to admit that the Padres and other teams have good players. And my strong admiration for [Stan Musial](#) is not at all reduced by my admission that [Tony Gwynn](#) was also an outstanding player and person. I can shout for my team to win, but do not wish to hurt those who perform well for other teams — would rather have the Cards get them for our lineup.

The laudable relative tradition of America is its diversity and its relative tolerance for packs outside our own. Our strength is very much that diversity; it allows us to maximize our performance without visiting war and death upon the many ethnic and religious and other packs within our borders. Pride in our rejection of packist obeisance and of inter-pack hostility properly manifests our proudest virtue.

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