Torture, Evil and Moral Development
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Preprint

I've been ruminating about torture and evil after stumbling upon and reading a couple of books on evil during a recent academic break, but especially since the release in December 2014 of the executive summary of the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program*. The summary revealed how deep, deceptive and mismanaged was the use of "enhanced interrogation" by the USA government. In past psychological discussions of systematic violence, most have focused on terrorism or social holocausts (e.g., Nazi Germany, Rwanda). Here, we have a case of the dominant nation of the world systematically practicing what its constitution and rhetoric abhors. I felt compelled to analyze how such a travesty came about and ponder how to prevent such behavior. Here are a few thoughts.

First, what happened?

In December 2014, the USA Senate Select Committee on Intelligence made public an executive summary of a 6700-page *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program*.1 In her foreword to the report, Senator Diane Feinstein acknowledged the setting at the time the interrogation regimes were instigated—the months and years following the attacks on the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, quickly followed by postal mailings of the poison, anthrax. In this context, the "CIA was encouraged by political leaders and the public to do whatever it could to prevent another attack" and "CIA personnel, aided by two outside contractors, decided to initiate a program of indefinite secret detention and the use of brutal interrogation techniques in violation of U.S. law, treaty obligations, and our values" (p. 2). Although the report itself does not characterize the CIA's actions as torture, the senator herself does in the introduction:

> "While the Office of Legal Counsel found otherwise between 2002 and 2007, it is my personal conclusion that, under any common meaning of the term, CIA detainees were tortured. I also believe that the conditions of confinement and the use of authorized and unauthorized interrogation and conditioning techniques were cruel, inhuman, and degrading. I believe the evidence of this is overwhelming and incontrovertible." (p. 4)

I also consider it torture and will use that term most of the time here.
The Senate report documents the many ways that prisoners were mistreated, violating international treaties that the USA had signed and ratified in the past. For example, the Geneva Conventions have specific guidelines for the treatment of prisoners. The USA ratified the provisions in the convention in 1932. Article 5 (Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 27 July 1929) says:

> No pressure shall be exercised on prisoners to obtain information regarding the situation in their armed forces or their country. Prisoners who refuse to reply may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to unpleasantness or disadvantages of any kind whatsoever.

The United Nations Convention against Torture, ratified by the USA in 1994, defines torture as:

> "...any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person, information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions."

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program* gives evidence that the CIA and the military violated these treaties. Recently a first-hand report has been published detailing the daily, ongoing torture of innocent prisoners (Slahi, 2015).

It is surprising to learn that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) realized decades earlier that coercive interrogation was a waste of time, having discovered that it led to useless leads. Senator Feinstein notes "The CIA itself determined from its own experience with coercive interrogations, that such techniques 'do not produce intelligence,' 'will probably result in false answers,' 'and had historically proven to be ineffective'" (p. 3). The report examines case after case showing that torture did not accomplish anything worthwhile, corroborating what experts already knew. "C.I.A. officers regularly called into question whether the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques were effective, assessing that the use of the techniques failed to elicit detainee cooperation or produce accurate intelligence" (Shane, 2014, p. A16). In his book, *Evil Men* (2013), James Dawes describes his many interviews with torturers around the world and concurs that torture gives lots of bad information. Naming people under torture leads to more torture of more innocent people. It's a spreading toxic spill of misinformation and harm. In fact, the Senate report points out that information that pro-torture advocates claim came from torture techniques was already previously known, gathered from non-coercive techniques.

Despite the prior knowledge of experts that torture is ineffective for intelligence gathering (Roper, 2004; Sands, 2008), why was the CIA directed to use the euphemistically-called "enhanced interrogation"? The easy answer is the

desperation and fear that came from the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001. The panic was accompanied by hypothetical catastrophizing: *What if there is another attack and someone knows where the bomb is—wouldn't you do all you could to find out?* Indeed, the "ticking-time-bomb" scenario (TTBS) was referenced as a justification for torture (Dershowitz, 2002). However, as pointed out by many, various assumptions must be true for a TTBS. Here is the longest list I have found (Randol, 2009): (1) An attack is imminent; (2) Legal and other authorities know about this imminent attack; (3) The attack will kill a large number of innocent people (this assumes a terrorist attack rather than an act in war); (4) Authorities have captured the/a perpetrator who knows where the bomb is hidden; (5) The authorities know that this is the right person; (6) The authorities know only torture will make him talk; (7) There is no other way to know where the bomb is hidden; (8) No evacuations are possible; (9) Torture, if used, is only used to get information (i.e., not used in a sadistic manner); (10) Torture is used only in extraordinary circumstances.

In real life, these ten requirements are never met simultaneously. But that is not what people believed at the time. The perception of the effectiveness of "enhanced interrogation" was shaped in part by the media and taken as justifiable by panicked viewers. In particular, the Hollywood television show, *24,* (beginning in 2001) showed its protagonist, Jack Bauer, in each episode facing a TTBS and using torture to successfully resolve the situation and save the country. Like any deep immersion in an environment that gives feedback about what is effective, the show, *24*, built viewers' implicit assumptions—that torture "works" and is patriotic (ethical). Viewers included military school students and soldiers in the field as well as decision makers in the USA government (who were actually getting ideas about torture techniques from the show; Mayer, 2009). To military and intelligence experts, the show's misinformation was so impactful that in 2006 the dean of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point flew with a delegation to Hollywood to ask the producers of "24" to desist—to stop showing torture as effective (Mayer, 2007). This was because students at West Point were arguing for the ethics of Jack Bauer's "whatever it takes" ethic, even though in real life he would have been a criminal. And a psychopath: One expert pointed out that "Only a psychopath can torture and be unaffected. You don't want people like that in your organization. They are untrustworthy, and tend to have grotesque other problems;" Mayer, 2007). The military delegation asked that the television program display torture's ineffectiveness and replace torture with effective information-seeking techniques that were non-abusive—they even provided the producers with a list. But the producers thought such techniques would take too much time to develop in an hour-long program. The visit had no effect on changing the show, which continued to broadcast torture's effectiveness for another 4 years.

When something bad happens, some people want to feel like they are doing something about it even if it is ineffective, or, as is often the case, harmful. The USA government officials who wanted to prevent any chance of another attack designed a structure where extreme measures could be applied. The time bomb was assumed to be ticking and justified any action at any price—even if there was only a 1% chance of someone being a terrorist, extreme measures should be taken (Suskind, 2006). What was set up was a vastly deceptive, corrupt and mismanaged system. The report notes that many people hired were incompetent, some with misconduct in their backgrounds and issues of self-control. People who would have been disqualified in any other circumstance were made into leaders. For example, the chief of interrogations had used inappropriate interrogation techniques in Latin America in the 1980s. The junior officer put in charge of the prison called the Salt Pit in Afghanistan, was known for his dishonesty and poor judgment. He ordered Gul Rahman shackled to the wall nearly naked overnight. (CIA guidelines for prisons signed by George Tenet in 2003 allowed detainees to be kept isolated and shackled in darkness, without heat in winter.) In the morning Mr. Rahman was dead. Despite such egregious behavior, the officer was later given a cash award for superior work. Even when oversight boards recommended disciplinary action for mistreatment of prisoners and prisoner deaths, these recommendations were overturned by those with greater power.

The people put in charge were often inexperienced and immature, making them susceptible to coercion and reckless behavior. Experience and expertise matter in any endeavor. The inexperienced are easily overwhelmed and misled, especially if they are young and uncertain of their identities. Dawes (2013) quotes Brian Glover's quote of a British soldier on how to make a torturer:

> "Take a young man, desperate to establish an identity in the adult world, make him believe military prowess is the epitome of masculinity, teach him to accept absolutely the authority of those in command, give him an exaggerated sense of self-worth by making him part of an elite, teach him to value aggression and to dehumanize those who are not part of his group and give him permission to use any level of violence without the moral restraints which govern him elsewhere." (Glover, 2001, p. 52)

Torture was outsourced to non-governmental contractors (85% in 2008, says the Senate report), again to novices in intelligence gathering. For example, the designers of the torture enterprise turned to two psychologists, Bruce Jensen and James Mitchell, who had been involved in helping soldiers prepare to survive possible torture if captured by Communist enemies with the Cold-War-era SERE program (Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape) (Shane, 2014, p. A16). They were chosen to design the enhanced interrogation techniques. They did not have any expertise in interrogations or knowledge of their effects. Brutal techniques were used with everyone from the beginning--there was no non-abusive questioning. Sleep deprivation lasted up to 180 hours. Detainees were kept naked and shackled, sometimes dragged and punched. Detainees were waterboarded and rectally "fed." Those who participated in torturing never escape their experience. Army veteran and torturer Eric Fair discloses in an op-ed, "I can't be forgiven for Abu Ghraib." He points out the torture techniques revealed in the report are only the tip of the iceberg of techniques used; most were redacted. Jensen and Mitchell evaluated their own programs and found them to be effective. They formed their own company in 2005 and the government outsourced torture to them thereafter. They were novices both in terms of their actions but also their ethics.

Morality was not addressed in the Senate report but we can easily see that it is unethical to force employees into committing torture. There was no informed consent, no ability for soldiers to decline the job of torturing. They were forced into misshaping their own characters. Both Fromm (1964) and Dawes point out that when individuals start to lose their autonomy, it leads to betrayal of oneself and one's humanity:

 "The mass violence of humans is complex and perplexing, but in most cases it can be traced back to this simple moment, when a man (often, but not always, a man) permitted himself to surrender his agency to another" (Dawes, 2013, p. 61)….Each small hurtful act they commit in the course of making their confused way will make the next act seem more normal. Give them time, and they will eventually shed their moral identities." (ibid, p. 57)

So here we have previously banned, illegal, ineffective procedures being used, sometimes with enthusiasm and sometimes with misgivings. Panic led to catastrophizing and was supported by misleading media narratives that presented it good, right and effective to use torture. Leaders pressed forward despite ongoing objections from experienced intelligence officers. Was it evil?

Is torture evil?

In the past, most people thought that torture was evil (Ross, 2005). What is evil? I have not made my mind up about a definition for evil but some use the term as a noun (vice, crime, harm) and others as an adjective—*frustrated* desire (Koehn, 2005). For example, Staub (1999) defines evil actions as repeated or persistent acts that cause extreme harm, sometime due to repetition, not commensurate with provocation. Certainly the CIA interrogation techniques can be categorized as evil according to this definition. But what are the causes?

Daryl Koehn (2005) distinguishes two contrasting perspectives on the cause and nature of evil, moralism and wisdom. The moralists (who in her view include Kant and Aristotle), equate evil with vice, the corruption of choice or the will (practical reason). Moralists assume we know ourselves and that our intent is flawed (weak, vicious). If we only made good choices and developed good habits by following the rules and role models, we would be virtuous. Kant argued that evil is a failure to reason well (consistently, rigorously, and intelligibly). Aristotle locates corruption in the action, bad habits or vices, also reflecting a failure to deliberate. "Wickedness or evil is our self-caused, voluntary lack of clarity as to what we must do if we are to lead humanly satisfying lives. Our habitual indiscriminate indulgence of our appetites and passions prevent us from thinking clearly." (p. 23). In short we are lazy and lax in our deliberations. Goodness is following inherited set of habits and norms that support human happiness. A good life relies on free agency and choosing well; evil is voluntary vice. Due to the influence of Aristotle on most legal systems, we tend to understand evil as the moralists do, as malice or sadism.

Dawes (2013), a researcher of torture perpetrators, seems to adopt the moralists' view that evil comes from a lack of deliberation. He describes how

Lynddie England, one of the abusers and torturers of captives at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, resembled Adolf Eichmann. Both were thoughtless. As Hannah Arendt pointed out, Eichmann was not diabolical but remote from reality, evident in his use of clichés and a stark inability to vary his words:

"The longer one listened to him the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such…he *never realized what he was doing*" (Arendt, 1994, pp. 266, 49, 287).

The banality of evil relies on an inability to deliberate or think properly. Similarly, an inability to think was apparent also in Lynddie England as shown in Judith Thompson's play, "Palace of the End" where Ms. England "delivers monologues composed of language used before: clichés, snippets of songs, advertising jingles, movie lines—prepackaged language as a safeguard against thought" (Dawes, p. 21). John Kekes (1990) too names lack of awareness, foresight, perspective (mindlessness) as a form of evil, common, he says, among those with too much freedom to ignorantly do things that harm others. "The sad truth of the matter is that most evil is done by people who never made up their minds to be or do either evil or good" (Arendt, 1994, p. 276). From a psychological perspective, both Eichmann and England sound dissociated, numb from experienced trauma. Emotionally and thoughtfully withdrawn from the world, they follow along with what they are told to do. This is a type of self-protectionist ethic I call "wallflower" (Narvaez, 2014).

Those in the wisdom tradition have a different view: "evil is the *frustrated* quality of unsatisfied desire" (Koehn, 2005, p. 5). Wisdom thinkers (Koehn includes Plato, Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, Spinoza, Goethe, Alighieri, Henry James) disavow that we are born free to choose. Instead, malice, violence, and vice are *symptoms* of true evil which is "human suffering caused by our lack of self-knowledge," mistakenly identifying "the self with something that it is not…lack of self-knowledge locks us into unsatisfying, quasi-mechanical patterns of behavior" (Koehn, 2005, p. 2). Evil as suffering is more a cause of collective and individual ignorance of human nature. "We rely on society's opinion-makers to supply us with an identity and to show us the best way to live" (Koehn, 2005, p. 4); then we try to maintain those false self-conceptions. Aiming (always) for our happiness, we take action against threats to our (false) self-identity and end up unwittingly harming self and others. Hence, evil as suffering comes about from aiming for the wrong things.

Wisdom thinkers believe that our concept of evil is confused because we are biased by prejudice and error. Mistakenly, we fight evil in others by focusing on judging and prosecuting them (the speck in the other's eye) instead of noticing our own mistaken desires through self-examination (the mote in our own eye). Avoiding evil (suffering and causing suffering) comes through insight into the nature of our being. Hypocrisy is a fundamental problem in individuals and collectives. A transformation of perception and understanding are required keep us from evil. We avoid hypocrisy, our way of life when we achieve insight into whom we really are.

Though Koehn never addresses what our true nature is, I will venture to do so, based on an emerging understanding from science that matches with ancestral and Eastern philosophical traditions. The nature of the world is that it is one entity. Everything is "alive" and connected. Enlightenment (in the Eastern sense) as well as mystical and peak experiences provide insight into the aliveness and connectedness. With this understanding, an us-against-them mentality is specious and torturing others is torturing self.

Taking this worldview as the normal baseline, the underlying misunderstanding behind evil is the sense of separation and consequent withdrawal from awareness of relationship-in-the-moment. Such belief in and practice of separation can lead to a host of behaviors that harm self and others. Kekes (1990) named two additional forms of evil beyond mindlessness: ruthlessness, and blaming. In my view, these emerge from immediate or habitual stress-reactive modes of thinking that lead to externalizing (aggression) such as domineering or bullying behavior, what I call a combative ethic (Narvaez, 2014). Both wallflower and combative ethics emerge from stress, especially in early life. Conditioned by past experience and habitual practice, both reflect an inability to be emotionally and cognitively present-in-the-moment with others.

Withdrawal from relationship, through mindlessness and lack of emotional presence, supports a moral disengagement process. Bandura (2002) identified situational elements that contribute to individual "moral disengagement." *Blaming or dehumanizing victims* makes violence easier to carry out. Armies do this routinely to get soldiers to kill, calling the opposition contemptuous derogatory names. Calling someone a terrorist can also degrade them into an evil being. *Displacement of responsibility* has to do with obscuring personal agency in bad activities. For example, terrorists and torturer advocates often see themselves as patriots, absolving moral responsibility. As Dawes (2013) found interviewing torturers, they say things like "*I bore the burden of having to do these things*" (p. 55). Responsibility can be diffused through group decision making or the small acts of many people who contributed some tiny part to a misdeed or atrocity. In *disregarding consequences of actions*, people minimize the consequences of acts for which they are responsible. Again, consequences can be obscured when there is a dispersal of behavior into smaller actions, as when superiors make decisions and others carry them out. Torturers were "doing their jobs." *Moral justification* has to do with construing conduct as serving moral purposes. Clearly those supporting the use of torture by the CIA used moral justifications. Even democracies sanitize actions with the words chosen (e.g., "Peacemaker" for a missile) and can contrast their chosen immoral acts with larger atrocities by others ("look at what the terrorists did; what we are doing is not so bad"). Moral disengagement may be fueled and justified by narratives and identities that emphasize us-versus-them attitudes. Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) pointed to five "dangerous ideas" behind most aggression, at the individual or group level: *sense of superiority, vulnerability, injustice, distrust*, and *helplessness*. Immersion in dangerous ideas and moral disengagement thwarts attuned, relational presence, what I call an engagement ethic.

The majority of scholars today trace group violence and perpetrator behavior to situational rather than individual characteristics (Dawes, 2013;

Zimbardo, 2007). According to Staub (1999), group evil develops or evolves over time. A variety of conditions can lead to societal evil. Those relevant to this discussion include *difficult life circumstances*. The "inability to protect oneself and one's family and the inability to control the circumstances of one's life," were evident in Germany after World War I, as well as in Rwanda (Staub, 1999, p. 294). The leaders who established the torture regimes not only were completely morally disengaged but felt like things were out of control. *Devaluation of a targeted subgroup*—e.g., Jews in Germany in the century before the Nazi leadership—can lead to violence targeted at that group. *Authoritarianism and ideologies of antagonism* support those who engage in the violence, as occurred in the USA against African Americans, including lynchings, from the Civil War era until World War II (Blackmon, 2008)). Belief in *cultural superiority* in combination with a *sense of weakness and vulnerability* were evident in Cambodia ("killing fields") and Argentina ("dirty war"), and in the USA post-9/11. But how do people get into these situations and how are they created?

What's missing

These explanations are well and good but they leave out a couple of key factors. There is no baseline for human functioning—what is normal human behavior? When we misunderstand our baselines, we misunderstand ourselves. Relatedly, developmental issues are not addressed. Let me take each in turn though they overlap.

Baselines. Those who subscribe to selfish-genecentrism might argue that torture behavior is not a surprise. Causing suffering to others intentionally is just an extension of our competitive selfish human nature and a sign of the dog-eat-dog world where individuals maximize their genetic survival, identifying their ingroup as part of themselves. We've gotten so used to this type of "selfish-gene" rhetoric, it almost seems to "make sense." But if we step back and consider human genus history and our place in the tree of life, it makes little sense. No other animal tortures its conspecifics (members of one's species) and maiming or killing conspecifics is costly and virtually absent in other animals (Bernstein, 2011). Contrary to the received view, the natural world evolved as a buffet of cooperation with condiments of competition (Margulis, 1998; Weiss & Buchanan, 2009).2 The assumption that humans evolved to be violent and selfish is based on the wrong baseline—on humans in complex, hierarchical societies. I contend that people in these societies do not represent optimality, or even normality, for the human genus, in part because they are missing early life supports that influence socio-moral capacities.

What kind of baseline can we use for normal evolved human functioning? Anthropologists have gathered extensive data, which along with explorer accounts, provide a glimpse into the type of society that represents 99% of human genus history, small-band hunter-gatherers. These societies raise children and support adults in ways that modern societies do not. As a result, they end up with a different human nature, much more self-regulated and virtuous in the sense of living cooperatively and synchonously, *with* nature instead of against it, with high communalism as well as high autonomy (Narvaez, 2013, 2014). These societies

provide a good baseline for human relations, including with the natural world. They show that it is more appropriate to consider goodness, instead of evil, as ordinary (Rochat & Modigliani, 1995).3 The 99%, of our history, like the rest of nature, was a matter of getting along, not causing or experiencing interpersonal suffering.4 Using small-band hunter-gatherers as a baseline for personality and social relations, we can see that regular aggression and selfishness are abnormal and are signs of something gone wrong, likely, in development.

Development. The moralists who want to put responsibility for evil solely on an individual's free will misunderstand human development. Humans are especially immature at birth, with only 25% of brain size at full-term birth, and, in comparison to other animals, should stay in the womb 9-18 months longer (Trevathan, 2011). Each individual human is dynamic system whose initial beginnings have great import for the life trajectory established. Humans are biosocial beings who require extensive supportive caregiving for proper development. A child's nature and personality are co-constructed by caregivers who help establish the functions of the stress response, endocrine systems, neurotransmitters, and so on (Narvaez, Panksepp, Schore & Gleason, 2013a) but also synchrony for the social life (Feldman, 2015). Early life experience, then, necessarily has great effects on brain and body systems, on how well emotion and cognitive systems are shaped. The "evolved developmental niche" (EDN) for social mammals is over 30 million years old and was intensified through human evolution (Konner, 2005). Early care matching the human EDN is normative for human beings and their development. The EDN involves several years of breastfeeding, nearly constant touch, responsiveness to needs before extensive distress, play, multiple adult caregivers and soothing perinatal experience (Konner, 2005). All these experiences have biopsychosocial effects (Narvaez, Panksepp et al., 2013a). Practices that match with the EDN have been linked to the development of empathy, self-regulation, cooperation, and conscience (Narvaez, Gleason et al., 2013; Narvaez, Wang et al., 2013), the types of characteristics that are prolific among SBHG (Narvaez, Valentino, Fuentes, McKenna & Gray, 2014). In my view, EDN practices create a cultural commons across groups for fostering an empathic effectivity core with a communal autonomy that bars harm to others (see Narvaez, 2014, for details). Children in the USA often do not receive EDN-consistent care, so we are undermining these otherwise normal human developments (Narvaez, Panksepp et al., 2013b).

American Exceptionalism?

Would any other country have reacted so viciously to an attack? We cannot say. It is notable that after the British experienced coordinated suicide attacks on July 7, 2005, leaders and citizens reacted very differently—not with fear mongering or viciousness. What made USA leaders and citizens *susceptible* to catastrophizing and moral disengagement?

I think the USA is particularly prone to self-protectionist morality because of its puritanical and fundamentalist religious roots which leads to routine violence against babies and children. Too often, "experts" in the USA tell parents not to meet the needs of their babies (e.g., for physical presence by advocating baby solo

sleeping) and undermine the natural bonding that otherwise develops. Medicalized births are often traumatic and infant circumcision is still common (over 50% in 2010; Owings, Uddin & Williams, 2015). These are early traumas that break natural social bonding, toxically stress the child and shift brain function towards a self-protection. When threat is perceived, the stress response is activated, impairing capacities for thinking and for compassion, leading to a safety ethic (see Narvaez, 2014). Harsh experiences in childhood contribute to aggressive worldviews (Tomkins, 1965). The individual is attracted to self-protective narratives and moralities that perpetuate dangerous ideas (e.g., superiority, distrust) that propel violence (Milburn & Conrad, 1996). The raising of many children is largely outsourced in early life (e.g., to stranger daycare and electronic media), leading to underdeveloped biosociality. These experiences reinforce the dog-eat-dog narrative that drives separation and condones aggression and a "whatever it takes" (to feel safe) mentality.

USA history likely also plays a role in the country's dispositions. The USA was built on violence against the original indigenous inhabitants through massacres (e.g., Sand Creek and Wounded Knee) and deliberate cultural genocidal activities (e.g., most recently, removing children to re-educate them). The nation built its wealth through slavery and decimation of natural resources. Although progress has been made in women's and minority rights, the country is still violent in its treatment of babies, alleged delinquents and criminals, as well as its permissiveness toward violent media and gun proliferation. Of course, the USA is also an empire with hundreds of military bases around the world which is perceived to be normal and right. There is a widespread attitude of superiority (American Exceptionalism) towards other nations, one of the dangerous ideas linked to aggression.

All these characteristics may help explain why over half of USA citizens think torture is acceptable (Drake, 2014). One might argue that they have been desensitized not only by their own (suppressed) trauma but by media infused with characters who intentionally harm others, normalize revenge, and successfully save others through sadism. The USA may be a nation of scarred people, a nation of people particularly susceptible to evil.

Prevention Education

Ervin Staub, one of the foremost leaders in education for the prevention of violence has recommendations for individuals on how to avoid evil behavior. Fundamentally important is the development of a *prosocial value orientation* (Staub, 2003). This orientation is widely apparent in small-band hunter-gatherer communities where it is extended to non-humans as well (more in Narvaez, 2014). Staub names three key aspects which we know now have their roots in early life experience and develop in the cultural commons of the EDN-consistent care. One is to develop and maintain a *positive view of human beings*. This requires attention to the development of trust in early life, a need that requires responsive caregivers and empathic care. When early life is suboptimal, remedial education can take place in environments, like classrooms and in therapy, if a positive supportive community is deeply experienced. A second feature that also emerges from life experience, and can be thwarted in early life, is *concern for others' welfare*, having empathy and taking the perspective of others. Trevarthen (1993) demonstrates in his work how newborn infants are ready to interact with these proto-skills. But these propensities must be

cultivated by early mutually-responsive relationships; otherwise the normal human trajectory can be impaired (but see O'Connell Higgins, 1994). Later remedies to increase such empathic concern are school interventions like the *Roots of Empathy* program where a mother and baby visit a classroom over many months (Gordon, 2003). A third feature of a prosocial value orientation is a *sense of responsibility towards others*, which in combination with empathic concern forms an inclusive caring (Staub, 2005). A sense of responsible connection, too, is rooted in early life experience where one learns to be mutually responsive with caregivers (Kochanska, 2002). One builds a sense of belonging to the community as a valued member— normal in small-band hunter-gatherer communities (e.g., Morelli et al., 2014). Of course there are other sensitive periods such as adolescence where trauma or deep social experience can also have long term effects.

Staub (2005) argues that a prosocial value orientation is supported by role taking ability, the capacity to walk in another's shoes. This imaginative capacity relies on a calm mindset, not the stress-induced, self-protective orientations mentioned earlier (for more, see Narvaez, 2014). Also needed is a sense of self-efficacy for prosocial action, what I call moral effectivity—a sense of efficacy plus the practiced skills that make *successful* moral action highly likely (Narvaez, 2010). Extensive, guided practice is required to learn the nuances of sensitive, effective practice. Though Hursthouse (1999) pointed out that virtue is not seen in the young for lack of life experience, it can also be true of adults outside their field of expertise.

To this list must be added more fundamental things that schools can also address. In Table 1, I list *basic psychological needs* identified by Staub (2005), Deci and Ryan (1985), and Fiske (2004) that should be met in every regular childhood environment (home, school). Meeting basic needs, especially in early life when brain system functions are being established, avoids the toxic stress that can shift the mind/body into a self-protectionist mindset (safety or security ethic; Narvaez, 2008, 2014). In addition, there are several capacities that educators can foster in students. Many USA children today arrive at school have deficits in *social and emotional skills*, critical foundations for morality. *Openness to others* is a capacity that counters aggression. It involves giving other people the benefit of the doubt until proven otherwise. Flexible cognitive and emotional capacities allow for the ability to find a middle ground with others. Openness includes the willingness to critique one's own culture and perspective equally to critiquing those of others. Staub contends that this means that one must avoid idealizing one's society and instead learn the history of its past destructive actions and reasons for them. Finally, *mindfulness* about one's selection of activities, one's thinking and attitudes is necessary. One must pay attention to what intuitions are cultivated by one's activities because, as noted earlier, immersion in shows, relationships and activities shape one's implicit understandings of the world (Hogarth, 2001). Self-monitoring of intuitions and behavior allows one to note signs of moral disengagement and dangerous ideas (Narvaez, 2010). Instead, one can learn to develop *moral courage*, a "positive bystandership," speaking up and acting for human welfare "even in the face of opposition, potential disapproval, ostracism, or a violent response" (Staub, 2005, p. 53).5

Conclusion

The Senate Intelligence report, *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program,* corroborates what was widely known by experts about the ineffectiveness of torture. Inexperienced government officials, naïve pundits and youth were misled by the media to believe that torture provides good information. According to Senator Feinstein in the introduction to the report, the trauma of 9/11 led the agency to employ "brutal interrogation techniques in violation of U.S. law, treaty obligations, and our values" which should serve as "a warning for the future" (p. 2). Though torture advocates and users claimed they were doing good and right, they had a misunderstanding of who they were.

Evil comes from all sorts of misguidedness about human being- and becoming-ness. Separation, punishment and dominance over babies and young children results in trauma that can have longterm effects. With harsh treatment in early life, one may be more prone to aggressive ideologies and actions, especially surrounded by cultural narratives that promote dangerous ideas like superiority of one's group. If we think of evil (suffering) as separation, then perpetuating a sense of separation from others (and from nature), as Western individualism tends to do, may be a grounding for evil. Targeted drone strikes of presumed terrorists, exponentially increased under President Obama, are much like advocating the hunting of wolves in the American West. In both cases, there is a failure to understand that individuals are members of families; their families are negatively affected for multiple generations. What leaders and adults in the USA often miss is that what one does, has repercussions, that boomeranging back on the actor (karma). Like the stone thrown in a pond, actions taken have ripple effects that come back to the actor. Thus, instead of preventing and quelling terrorism, USA military actions, including torture, have increased it (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2013).

Evil as suffering comes from ego investment in a world that is misconstrued and then misconstructed. The misunderstandings and misconstructions are passed generation to generation as indicated in Figure 1. We have built a world full of separation, punishments and tortures that are not part of our heritages (Narvaez, 2014). We can only hope that people wake up and understand that all are connected, that we are part of a longstanding cooperative tree of life, and that humans need particular supports at critical times to develop well. Perhaps then we can find peaceful ways to co-exist in a complex world.

ABSTRACT NOT USED
I describe the 2014 Senate Intelligence report, *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program* which corroborates what was widely known by experts about the ineffectiveness of torture. Inexperienced government officials, naïve pundits and youth were misled by the media to believe that torture provides good information. Internal CIA documents note otherwise. Though torture advocates and users claimed they were doing good and right, they had a misunderstanding of who they were. Evil (suffering) comes

from all sorts of misguidedness about human being- and becoming-ness. Humans emerged from a cooperative tree of life and only recently have become misdeveloped when evolved early life experiences that support the development of a cooperative human nature have diminished (e.g., not providing constant touch to babies, keeping them calm, breastfeeding, etc.). Instead, isolation and ignoring baby needs promotes misdevelopment into fear/anger/panic and self-preoccupation. These characteristics lead one to more easily become an uncaring, unempathic adult who can easily fall into evil (causing suffering).

ENDNOTES

1 The Washington Post has an interactive story about the torture report outlining the main conclusions, which has links to quotes from internal CIA memos and emails. "Senate report on CIA program details brutality, dishonesty," http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/senate-report-on-cia-program-details-brutality-dishonesty/2014/12/09/1075c726-7f0e-11e4-9f38-95a187e4c1f7_story.html

2 Of course, there is an exchange of life within nature; death of one is nourishment for another, suggesting that suffering is built into the scheme of things. But in indigenous societies such as Native American, taking prey for food is considered a matter of permission and gift from prey to predator.

3 "With respect to rescuers, we found that those who aided persecuted people acted in ways best conceptualized in terms of the *ordinariness of goodness"* (Rochat & Modigliani, 1995 p. 198).

4 In fact, small-band hunter-gatherers got rid of dangerous community members with expulsion or killing (for murderers).

5 For more on ethical theory that can counter military evil, see Snow, 2009.

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Table 1. Practices in Developmental and Educational Settings to Prevent Evil Behavior

DEVELOPMENTALLY PROVIDE
1. The evolved developmental niche
2. Intensive positive social support throughout childhood
3. Extensive opportunities for practicing virtue instead of vice

IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS
1. Meet basic human needs for autonomy, belonging, competence, self enhancement, purpose, trust in self and world.
2. Cultivate social and emotional skills and a sense of connectedness to others.
3. Develop openness:
    a. Give other people the benefit of the doubt until proven otherwise.
    b. Critique your own culture and perspective equally to those of others
    c. Find a middle ground with others
4. Be mindful:
    a. Pay attention to what intuitions are cultivated by one's activities.
    b. Use critical thinking to monitor intuitions and behavior.
5. Practice moral courage.

Culture that features "Dangerous" cultural narratives and practices

Childhood trauma and undercare

Impaired biopsychosocialilty

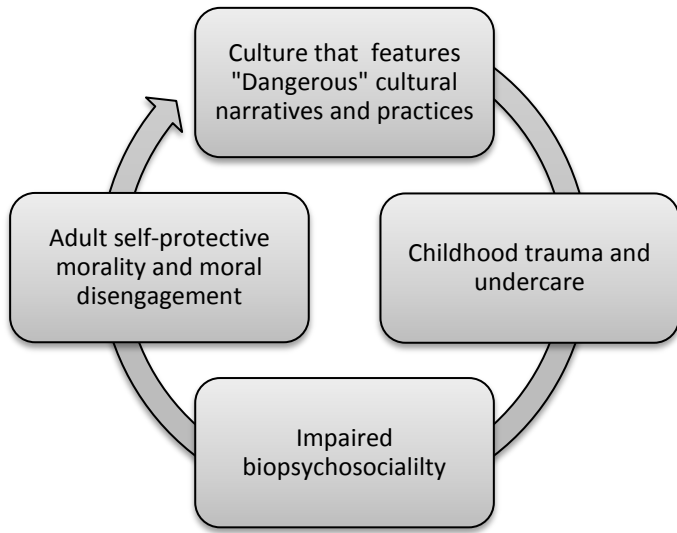Adult self-protective morality and moral disengagement

Figure 1. The cultural cycle of misdevelopment, misconstrual and cultural misconstruction.