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And verily, I say onto you,
The party of God
Shall triumph over all unbelievers . . .

Emotional Contagion
Religious and Ethnic Hatreds and Global Terrorism

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"Why can't the Palestinians and Israelis craft a peaceful solution to the current crisis?" political commentators ask. To many, the accords seem so straightforward. In the end—whether the peace process takes one year, 10 years, or 1,000 years—Palestinians and Israelis must find some way to share the Promised Land. Both will have to sacrifice the cherished conviction that they (and only they) are the rightful inheritors of the lands of the Ken'ites and the Ken'izites, the Kad'mon-ites and the Hittites, the Per'izzites and the Reph'aims, the Am'or-ites and the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jeb'u-sites . . . (for a discussion of prevailing views, see Bickerton & Klausner, 1998; Friedman, 1995; Said, 1998.)

And yet the killings go on.

The Palestinians and the Israelis are not the only peoples who find themselves swept up in "perplexing" political, religious, and ethnic conflicts. In the past decade, the world has witnessed a plethora of the horrific: suicide bombers, mass murder, genocide, crimes against humanity, and global terrorism. We have only to speak the names "Serbia and Bosnia," "Northern Ireland," "Cambodia," "Rwanda," "Palestine and Israel," and the "World Trade Center" to despair.

Social psychologists have devoted a great deal of thought to unraveling the mysteries of the "psycho-logic" that allows good people to commit staggering wrongs—to engage in orgies of torture and killing (see Reich, 1990). Theologians parse the promises of the *Bible,* the *Torah,* and the *Qur'an.* Social psychologists speak of cognitive transformations that allow people to interpret the Golden Rule and the Fifth Commandment that "Thou Shalt Not Kill" as meaning "God Is On Our Side" and "Victory At Any Price," and "By Any Means." In discussing how terrorists can so blithely invoke religious precepts in justifying moral atrocities, Albert Bandura (1990) observed:

People see themselves as fighting ruthless oppressors who have an unquenchable appetite for conquest, protecting their cherished values and way of life, preserving world peace, saving humanity from subjugation to an evil ideology, and honoring their country's international commitments. (p. 164)

Psychologists speak of cultural factors, "moral disengagement," "self-deception," "depersonalization," "splitting," and "externalization." The development of an "Us versus Them" mentality, of "denials of doubt," and a refusal to admit even the *possibility* of uncertainty (Newman & Erber, 2002; Rapson, 1978).

Yet these intellectual analyses seem pallid when confronting the stark enormities of suffering in conflicts such as those in the Middle East: The grief-stricken Israeli father whose daughter has died in a Tel Aviv car bombing. Palestinian militants mourning the death of Muhammad al-Dura, the 12-year-old boy from Gaza, caught in a hail of Israeli gunfire. The Israeli settlers and "Millennialists," attempting to demolish the Islamic Holy of Holies. A Palestinian woman in Jenin, sitting amid the rubble of her home, bulldozed by Israeli "peace" forces. The constant fear in which Israeli and Palestinian children live.

Nor do abstract psychological phrases quite capture the anger, grief, and confusion of Americans listening to Israelis, and Arabs denouncing their rivals' cruelty, inhumanity, and intransigence as they contemplate these outrages.

We would argue that, although political policy makers and psychologists can best understand the white heat of conflicts (such as the Arab-Israeli clash) by considering: (1) the cultural, historical, and economic factors sparking such conflicts; and (2) the cognitive and rational calculations of combatants, we must not stop there. (3) We must grapple with peoples' emotions as well—facing up to the inner conflicts of people caught up in such "Holy" crusades and attempting to comprehend the nature of their shame, fear, rage, hatred, and despair.

We must be sensitive to the emotional lives of Arabs and Jews, of Serbs and Croats, of Irish Protestants and Irish Catholics. We should be aware that people experience both their own joys and sorrows *and* tend to "catch" the emotions (the joy, love, anger, fear, and sadness) of those around them. In an isolated group, when there is no real cross-cultural dialogue going on, when people spend their days with others who share their resentments and fury, feelings are sometimes like cancer cells—duplicating and dividing and dividing yet again, as time and hostilities go on.

Of the suffering that the conflict-riven have endured, we can hardly add anything new. Poets, writers, and social commentators have depicted that with greater power than we could (see Benarroch, 2001; Darwish, 1995). In this chapter, we will discuss a topic not commonly addressed: the process of primitive emotional contagion that shapes people's reactions in the best and worst of circumstances.

It is our hope to provide a few insights into the powerful forces that unite people and divide them from their fellows . . . . and to provide a better understanding of the factors that provide a shared vision, push emotions to a fever pitch, and contribute to people's perplexing and unrelenting willingness to engage in Holy Wars—no matter how wasted the effort, horrendous the costs, and how devastated a suffering humanity.

Let us begin by discussing emotional contagion and the psychological mechanisms that account for this ubiquitous phenomenon.

The Theory of Emotional Contagion

Defining Emotional Contagion

Emotional contagion is defined as:
The tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person and, consequently, to converge emotionally. (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993, p. 5)

The Emotional Contagion Scale is designed to assess people's susceptibility to catching joy-happiness, love, fear-anxiety, anger, and sadness-depression, as well as emotions in general (see Doherty, 1994).

Theory of Emotional Contagion

Psychologists point out that emotions can be caught in a variety of ways. Early investigators focused on the complex cognitive processes by which people come to know and feel what others are feeling. They speculated that conscious reasoning, analysis, and imagination accounts for such a knowing and feeling. As Adam Smith (1759/1966) observed:

Though our brother is upon the rack . . . by the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. (p. 9)

Other psychologists have argued that children and adults come to share others' emotions because they are taught to do so. By way of example, Justin Aronfreed (1970) pointed out that, if a father habitually lashes out at his son when he staggers home from work hot, tired, and upset, soon the sight of the distressed father will come to elicit a stab of anxiety in the son. A person's emotional behavior may also generate an *unconditioned* emotional response in bystanders. When some people are nervous, for example, their shrill, hysterical voices grate on us like chalk screeching on a blackboard.

We would agree that conscious cognitive processes, social conditioning, and sympathy and empathy (see Davis, Chapter XXX) all play a part in explaining "emotional contagion." But conscious and semiconscious processes are not the whole story. In conflict-riven situations (such as those in the Middle East, Serbia and Bosnia, and Northern Ireland), a third force shapes combatants' emotions: emotional contagion.

Emotional contagion is a primitive process. It happens swiftly, automatically, and outside of conscious awareness—hence its startling power in shaping men and women's cognitive and emotional lives.

Mechanisms of Emotional Contagion

The process of emotional contagion is thought to involve three steps: (1) Mimicry, (2) Feedback, and, consequently, (3) the Experience of Emotional Contagion:

Step #1: Mimicry.

Proposition 1: In conversation, people automatically and continuously mimic and synchronize their movements with the facial expressions, voices, postures, movements, and instrumental behaviors of others.

Scientists and writers have long observed that people tend to mimic the emotional expressions of others. As Adam Smith (1759/1966) observed: "When we see a stroke aimed, and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back on our leg or our own arm." (p. 4) Smith felt that such imitation was "almost a reflex." Since the 1700s, researchers have collected considerable evidence that people do indeed imitate others' facial, vocal, and postural expressions of emotion—with surprising speed and accuracy.

Social-psychophysiologists document that peoples' facial expressions (as measured by electromyographic [EMG] procedures,) reflect the emotional expressions of those they observe. Ulf Dimberg (1982), for example, studied college students at the University of Uppsala, Sweden. He recorded participants' facial EMG activity as they observed targets displaying happy and angry facial expressions. Participants were found to display very different EMG response patterns when observing happy versus angry faces. Specifically, when subjects observed happy facial expressions, they showed increased muscular activity over the *zygomaticus major* (cheek) muscle region. When they observed angry facial expressions, they showed increased muscular activity over the *corrugator supercilii* (brow) muscle region.

People also mimic and synchronize vocal utterances. William Condon (1982) argues that such synchrony begins early:

I think that infants from the first moment of life and even in the womb are getting the rhythm and structure and style of sound, the rhythms of their culture, so that they imprint to them and the rhythms become part of their very being. When they say the baby will babble French or babble Chinese, this may mean that the predominant rhythms are already laid into the neurological system, so that, when the child starts to talk, he incorporates the lexical items of the system right into these rhythms.

As an infant hears his mother speaks in a certain pattern, he begins to move with her breathing rhythms, rhythmic heart beats, movements and so forth. Thus his rhythms become coordinated with hers early on. (pp. 66-67)

There is considerable evidence in controlled interview settings that people tend to mimic others' utterance durations, speech rate, and latencies of response. They have also been found to mimic and synchronize their postures and movements with others (see Hatfield Cacioppo, and Rapson, 1993 for a review of this voluminous research).

Researchers argue that such mimicry is *not* consciously mediated: the process is simply too complex and too fast to allow higher cognitive centers to be involved. An example: It took the lightning fast Muhammed Ali a minimum of l90 milliseconds to detect a light and 40 milliseconds more to throw a punch in response—a total of 230 miliseconds. Yet, William Condon and W. D. Ogston (1966) found that college students could "instinctively" synchronize their movements within 21 milliseconds (half the time of one film frame.) When we consider that, moment-to-moment, people are mimicking a plethora of facial, vocal, and postural actions, the idea that all this mimicry could be consciously mediated seems implausible. Mark Davis (1985) argued that microsynchrony occurs too fast and too ubiquitously to be a conscious process. More likely, it is mediated by brain structures at multiple levels of the neuraxis. Primitive emotional contagion, he argues, is "something you've got or something you don't." There is no way that one can deliberately "do it" (p. 69). Those who try consciously to mirror others, he speculates, are doomed to look "phony."

In any case, there is considerable evidence that: (1) people are capable of mimicking/synchronizing their faces, vocal productions, postures, and movements with startling rapidity, and (2) they are capable of automatically mimicking/synchronizing a startling number of emotional characteristics at a single instant.

Step #2: Feedback.

Proposition 2: Subjective emotional experience is affected, moment-to-moment by the activation and/or feedback from facial, vocal, postural, and movement mimicry.

Emotions theorists point out that emotional experience may be influenced by three different processes: (1) the central nervous system commands that direct such mimicry/synchrony in the first place; (2) the afferent feedback from such facial, verbal, or postural mimicry/synchrony; or (3) conscious self-perception processes, wherein individuals make inferences about their own emotional states on the basis of their own expressive behavior. Given the functional redundancy that exists across levels of the neuraxis, all three processes may operate to ensure that emotional experience is shaped by facial, vocal, and postural mimicry and feedback.

Darwin (1872/1965) argued that emotional experience should be profoundly affected by feedback from the facial muscles:

> The free expression by outward signs of an emotion intensifies it. On the other hand, the repression, as far as is possible of all outward signs softens our emotions. He who gives way to violent gestures will increase rage; he who does not control the signs of fear will experience fear in a greater degree; and he who remains passive when overwhelmed with grief loses his best chance of recovering elasticity of mind. (p. 365)

Recent reviews of the literature on facial feedback document that emotions are tempered to some extent by facial feedback. What remains unclear are how important such feedback is (is it necessary, sufficient, or merely a small part of emotional experience?) and exactly how the two are linked.

Researchers have tested the facial feedback hypothesis—using three different strategies to induce subjects to adopt emotional facial expressions. (1) Sometimes, they simply ask subjects to exaggerate or to try to hide any emotional reactions they might have. (2) Sometimes, they try to "trick" subjects into adopting various facial expressions. (3) Sometimes, they try to arrange things so subjects will unconsciously mimic the emotional facial expressions of others. In all three types of experiments, researchers find that subjects' emotional experiences are affected by the facial expressions they adopt.

In a classic experiment, James Laird (1984) told subjects that he was interested in studying the action of facial muscles. The experimental room contained apparatus designed to convince anyone that complicated multi-channel recordings were about to be made of facial muscle activity. Silver cup electrodes were attached to the subjects' faces between their eyebrows, at the corners of their mouths, and at the corner of their jaws. These electrodes were connected via an impressive tangle of strings and wires to electronic apparatus (which, in fact, served no function at all). The experimenter then proceeded surreptitiously to arrange the faces of the subjects into emotional expressions. Laird found that emotional attributions *were* shaped, in part, by changes in the facial musculature. Subjects in the "frown" conditions were less happy and more angry than those in the "smile" conditions. The subjects' comments give us some idea of how this process worked. One man said with a kind of puzzlement:

When my jaw was clenched and my brows down, I tried not to be angry but it just fit the position. I'm not in any angry mood but I found my thoughts wandering to things that made me angry, which is sort of silly I guess. I knew I was in an experiment and knew I had no reason to feel that way, but I just lost control. (p. 480)

The link between emotion and facial expression appears to be quite specific. When people produced facial expressions of fear, anger, sadness, or disgust, they were more likely to feel the emotion associated with those *specific* expressions.

Paul Ekman and his colleagues (1983) argued that both emotional experience *and* autonomic nervous system activity are affected by facial feedback. They asked people to produce six emotions: surprise, disgust, sadness, anger, fear, and happiness. Participants were to do this either by reliving times when they had experienced such emotions or by arranging their facial muscles in appropriate poses. The authors found that the act of reliving emotional experiences or flexing facial muscles into characteristic emotional expressions produced effects on the ANS that would normally accompany such emotions. Thus facial expressions seemed to be capable of generating appropriate ANS arousal.

Vocal feedback can also influence emotional experience. In one experiment, Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues (1995) asked subjects to reproduce one of six "randomly generated" sound patterns. Communications researchers have documented that emotions are linked with specific patterns of intonation, voice quality, rhythm, and pausing. (Klaus Scherer, 1982, for example, found that when people are happy they produce sounds with small amplitude variation, large pitch variation, fast tempo, a sharp sound envelope and few harmonics). The five tapes were designed to possess the sound characteristics associated with joy, love, anger, fear and sadness. The authors found that individuals' emotions were affected by feedback from their vocal productions.

Finally, evidence exists suggesting that emotions are shaped by feedback from posture and movement. Interestingly enough, the theorist of theatre, Konstantin Stanislavski (in Moore, 1960), noticed the connection between posture and performance. He argued:
Emotional memory stores our past experiences; to relive them, actors must execute indispensable, logical physical actions in the given circumstances. There are as many nuances of emotions as there are physical actions. (p. 52-53)

Stanislavski proposed we may relive emotions anytime we engage in a variety of small actions that were once associated with these emotions. Whether or not Stanislavski is correct, there exists an array of evidence supporting the contention that subjective emotional experience is affected,

moment-to-moment, by the activation and/or feedback from facial, vocal, postural, and movement mimicry.

Step #3: Emotional Contagion.
> Proposition 3: Consequently, people tend, from moment-to-moment, to "catch" others' emotions.

There is compelling evidence that people do indeed tend to catch the emotions of others. This evidence comes from social psychologists and sociologists, clinical researchers (exploring transference and counter-transference, and the impact that anxious, depressed, and angry people have on others), animal researchers, developmentalists (interested in primitive emotional contagion, empathy, and sympathy), and (most recently) historians (see Hatfield et al., 1993, for a review of this research.) Since in this paper we are focusing on the impact of contagion on religious and ethnic hatreds and global terrorism, let us briefly review a sampling of the historical research on "hysterical contagion."

Emotional Contagion: A Historical Approach

Were our forebears as sensitive to others' emotions and as likely to "catch" others emotions as we are? Historians are currently debating this question. Before the 18th century Enlightenment, most people neither read nor wrote; thus it is not easy for historians to answer such questions. Currently, most historians tend to argue that our forebearers were surprisingly insensitive to the suffering that engulfed them.

Lawrence Stone (1977), in his trailblazing *The Family, Sex, and Marriage: In England 1500-1800,* for example, argued that in the preindustrial era, even in the closest of family relationships, people possessed little ability to "feel themselves into" the emotions of others. The English of that era, he insisted, tended to display "suspicion towards others, proneness to violence, and an incapacity to develop strong emotional ties to any one individual." (p. 409)

Stone's challenging explorations generated a whirlwind of debate among historians and many other scholars. Were people as remote, their emotions as crude and ugly, as Stone claimed? Some historians insist that people were far more compassionate in the preindustrial era than Stone admits (Gadlin, 1977; Ladurie, 1979; Taylor, 1989).

Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence in favor of Stone's contentions. Some examples:

In 1466, in Rome, for example, Pope Paul II initiated the February Carnival, a race run on the Corso, a narrow ribbon of road that ran from the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza Venezia in the Holy City. To our eyes, the Carnival seems a barbaric celebration:

The Carnival was, even after its most barbarous customs were suspended by fiat, a peculiar mixture of glamour and cruelty. Even some of its participants were terminally divided between believing the Carnival was an occasion of innocent vivacity and condemning it as the epitome of masked wickedness. Horses were at one time whipped by little boys, and donkeys and buffaloes viciously goaded by men on horseback; and cripples and hunchbacks, naked old men, and despised Jews were made to run for sport. (Harrison, 1989, pp. 227–228)

Four centuries later, in the same city, Charles Dickens attended a public execution. He reported that, at the beheading, the crowd "counted the drops of blood that spurted out of the neck of the executed man in order to bet that number on the lottery; [Dickens] was naturally appalled" (Harrison, 1989, p. 325). In cases like this—as in lynchings, cat massacres (Darnton, 1984), and guillotinings—contagion becomes complex! Spectators, though not catching the suffering of the executed, may well be picking up the pleasure, excitement, and anger of the mob around them. If people lacked empathy for the woe of others, contagion seemed plentiful enough when it came to the rougher and wilder emotions of fear, anger, and hatred.

Nonetheless—whether people in the 16th to the 18th centuries were as sensitive to others' feelings as they are in the 21st or whether they were not— primitive emotional contagion did seem to be a common occurrence. Historians report that, in many societies and many eras, in times of stress, fear, hysterical grief, and anger have swept through rural communities (Rude, 1981). They attribute such social phenomenon to "emotional contagion" or "hysterical contagion." Let us consider a few of these examples:

The dancing manias of the Middle Ages.

In the Middle Ages, in the wake of the Black Death, dancing manias, redolent of mass hysteria, swept throughout Europe. Harold Klawans (1990) set the scene of generalized "sorrow and anxiety" that drove people "to the point of hysteria":

[The bubonic plague, the infamous Black Death] appeared [in the 12th century,] an illness far worse than any of the others. . . . It was an epidemic of unprecedented proportions that broke over Europe in a great wave. Entire villages were exterminated. Fields became neglected. Soon famine complicated the pestilence. And just as the plague receded and the population and economy began to recover, another wave struck.

From 1119 to 1340—a period of 221 years—the plague ravaged Italy sixteen times. No words can fully describe its horrors, but the people who witnessed them, who lived in those days so full of the uncertainty of life, of sorrow, and of anxiety, were driven to the point of hysteria.

It was at that point that the dancing mania began and spread like a contagion. Today, most historians view this phenomenon as a form of mass hysteria. (Klawans, 1990, pp. 236–237)

One writer (reported in Hecker, 1837/1970) described the 12th-century scene this way:

The effects of the *Black Death* had not yet subsided and the graves of millions of its victims were scarcely closed, when a strange delusion arose in Germany, which took possession of the minds of men, and, in spite of the divinity of our nature, hurried away body and soul into the magic circle of hellish superstition. It was a convulsion which in the most extraordinary manner infuriated the human frame, and excited the astonishment of contemporaries for more than two centuries, since which time it has never reappeared. It was called the dance of St. John or of St. Vitus, on account of the Bacchantic leaps by which it was characterized, and which gave to those affected, while performing their wild dance, and screaming and foaming with fury, all the appearance of persons possessed. It did not remain confined to particular localities, but was propagated by the sight of the sufferers, like a demoniacal epidemic, over the whole of Germany and the neighboring countries to the northwest, which were already prepared for its reception by the prevailing opinions of the times.

So early as the year 1374, assemblages of men and women were seen at Aix-la-Chapelle who had come out of Germany, and who, united by one common delusion, exhibited to the public both in the streets and in the churches the following strange spectacle. They formed circles hand in hand, and appearing to have lost all control over their senses, continued dancing, regardless of the by-standers, for hours together in wild delirium, until at length they fell to the ground in a state of exhaustion. They then complained of extreme oppression, and groaned as if in the agonies of death, until they were swathed in cloths bound tightly round their waists, upon which they again recovered, and remained free from complaint until the next attack. This practice of swathing was resorted to on account of the tympany which followed these spasmodic ravings, but the by-standers frequently relieved patients in a less artificial manner, by thumping and trampling upon the parts affected. While dancing they neither saw nor heard, being insensible to external impressions through the senses, but were haunted by visions, their fancies conjuring up spirits whose names they shrieked out; and some of them afterward asserted that they felt as if they had been immersed in a stream of blood, which obligated them to leap so high. Others, during the paroxysm, saw the heavens open and the Saviour enthroned with the Virgin Mary, according as the religious notions of the age were strangely and variously reflected in their imaginations.

Where the disease was completely developed, the attack commenced with epileptic convulsions. (pp. 1–2)

The dancing mania spread from town to town. In Cologne, 500 joined the wild revels; in Metz, 1,100 danced. Priests tried to exorcise the devils. Sufferers traveled to the Tomb of Saint Vitus in southern France to be cured. Paracelsus, a 16th-century physician and alchemist, devised a harsh but effective treatment for the dancing mania: He dunked the victims in cold water, forced them to fast, and condemned them to solitary confinement. The hysterical outbreaks began to subside.

The historical record abounds in descriptions of mass emotional effusions inspired by superstition and charismatic demagogues. (Modern-day tent and TV evangelists are masters of the art of contagion, as were such orators as Adolph Hitler.) However, even supposedly "reasonable" folk are not immune to the spread—witness the next case from "The Age of Reason."

The great fear of 1789.

In the 18th century, the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment championed the cause of science and reason over ignorance, superstition, and tyranny. Much intellectual leadership came from such French writers as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Diderot, who challenged the traditional legal, moral, hierarchical, and religious foundations of French society. By 1789, large sections of France's professional and middle classes had been converted to these revolutionary ideas, and they became active in trying to achieve the changes in French society that they thought necessary. In fact, some of these advocates of reason began to try to force social change.

Reason and persuasion soon gave way to hate and terror. Rumors began to circulate that the Royal Court and aristocracy were plotting to take over Paris by counterforce. People fled Paris in fear. As they trudged along country roads on their way to the French countryside, they spread rumors of an impending assault on the provinces by a mercenary army of criminals and foreigners in the pay of the aristocracy.

France became gripped by an almost universal panic. Fear bred fear. Local authorities and citizens became convinced that the criminal army was not just on the march, but was at the door. This led to the breakdown of local government, the arming of the poor, and food riots, and furnished a dramatic impetus to revolution in the provinces (Bernstein, 1990; Cook, 1974; Headley, 1971; Lefebvre, 1973).

After the storming of the Bastille in 1789, historians described the years that later ensued as the Reign of Terror—a term suggesting that emotional contagion may have a life well beyond the walls of the laboratory.

The New York City draft riots of 1863.

New York City, in the hot summer of 1863, was a place of extremes. The Civil War had brought ever greater wealth to a few and increasing poverty to many. Wartime inflation eroded the buying power of the poor. The city's struggling immigrant population lived in run-down, crowded tenements. Immigrants, especially the Irish, were outraged at the use of blacks to replace striking Irish longshoremen.

New York was an antiwar city, controlled by a local Democratic political machine, which had lost power and influence to the national Republican "war" party. The city's Democratic press and politicians skillfully played up the theme that Northern white workers were betraying their own best interests by fighting to free slaves who would then compete for their jobs.

In the midst of this, a national military draft commenced during the summer of 1863. The new law permitted a commutation of military service for anyone who could pay a $300 fee. This set the stage for viewing the draft as a symbol of Republican over Democrat, national over local government, native over immigrant, and rich over poor.

The first 1,236 names of New York City drafted men appeared in the morning papers at the same time that casualty lists from Gettysburg (the bloodiest battle ever fought on the North American continent) were posted around the city. Early the next morning, men, women, and boys began to move along streets carrying the weapons of the poor—crowbars and clubs. Mobs quickly formed and grew, caught up in and carried away with anger.

Four days of subsequent uncontrolled violence—including the lynching and burning of 12 blacks—left 119 persons dead and 306 injured. Forty-three regiments of union troops had to be stationed in and around the city to ensure order (Church, 1964; McCague, 1968).

The era of mass media.

Research on emotional contagion has focused on the effect of interpersonal interactions; there is, however, historical evidence to suggest that the dissemination of emotions does not always require direct physical contact or proximity. As rumors spread, emotions may accompany them. Mass communications—films, newspapers, radio, and (particularly) television—can transmit people's emotions far beyond their geographical perimeters. Our very image of the mob is linked inextricably with notions of the spread of anger, leading to the out-of-control behaviors of murder, lynchings, and large-scale destruction. We see daily on television the pictures of weeping and angry crowds mourning the death of a Palestinian guerrilla or an Israeli child, a murdered leader and her mournful followers, or the defiant and angry opposition. We replay the weekend of mourning by an entire nation (perhaps even the entire world) upon the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Are these instances of emotional contagion, or are these phenomena too complicated to be so labeled? Historical examples cannot be tested in the laboratory, but they do hint at the reality of emotional contagion and suggest that it may have occurred on a large scale in many historical eras. They also suggest that the mass media of our day may possess power even greater than generally realized because of their potential to precipitate the spread not just of information and entertainment, but of emotions as well.

Summing Up

In this chapter, we have considered evidence in favor of three propositions: (1) that people tend to mimic others; (2) that emotional experience is affected by such feedback; and (3) that people therefore tend to "catch" others' emotions. We also reviewed historical evidence that, throughout history, in times of stress, people in many societies have seemed vulnerable to emotional or hysterical contagion.

It is not wise to claim too much. We are *not* arguing that emotional contagion is always a cause, or is generally the prime cause of religious and ethnic hatreds or of tribal and national outbursts of anger and violence. We have no idea how often contagion plays a part, or of how much a part it generally plays in such outbursts. After all, the people swept up in the "hysterical contagion" movements of the past are all long dead. We cannot question them as to what they felt and why. But we would argue that the existing psychological and historical evidence is compelling enough that in addition to the usual "suspects"— the cultural, political, and economic factors thought to breed religious and ethnic hatreds and global terrorism—pundits might be aware that psychological factors, such as emotional contagion, may play a role as well. Naturally, more theorizing and research are needed to determine when it plays a role, how much of a role it plays, and how crucial this role may be.

Conclusions

One of the great ideas of the 18th century Enlightenment, the "Age of Reason," was the notion of tolerance. Voltaire, Diderot, Jefferson, Locke, and a host of other thinkers argued in behalf of accepting that people can possess different beliefs and that such nonconformists need not be exiled, despised, castrated, or killed for them. But the idea of cherishing (or at least tolerating) differences is just that: an idea. It is not an emotion in itself, even though it can *lead* to feelings, such as the joy that can come when one discovers that an assumed enemy can be a friend.

But the idea of toleration, like peace, remains a fragile flower, easily trampled underfoot. The conviction that cultural differences are to be accepted is oft times swept away in the anger, fear, and hate that is ignited and spread (via emotional contagion) to mobs joined in resentment. When faced with a sobbing Israeli father, with ululating mourners at the funerals of murdered children, with people fleeing burning buildings, or crowds running through the streets in panic or rage, it is a rare person who can resist getting lost in a morass of emotion. Passion takes a toll on logic and complex thinking. In troubled times, it is tempting to retreat into religious, national, familial, and tribal loyalties. Yet, it is just at these times that the world has the greatest need for intellectual *and* emotional intelligence. During outbreaks of the darker side of emotional contagion, we most need complex, nuanced thinking and emotional empathy for "the other." Can we find ways to give sufficient emotive power to the value of thoughtful contemplation so that it can match the force of feeling and emotional contagion, and hence help the world have a better chance of preventing contagion from becoming a plague? At the very least, we can be passionate about the value of mutual toleration and can also try to plant a few seeds of understanding.

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