

Is the Paleomammalian Brain of Leaders an Immutable Barrier to Lasting World Harmony?

Breena E. Coates
The California State University, San Bernardino

This exploratory paper hypothesizes that sustained universal peace is inexorably limited by the human genetic drive to survive. National and corporate leaders need to be particularly aware of their powerful, persistent, reptilian brains, especially when making decisions in conflict situations with the nuclear button readily accessible. Brain structure can explain the complexity. On the one hand, the slower, problem-solving, rational, neo cerebral brain is in the frontal cortex. On the other hand, the paleomammalian, subjective, primeval brain is located in the limbic system. The paleomammalian brain is fast, self-centered, and protective. Its quickness dominates. The unfortunate corrosive sides of humanity emerge from the limbic system when survival is, or perceived to be, threatened. War, cruelty, hypocrisy and impossible fantasies manifest from this brain structure. Given that some leaders—Trump, Putin, and Kim Jong Un, have the nuclear code, the possibility of destroying humanity is real.

Keywords: leadership rage, leadership failures, dangerous leadership

INTRODUCTION

This paper hypothesizes that sustained Self/Other unity for humankind is inexorably limited by our genetic drive to survive. This dichotomy emerges early in the immature neural apparatus of a baby. This survival action is fundamental and is contained in two opposing facets of brain architecture. On the one hand there is the problem-solving neo cerebral brain in the frontal cortex. This is the cognitively sophisticated neocortex but cannot fully restrain the limbic system's fast, primeval emotional responses (McLean, 1990; Garces & Finkel, 2019). On the other side, there is the paleomammalian, subjective brain located in the limbic system. This system also houses powerful amygdalae that control emotions, behavior and long-term memory. Reaction to stimuli are *Innate Responses* (Mameli and Bateson, 2011). Sensemaking of the external environment is genetic, which signifies that it has been preserved by species over generations. It also is a reminder that this has been useful in solving certain very specific, ancient, frequent, and repetitive stimuli. Within innate responses, instinctual reflexes are also present (Purves, 2004). Fixed Action Patterns or instincts are “patterns of behavior that are fully functional from the first time they are executed, even if the individual has had no previous experience with the stimuli that elicit the response” (Alcock and Farley, 2001, p. 118). This structure will “hijack” rationality (Goleman, 1995) under dangers—real or imagined. The paleomammalian brain is fast, self-centered, and protective in its response to threat or danger. The twin almond-shaped structures, known as amygdala, play a crucial role in response to stress, by engaging the autonomic nervous system in order to prepare the individual to protect themselves, stay safe, and react quickly to a threat—albeit, one that may not necessarily be real, but instead

delusionary. The amygdale often misconstrues the level, and intensity of the threat. Amygdalae control human reactions from birth to adulthood. Early on in development, these become embedded in the neural networks in the infant's brain and are carried over into maturity. Many of our responses are misconstrued harms, as interpreted within a baby's immature brain. Responses from the amygdalae get strengthened each time the stimulus occurs. Stress hormones—adrenaline and cortisol, among others— flood the mind and body. The neural channel to the slower cognitive, logical process in the neocortex shuts down. The mind becomes disoriented and thoughts narrow to one singular perspective—i.e., ME=RIGHT, YOU=WRONG.” (Hamilton, 2015). and it also asks how can I survive by freezing, flight, or fight? The amygdalae play an essential part in context-based fear reactions arising from volatility, such as: PTSD, and social anxiety (Phillips and LeDoux, 1992, pgs. 274-285; Alvarez et al., 2008, 6211-9; Morey et al., 2012). If a threat is not perceived as acute, the slower frontal lobes of the brain can take over control, and with it a logical-rational reaction will occur affording time for a more calculated response. It becomes essential for all of us, especially leaders to become mindful of our automatic response—but this not easy.

It should be noted that the topic of leadership, and in particular leader toxicity, has a revered history in terms of workplace dynamics. Because this article deals with toxic behavior of leaders it should be noted that some of the prominent scholars in this area are: Kets de Vries, et.al., 1985; Tepper, 2000, Lipman-Blumen, 2004, 2005; Kellerman, 2004; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Mitchel and Ambrose, 2007; Pelletier, 2010.) This paper focuses, instead, on biological determinants of toxicity that handicap national leaders and affect society at large. However, this study departs from a wider social context to individual behavior patterns derived from the biological structures of the human emotional brain, known as the limbic system.

The unfortunate corrosive sides of human action emerge from the limbic system when a person is under prolonged anxiety and feels persecution (or even perception of such) in both present and past contexts. In the hippocampus, located in this system, emotional memories are stored. Notions about danger from rivals and enemies can be triggered from here. The distinction of Self/Other dichotomy prevails at these times, and the organism is propelled to work to preserve the Self. Adam Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, made the pronouncement that “every man, as the Stoics used to say, is first and principally recommended to his own care; Every man feels his own pleasures and his own pains more sensibly than those of other people. The former” he explained, “are original sensations; the latter the reflection of sympathetic images of those sensations The former may be said to be the substance, the latter the shadow” (1976, Ch,2 pg. 82, 219). When it happens in the minds of powerful leaders who control the nuclear code of their nations, every living thing comes under existential risk. This paper shows how three powerful leaders, Trump, Putin and Kim Jong Un, are being guided by their amygdalae, by age-old fears emanating from their baby brains from childhood. Other leaders share this weakness and despite international accords and compacts between nation-states for unity, our amygdalae control the separation between the Self and Other and an effort at true partnership by nations and within nations is difficult to achieve. It also limits the individual from true collaboration within its own Self.

This conceptualization starkly contrasts traditional, longstanding views from religions and other written texts, that awareness of oneness can be achieved and maintained in near perpetuity, via mental disciplines, such as meditation. In the late 20th century and extending into the 21st century, studies related to integration between the two brains have been shown in a variety of scholarly research from 1987 until now, but these have not culminated in a single ineluctable theory, as noted by Garcés and Finkel, in “The Emotional Theory of Rationality” (2011, 954-17) and in some earlier studies (Lazarus 1984, 353-367).

Emotionally, humans like to believe that they and their in-groups are beyond routines of petty self-service. Because, we cannot acknowledge this weakness in ourselves—this is why it prevails unchecked through generations. Cassius, in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, famously says; “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars / But in ourselves, that we are underlings.” (*Julius Caesar*, Act I, Scene III, L. 140-141).

GENUINE ALTRUISM—OR SERVICE TO THE SELF?

From a Darwinian viewpoint the well-being of the Self is primary. Darwin's theory of natural selection suggests that animals act in ways that increase their *chances of survival and reproduction*, not those of

others. Darwin implied that by behaving altruistically, a being knows that it will draw attention to itself, thereby reducing its own likelihood for survival. For example, Meercats and prairie dogs produce warning signals to the group to alert them when a predator is near, thus exposing themselves to predators and the possibility of death. Some scholars have seen this as innate animal altruism. Doctors, scientists, and philosophers have spent centuries debating whether or not true human altruism *can* exist. Many cite the *social exchange theory* (the cost-benefit calculation of giving and taking) as evidence that true altruism is impossible because the act of altruism is performed for the purpose of a payoff (Cepelwicz, 2016)—the payoff being a good reputation, the protection of genes, a reward, or an *eustressed* feeling. From this we get that the social exchange theory asserts that people always do things for selfish reasons, as Adam Smith stated in his ethics book, referred to earlier.

The evolution of altruistic-cooperative behavior, in which an organism's action *reduces* its survival fitness and *increases* the fitness of another organism (e.g., by contribution of food)—only makes some sense when it is directed at genetically related organisms (kinship structures) or when one can expect the favor to be returned (reciprocal altruism) as in Axelrod's explication of the prisoner's dilemma (1984).

Writing in *The Intellectual Standard*, Kyle O'Shea's study, "Survival Of The Selfish: Natural Selection And The Myth Of Altruism," enlarges this notion, when he states that humans are motivated to assist others, only when this action will benefit them. O'Shea speculates that altruism may have existed in a gene at some time, but species with that gene died off. O'Shea indicates that altruistic acts might occur, but would not be sustained over time, because they would, in essence, spearhead the extinction of altruistic individuals or groups.

In the book *The Last Train From Hiroshima*, Charles Pellegrino (2010) describes the individualistic (selfish) perspective when he refers to reports from survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb told by witnesses who said that they felt that they (themselves) had exhibited "immoral" behavior for the simple reason that they looked after their well-being rather than making an effort out to help others. Joe Simpson's book (that was turned into a documentary) called: *Touching the Void*, a famous mountain-climbing accident was narrated. He explained that he hanging off a cliff, in foul weather, while his partner, Simon Yates, was attempting to rope him to safety down a mountain slope when the attempt went askew. Yates had no choice but to cut the rope to Simpson to save his own life. But, Simpson survived and documented the incident.

In December 2015, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, welcomed the birth of their new daughter, Maxima. The parents followed with promise to bequeath 99 percent of their Facebook shares over the course of their lives to benevolent causes. This pronouncement garnered both praise for the Zuckerberg's' altruism as well as, censure--as people called into question the Zuckerberg family's "true" purpose. People asked: was this true altruism, or simply an effort to save millions of dollars in taxes? (Cepelwicz, 2016).

The egocentric view, by which he meant the self-centered view, was expounded by Nobel Prize Winner, Gary Becker (1976) in an article in the *Journal of Economic Literature*, where he put forth a central premise that rational economic choices based on self-interest, govern most aspects of human actions—and he further argued that altruism seen among kinfolk does indeed encompass a modicum of strategic self-centeredness.

Departing from the strictly *homo economicus* model, economists in recent decades have studied altruism from *egoistic and egocentric perspectives*. The "egoistic" perspective, can be seen as a variant of the mutual or reciprocal cooperation models such as the one proposed by Axelrod (1984). However, Axelrod's also asked under what conditions would cooperation materialize in a world of egomaniacs without central control? Axelrod concludes that cooperation will thrive only when there is reciprocity and when the future is important enough to secure this exchange.

Barasch, (et.al., 2014, 313-413) stated that there are those who reject the notion of altruism outright, and postulate that positive emotional benefits serve as the clandestine driver for good actions; and that people cull advantages from positive feelings associated with doing good to others. In similar fashion, Neel Burton, M.D., (2012) has noted those same emotional paybacks.

In the longer term, altruism is associated with better mental and physical health and greater longevity for an individual. Altruism's payoffs is satisfaction for the altruistic doer. This also relates to recent

neuroscience studies that have shown that when people behave altruistically, their brains activate in regions that signal pleasure and reward. In his Social Science Review article (1993), some theorists like Schwartz explain why altruism is impossible. Rosen goes to a biological explanation—he submits that natural scripts propel humans to pleasure (2017) and explains that people are biologically scripted to pleasurable ends. Going further into biology, neuroscientist David Eagleman (2011) asserts that for homo sapiens, reality is a function of our natural biology.

Neuroscientists tell us that it is the stimulation of dopamine, oxytocin and serotonin that perpetuates altruistic acts; and brain science tells us that the brain is designed to repeat actions that generate pleasure, shown in a 2018 study conducted by Dr. Rui Costa of the Zuckerman Institute (Alcock, 2001) and many others, see the purpose of life as a way to replicate DNA for future generations. The behavioral ethologist John Alcock, stated: “we exist solely to propagate the genes within us.” (pgs. 16, 69). A study of 149 leading biologists found that 89.9 percent believed that “evolution as no final purpose” and that we are just a product of cosmic chance (Graffin, 2004, 42.) Going further, the evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins, notes: “The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference” (1995, 133). His view and that of others, have suggested that what human beings call altruism is in reality selfishness. as it is a person’s endeavor gain a *positive* sensation for themselves, or an effort to avoid a *negative* sensation. Suppose the positive sensation is construed as a win. In that case, one can see this is particularly dangerous if one is in a position of influence as someone like Donald Trump who is focused on the joy of “wins” but shows indifference to the suffering of others. Political leaders have committed their people knowingly to untold suffering, but often use hypocritical statements to justify this. In this respect, many have said that President Trump acts from his reptilian brain in his “decision-making”, made more so by his penchant to put himself into difficult situations. Maximizing satisfaction him/herself is the utility for function of the human being.

THE SELFISH GENE WITHIN US

Most people like to think of themselves as generous, but can we be altruistic when we are steadfastly focused on selfish ends? The “biology of selfishness and altruism” posited by Richard Dawkins (1999, 1,2), explains that humans have retained a relentlessly “selfish gene” that gives rise to self-centeredness and replicates over and over again into our offspring. His viewpoint is as controversial as that of Charles Darwin’s survival of the species (1859). Nonetheless, looking at the Dawkins theory of the selfish gene is very useful. This article follows Dawkins’ viewpoint in looking at selfishness as a strongly gene-based phenomenon versus altruism.

The flight, freeze, or fight response, also called the “acute stress response” was first described by Walter Cannon in 1932 in his book, *The Wisdom of the Body*. His theory was that *animals* react to threats with a general discharge from the limbic (emotional) system. We can also agree that this represents *human* reactions to stress. The amygdalae in the emotional brain play an essential part in context-based fear reactions, such as: PTSD and social anxiety (Phillips and LeDoux, 1992; Alvarez et al., 2008, Morey et al., 2012).

Neuroscientist David Eagleman, in his book, *Incognito: The Secret Lives of The Brain* (2011), has contended that the limbic system is the master system of the brain. Reaction is fast and strong, but not always rational. Following Walter Cannon, Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman, in his iconic book *Thinking, Fast And Slow*, digs more deeply into this concept. Kahneman shows how the dual mind works in its two dichotomous systems (2011). His System 1 is the limbic system. It is lightning fast, instinctive, emotional and unconscious. It is the controller of our minds, the direct interpreter of the world, and the protector of it. Its quick reactions have led us into war, murder, killing, and other nasty things. Kahneman’s System 2 is more objective and is the keeper of slower, more intentional, deliberative, and logical processes. In System 1, Humans will generally obey the survival instinct over all others such as compassion, benevolence and love—the very traits we seek to attain, in vain, in our purported, but often futile, search for cosmic consciousness. It should be noted that scholars, such as Chocalingam, et. al., in the article “*Higher Consciousness Through Self-Inquiry Can Improve Cardio Metabolic Outcomes, Mental Health, and*

Resilience” argue that the awakened or enlightened states from the neo cortex are very rarely attained because of the emotional brain, but suggest that if reached, has the potential for the unification of humans and their health.

In the 200,000 years of homo sapiens on the planet, modern humans have favored and cultivated those traits that made survival possible. The most fundamental of these is the *drive for survival of the self*. When leadership expresses fear, anger and undertakes aggressive actions, it impacts not just the leader, but also flows to the inner circle, and on to the public, and even the planet. These will be discussed next within the context of leadership in the United States, Russia and North Korea expressing itself through faulty codes in a baby’s primal brain.

HOW TYRANTS ARE HATCHED

Babies are not born with a “tyrant gene”, but like all humans they are endowed with the ancestral trait of survival locked into their DNA. For a young child, early trauma, such as being subjected to cruelty and neglect often engenders insecurity, fear and rage. These experiences are held in the emotional system of the brain. Repetitive traumas reinforce neural pathways to store that rage (McElroy, 1999). At present, anger and rage has been classified as Intermittent Explosive Disorders—IEDs. As recorded in the 2013, American Psychiatric Manual (DSM) individuals will likely mimic the early parenting they are familiar with, when parenting their own children Infants experience fear and anger and will act out these emotions because they lack the necessary vocabulary. The celebrated psychologist T. Berry Brazelton has explicated the experiences of infants in his emblematic book, *What Every Baby Knows* (1988). Brazelton has said that babies communicate not in words, but in the form of action. These behaviors become part of a rich “vocabulary” despite the infant’s lack of words.

Recently we have been made aware of these experiences and behaviors in the childhood histories of major authoritarian leaders in our own time, such as--Trump, Putin and Kim Jong Un, and the impacts of flaring amygdalae in their adult psyches. In extreme rage, notions of morality are displaced in decision-making. It is argued that Trump’s enraged rants have “weaponized fear” by playing to the public’s anxiety and phobias. His words have shaped public discourse by emphasizing threats—both real and delusory. Glassner calls him a “master” of fear. His reactionary neural pathway project “Be very afraid” (Glassner, 2010; Furedi, 1997). When this occurs, we, the public, have knowledge of the immaturity, but deadly, functions from his childish reptilian brain.

More importantly, Trump, Putin and Kim Jong Un, have displayed obvious authoritarian survival tactics for themselves—regardless of the cost to others. They also know that power is the only way to survive their well-known atrocious behavior. Trump’s recent tactics to regain power has cost America dearly--in terms of human lives and financial costs. Putin hangs on to power with directed purposeful fear—particularly the fear of being perceived as an enemy to be killed at whim. Kim Jong Un shows his need for power through assassinations, hard rules, and horrific punishments in his labor camps for enemies. All three show factors in McClelland’s acquired needs theory (1961), particularly the need for power. Another facet of the psyches of these three is seeking eudaimonia to a heightened degree.

In his book, *Culture of Fear*, Glassner explains that leaders may inflame fear in the general public to achieve political or corporate goals. This viewpoint was developed as a sociological framework by Frank Furedi (1997). Jean Lipman-Blumen, in her book, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians—and How We Can Survive Them*, explained that there is a tendency in contemporary society to seek authoritative, even dominating, characteristics among our leaders because of the public’s personal psycho-social needs and emotional weaknesses. Lipman-Blumen’s position is that “toxic leadership” but not about everyday mismanagement. Rather, Lipman-Blumen referred to leaders, who, under their “characteristics” and “destructive behaviors” ...”inflict reasonably serious and enduring harm” not only on their own people but on others outside of their immediate social circles. Three of the world’s most powerful, leaders have been doing this:

WORLD LEADERS WITH FLARING AMYGDALAE

FEAR & RAGE: Former President Donald Trump

Donald Trump was born into a family where he received poor, and abusive parenting. Fred Trump's modus operandi for parenting was to persistently bellow, berate and belittle his sons. Trump, Sr.'s ire was often directed his elder son, Fred, Jr. The effects of this led, very likely, his alcoholism and early death at age 42. We know of these familial details, as they are offered in the patriarch's psychologist granddaughter's expose, *Too Much and Never Enough*. In Mary Trump's 2020 revelations of her family, she describes Fred Trump as a functioning anti-social individual. Fred Trump's insecurities, fears, and angers hurled at his children likely caused powerful but primitive defenses in the development of the paleomammalian brain of his son Donald. Like his father, Donald Trump has displayed a psyche of cruelty, cheating, mendacity, and verbal abuse, xenophobic coping mechanisms. The American public has had an ongoing display of antipathy to others, and cruel "joking." In place of normal nurturing of his emotional needs, he grew a kind of grievance mentality and behaviors such as--bullying, disrespect, and aggressiveness—that served their purpose in the moment but became more problematic over time, reported his niece (ibid, 2020). Mary Trump's first-hand account also alludes to not only his persecution complex but also his moral turpitude. As noted by another observer, Trump appears to be amoral with few ethical core values. Morality for Trump is what a sonata is to those who cannot hear (Wehner, 2023).

The psychologist, Dan McAdams observed in his book (2016) *The Strange Case of Donald J. Trump: A Psychological Reckoning*, that Trump has a variety of psychological ills, including a hatred of facts. McAdams argued that self-assured leaders do not fear dissent, but Donald Trump cannot handle opposition to his ideas. A weak leader like Trump stomps on legitimate dissent. Dangerous pandering to him shows up in subordinates, which perpetuates Trump's false sense of grandeur. To his followers, Trump's constant carping is infectious, charming, even inspirational and goes viral, As reported to CNN host Jim Acosta by a White House insider (2022) about one incident "Trump is livid" and "screaming at everyone, after last night's disappointing midterm results for the GOP."

Trump has displayed his anger and frustration in physical attacks as well. As reported by Cassidy Hutchinson, a senior aide to the President, Trump's anger flared when his limousine driver disobeyed the order to take his car to the Capitol, where there the infamous riot was raging. Trump reached over from behind and tried to grab the steering wheel (Hutchinson, 2023). Hutchinson also reported that the angry Trump had lost control that day. He smashed dishes and flipped table cloths in the White House dining room, toddler rage. He has been known to counsel police officers on the use force on detainees, stating that officers were too compassionate--referring to police routine behavior, such as helping captives into squad cars.

The depravity and disrespect also is observed in situations concerning disabled people. He provided a cruel caricature of the journalist, Serge Kovaleski of the *NY Times*, because in Trump's world, Kovaleski was using his disability to grandstand at a campaign rally. He later disavowed doing such an act. The Washington Post's factchecker reported, that much of what Trump says are Four-Pinocchio mendacities, expressed in rage, and misnamed by Trump, as horseplay.

Trump does not deny this acute rage, implying his rage is a source of pride to him. He remarked to journalist Bob Woodward, that he does bring his rage to the fore, and has always done so (Woodward, 2020). Karin Wahl-Jorgenson has argued, that Trump's frequent rants were about nothing in particular. She wrote that Trump was an influencer whose rage was imitated by his base (2018). In these and many other instances. Trump's infantile rage, spread to the national and world stage.

His vanity and disinterest in the public good have also been seen in the multiple times Trump has praised himself about his good looks, and intellect (Diaz, 2018). Despite the chaos he was creating he often referred to himself as a level-headed "genius" and a person with high intellect; Donna Brazile in her book *The Hypocrisy of Trump* (2020) also noted this tendency for self-glorification. She stated that while the national discourse was centered on the brutal police murder of George Floyd, Donald Trump was insisting that he was the president of law and order. But, the rest of us are guilty too. We willingly participate in such

depravity, (albeit hypocritically) based on a political motive of mutual cooperation to preserve cronyism and selfish interests (Axelrod, 1984).

FEAR & RAGE: President Vladimir Putin

Trump is not the only powerful world leader with a deprived and insecure childhood that has colored his behavior in his public life. Like Trump, Vladimir Putin displays a similar, sinister, spine-chilling mindset. His childhood provides a stark, dark, but glaring, moving picture of how childhood trauma can cause most social, economic and mental health issues, resulting in violence and chronic disease. Bradley stated that Putin has mixed lies and rages together making the truth elusive, and for years, Russian President Vladimir Putin has bundled U-turns and lies together, and weaponized that toxic mix into blackmail to bamboozle his foes. In an article, he was described as an instrument of anarchy (ibid, 2023). Today he is also suspected of “roid” rage—a condition known to result after taking steroids for cancer (Owen, 2022). Peter Pomerantsev in *The Observer* (2023) quizzically remarked that when powerful leadership in the form of a Trump, Putin or Kim Jong Un distort and displace the truth, the body politic suffers. Chilcott opined that shame has distorted public speech (ibid, 2023).

Vladimir Putin was born in a Leningrad then shattered by a horrendous three-year siege and genocide, perpetrated by the Nazis during WWII. Most of the population of three million people died of starvation, filthy conditions, and other social scarcities. The war damaged Putin’s parents—his father was gravely disabled, and his mother, frail and weak with hunger. The Putin family lived in a small, pest-ridden apartment with two other families. They had little or no heat to offset the icy Leningrad winters. Hygiene was limited. The families shared a broken-down toilet but had no hot water or bathing facilities. His debilitated father labored in a factory; his mother sought whatever odd jobs that were available. Gentleness and affection were not the parenting that Putin’s childhood shows. As a small child, with a petite build, Putin reportedly was ruthlessly tormented by classmates. This bullying has played out in his own behavior as the leader of Russia. The sum of all of this shows a lack of care and nurturance in his early years. Having lived with anger and insecurity in his developmental years, it resulted in a man who delights in showing a virile and toxic persona. Putin has portrayed himself as a “strong man”—always displaying an apparent lack of regret or remorse for his cruelty.

It is a known fact that Putin likes to kill his enemies—usually with the aid of poisons, although suspicious falling from heights, and other killing tactics are also in his arsenal. Notable events of poisoning include, Alexei Navalny, (Russia’s most prominent political opposition leader). In 2018, Navalny, became violently ill on a flight from Siberia to Moscow after drinking a cup of poisoned tea. Putin was widely suspected as being the source of this attack. Navalny had previously been subjected to poisoning, arrests, interrogations, and jailing’s. After one poisoning with Novochik—a banned substance Navalny observed that he had critically enraged Putin simply by living. Slaughter, said Navalny, is the only way he knows how to attack. He’ll go down in history as an “assassin” (Washington Post, 2021). Navalny opined that the real reason for these things was because of Putin’s animosity, dread and fear. He calls Putin, an old man and a small man at that, living in a foxhole (Harding, 2021). Another example reported in the *New York Intelligencer* was about Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich. Subsequently, Abramovich lost the ability to see for several hours, and the symptoms were so severe he suspected that he was dying (Hart, 2022). A third instance was in 2004, when Abramovich who ran against a Putin pet—Viktor Yushchenko, in Ukraine’s presidential election, was left permanently disfigured then he was poisoned with dioxin. Yet another case, in 2006, came about in London, when ex-KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko, died an agonizing death after he was poisoned with Polonium 210, a rare radioactive isotope.

Other favorite tactics of Putin, are deaths from airplane falls, car-jackings, falling from buildings, supposed “massive heart attacks”, gunshot wounds, and more. Recently, the world may have experienced Putin’s rage at the Wagner mutiny when Yevgeny Prigozhin died in an airplane crash in keeping with Putin’s history of eliminating opponents. Putin uses verbal abuse often when speaking about his enemies. In an *Atlantic* magazine article of 2018, entitled, “What’s behind Putin’s Dirty, Violent Speeches”? Leon Aron described, Putin’s low-down, vulgar, and obscene utterings. Prison terminology has entered the

Russian lexicon with Putin's example. The word *mochit*, which means to drench, has taken on new meaning due to Putin's use of it. It now denotes "to beat up someone."

Within his psyche, Putin is likely situated in the famous blind window, mentioned by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham (1955). In analytical psychology, this is also where Carl Jung's emotional "shadow" resides and grows stronger if not brought into the conscious mind and reversed. Jung said that while the shadow is unconscious, it will nevertheless, flood the conscious mind with negativity. Moreover, a person who is haunted by his shadow is always vulnerable to his own traps (Jung, 2014). The shadow also is used by Jung as an archetype for the collective unconscious.

FEAR & RAGE: Supreme Leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un

Kim Jong Un's early childhood, like Trump's, was influenced by the iniquities of his father Kim Jong II—who was first fondly called the "Dear Leader." North Korea has unabashedly shown that high-sounding titles for its leadership are favored. Today, Kim Jong Un, a tyrant, is misnamed: "Beloved Leader," "Supreme Leader," "The Dear, Respected Comrade Kim Jong Un," and "Dear Leader." North Koreans, from childhood, are propagandized to idolize their leaders and to never doubt the system in which they live. This manipulation and brainwashing stems from insecurity and fear projected from the "soul" of their authoritarian leaders; who have the mistaken notion that complete control is a necessity for their rule, and is needed to keep North Koreans compliant. NBC News reported that the North Korean leader has committed 10 recognized crimes against humanity: murder, extermination, enslavement, forcible transfer, imprisonment, torture, and sexual violence. Persecution, enforced disappearances and other inhumane actions were also perpetrated. (International Bar Association War Crimes Committee Report, 2017). Jong-Un's leadership began with purges unprecedented since the 1950s to safeguard his power. (Falletti, 2018). He has terrorized high-level Korean officials. They do not dare to speak out, and this breeds sycophancy.

The "Beloved Leader" is an honorary moniker for Kim Jong Un, but inappropriate, considering that he is a man whose deadly anger cannot be controlled, easily provoked over insults--real or perceived. He has a rapacious penchant to kill enemies. His propensity to kill was, and is, Jong-Un's *modus operandi* and extends even to close relatives. He had his older brother, Kim Jong-Nam, killed with a VX nerve agent at the Kuala Lumpur airport. No one was charged for the crime, but it was believed that Jong Un had ordered the murder. He had his Minister for Defense, Hyon Yong-Choi, publicly executed with a ZPU-4 anti-aircraft gun—an enormous, four-barreled machine gun capable of firing 600 rounds per minute. The punishment was for dozing in a meeting. In another case, a man accused of selling CDs of South Korean movies was executed in front of his wife and children. The man was killed by firing squad, even as his wife, son and daughter were forced to stand and watch (Jacob, 2018). Other critics of the regime have been viciously killed—estimated at 70 citizens (Hutchison, 2018).

Jong-Un executed his uncle Jang Song-Theak for alleged treachery and, curiously, for running horrific prison camps, but Jong Un does the same. Kim Il-sung, his grandfather, modeled the North Korean prison camps on the Soviet gulags. Jong Un's prison camps, are known as *kwan li so*, notorious for horrific living conditions and brutality--including induced starvation, lack of medical care, abuse by guards, and continuous forced labor in highly dangerous, brutal conditions (UN Human Rights Watch, 2014). The cruelty perpetrated on Otto Warmbeier is evidence of this brutality. Otto Warmbeier was arrested in North Korea on a trumped up "hostile" act against the state. During that time, his health deteriorated--in a forced and brutal labor prison camp, so much so that when he was repatriated to the U.S. he remained in a coma until his death.

Jake Epstein of *Watchdog Insider* says there are 120,000 prisoners (2023). In North Korea, but, reports vary. Some reports say there are 130,000-150,000 prisoners in camps under fictitious or dubious charges—a true number probably is not available, because of the extreme secrecy of the regime. Three innocent generations of a prisoner's family are also held in what is known as *wan-jeon-tong-de go-yeok* for the crime of "guilt by association."

A book by Fifield (2019) reveals previously unreported details about Kim's strange and secluded early life, which revolved around entitlements and power. He grew up angry, irascible, a sore loser, with a cold-blooded demeanor, and an easy desire to belittle others. Kim is a heavy drinker with displays of drunken

rages. Robbie Gramer, in *Foreign Policy* wrote an article entitled: “A Drunk Kim Jong Un Is an Angry Kim Jong Un,” in which he expressed the fear that erratic and sozzled leaders with nuclear weapons are dangers to the world. (Gramer, 2016). In the same vein Kim’s words must be taken as a serious threat, that the entire United States is within range of his nuclear weapons, and that his military are prepared to respond to threats by nuclear means (Shin, 2022). As stated by one observer, the “Dear Leader” is not a fat, amiable toddler, but a dangerous who is a threat to the world (Fifield, 2019).

WHEN LEADERSHIP IS VULNERABLE TO THE AMYGDALA HIJACK

Much has been studied on the topic of the organizational behavior of leaders. This document takes a biological behavior view. As noted earlier, the amygdala flare-up is an acute and swift, emotional response to a threat, or perceived threat in a person’s environment. While these threats multiply with ever evolving technology when communication is faster than ever, the amygdalae are constant. For leaders, in their complex roles, encounter recurring international and domestic conflicts, personal attacks by a political opponent, criticism from an unfriendly nation; betrayal from a partner nation; negative information; national killings with guns; disrespect from a peer, disappointment when your political plan goes haywire, etc., can inflame the amygdala.

Some clues to overcome the negative response from the limbic system reveal themselves, but only with diligent mental practice of self-awareness. They surface as: 1.Body tremors; 2.Spasms in the Diaphragm; 3.Tension in the muscles, particularly in the celiac region; 4.Nausea; 5.Quickened heartbeat. Possible ways to reduce frequent unnecessary amygdala hijacks, and to allow the neo-cortex to take over are: 1.Building self-awareness; 2.Controlling the ego; 3.Mindfulness of breathing; and, 4.Meditation.

CONCLUSION

By the late 1900’s environmental concerns focused upon planetary interconnectedness and global ethics. But, we have become hedonistic. We are primarily selfish—not as altruistic as we think. Consciousness, known as “higher consciousness,” theologians and scholars tend to say, brings with it a UNITY—a sense of oneness and empathy with all things in the universe. This state is often described as cosmic consciousness—an absolute awareness with no distinction between Self and Other. But how can we know that anyone has achieved this? This question remains: is it possible to carve up the subjective experience of another human being? The answer is implicit in Thomas Nagel’s famous question, “what is it like to be a bat?” We cannot know, as we are not bats. How can we understand ourselves, the limbic system thwarts this. We live in the Johari Blind Window Pane (Luft and Ingram, 1955).

However, it can be safely understood that humans rarely reach higher stages of consciousness, let alone even simple self-awareness. Nietzsche and the existentialists asked a pivotal question: how can we know ourselves when we primarily look outward and at the failings of others? Indeed, one has only to look at the human history of war, torture, and vengeance to know pointing the finger at others has widened the distance between Self and Other, with the Self being deemed righteous and just, and the Other as evil and debauched. Friedrich Nietzsche posited that we humans are simply unknown to ourselves--*but* we think we know. This for Nietzsche is a puzzle, as it has been for many thinkers. “We have never looked for ourselves— so how are we ever supposed to find ourselves?” (Nietzsche, 1887). What brain science tells us today is how difficult it is to know oneself.

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