

chiefs” in which the rank and file band together to dominate and restrain would-be alpha males. (It’s uncannily similar to Marx’s dream of the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”)<sup>34</sup> The result is a fragile state of political egalitarianism achieved by cooperation among creatures who are innately predisposed to hierarchical arrangements. It’s a great example of how “innate” refers to the first draft of the mind. The final edition can look quite different, so it’s a mistake to look at today’s hunter-gatherers and say, “See, that’s what human nature *really* looks like!”

For groups that made this political transition to egalitarianism, there was a quantum leap in the development of moral matrices. People now lived in much denser webs of norms, informal sanctions, and occasionally violent punishments. Those who could navigate this new world skillfully and maintain good reputations were rewarded by gaining the trust, cooperation, and political support of others. Those who could not respect group norms, or who acted like bullies, were removed from the gene pool by being shunned, expelled, or killed. Genes and cultural practices (such as the collective killing of deviants) coevolved.

The end result, says Boehm, was a process sometimes called “self-domestication.” Just as animal breeders can create tamer, gentler creatures by selectively breeding for those traits, our ancestors began to selectively breed themselves (unintentionally) for the ability to construct shared moral matrices and then live cooperatively within them.

The Liberty/oppression foundation, I propose, evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of living in small groups with individuals who would, if given the chance, dominate, bully, and constrain others. The original triggers therefore include signs of attempted domination. Anything that suggests the aggressive, controlling behavior of an alpha male

(or female) can trigger this form of righteous anger, which is sometimes called *reactance*. (That’s the feeling you get when an authority tells you you can’t do something and you feel yourself wanting to do it even more strongly.)<sup>35</sup> But people don’t suffer oppression in private; the rise of a would-be dominator triggers a motivation to unite as equals with other oppressed individuals to resist, restrain, and in extreme cases kill the oppressor. Individuals who failed to detect signs of domination and respond to them with righteous and group-unifying anger faced the prospect of reduced access to food, mates, and all the other things that make individuals (and their genes) successful in the Darwinian sense.<sup>36</sup>

The Liberty foundation obviously operates in tension with the Authority foundation. We all recognize some kinds of authority as legitimate in some contexts, but we are also wary of those who claim to be leaders unless they have first earned our trust. We’re vigilant for signs that they’ve crossed the line into self-aggrandizement and tyranny.<sup>37</sup>

The Liberty foundation supports the moral matrix of revolutionaries and “freedom fighters” everywhere. The American Declaration of Independence is a long enumeration of “repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of absolute Tyranny over these states.”<sup>38</sup> The document begins with the claim that “all men are created equal” and ends with a stirring pledge of unity: “We mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” The French revolutionaries, similarly, had to call for *fraternité* and *égalité* if they were going to entice commoners to join them in their regicidal quest for *liberté*.

The flag of my state, Virginia, celebrates assassination (see figure 8.3). It’s a bizarre flag, unless you understand the Liberty/oppression foundation. The flag shows virtue (embodied as a woman) standing on the chest of a dead king, with the motto