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On the Origins of War

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Review of Mary Coleman's Blood of the Beloved II (Sarasota, FL: Peppertree Press, 2025), ISBN: 978-965950-15-1, 103 pages, hardcover, \$24.95.

Keywords: Blood of the Beloved II, book review, Franco Fornari, Gaston Bouthoul, Mary Coleman, multidisciplinary, psychohistory, sacrifice, war

This book is a multidisciplinary essay on the origins of war, a follow-up to Coleman's *Blood of the Beloved* (2007). That earlier work used a novel approach to the question of, "Why war?" Presented as a Socratic dialogue between an archaeology student and his professor in the year AD 2793, it invites readers to overhear their discussion after an imaginary 28th century "reenactment convention" examining violence and war in "primitive times," namely, the 21st century and earlier. In that book, Coleman makes it clear that while many of the people she writes about were actual historical figures, her book's imaginary premise makes it "a work of fiction" (p. vi).

The current volume is written for both general readers and specialists. It is a most welcome addition as it makes the ideas and arguments of the earlier book accessible in essay form, a format many readers find more familiar. Coleman tells us that "the second book enlarges, distills and emphasizes important points in the first book," and that she borrowed "from many disciplines ... military history, political science, psychology, psychoanalysis, psychohistory, neurology, psychiatry" (p. 83), as well as from the evidence presented, prehistoric archaeology.

Coleman makes explicit her specific contribution to the debate in the title of the first chapter, "The Planned Sacrificial Killing Ritual." Throughout the later chapters, she provides evidence from many cultures and periods, reminding us that sacrificial killing has been central to various cultures worldwide for millennia. As a backdrop to that evidence, we shortly encounter a summary of the largely agreed-upon psychodynamic processes at work in enemy formation preceding wars. She writes:

Sacrifice in war of their own young adults by a nation relieves the stressful crisis that led to it in the first place, unloads the conciliated internal bad feelings, distracts from their own collective

problems and cleanses the dissociated negative representations of their history. Sacrifice implies a consecration; the persons sacrificed pass from the common to the special, almost sacred, holy domain... (p. 3)

Coleman's argument is in direct line with the tradition of the now largely neglected French sociologist Gaston Bouthoul—who wrote on various subjects, including war, from the 1920s to the 1950s—and Italian psychoanalyst Franco Fornari, who agreed with Bouthoul's views, which he expressed in his book, *The Psychoanalysis of War* (1966). These authors agree that all wars share one fundamental thing: older men send younger men to their deaths. According to Bouthoul and Fornari, this amounts to delayed infanticide; in Coleman's words, "the blood of the beloved."

Coleman adds data previously not available to those earlier works, thus bolstering the argument. Bouthoul and Fornari were writing at a time when the massive scholarly literature on war that exists today was unavailable. Coleman is wise to keep those earlier arguments out of the picture. Of necessity, Bouthoul and Fornari had to rely on what seems today more like theory than evidence available from the social sciences and what we've discovered about the functioning of the brain in the last century. Coleman's conclusions rest on those findings.

Nowhere in any of her writing does one learn of Mary Coleman's credentials. Her modesty precludes her from mentioning them. Readers of reviews can benefit from knowing something about the strengths of the authors they are reading about. Before retiring, Dr. Coleman maintained a decades-long practice in pediatric psychology in Washington, DC. She is Emeritus Clinical Professor of Pediatric Psychology at Georgetown University School of Medicine and has published at least ten books, five on autism, including *The Autisms* (Oxford University Press, 4th ed., 2012) with Christopher Gilbert. She is a peace activist who has worked for CORE, was an early member of Physicians for Social Responsibility, and has lectured widely in the U.S. and around the world.

Dr. Coleman became interested in psychohistory in the early 1980s. She founded a branch of The Institute for Psychohistory in Washington, DC, where she hosted bi-monthly research meetings in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of those meetings were attended by members of President Reagan's staff. These credentials aside, the strength of her arguments rests on the extensive amount of behavioral data she provides rather than on her prominence as a physician, neurologist, activist, and scholar.

One short chapter is devoted to "War and Psychoanalysis/Psychohistory." In it, she writes: "There are many brilliant psychoanalysts and psychohistorians who have contributed to our understanding of war. There is such an abundance of interesting concepts that this chapter is a woefully inadequate summary" (p. 55).

One of Coleman's contributions to understanding war is the notion of The Sacrificial Quotient. The idea, buttressed by historical observation, is that the number of the beloved sacrificed in war bears a direct correlation with how long it takes for the next war to break out. The fewer the deaths, the swifter the next war is waged; the greater the numbers killed, the longer it takes for the next war to arrive. As in all the other parts of her presentation, this argument is derived from careful attention to documented studies of human behavior. The evidence corroborates Coleman's conclusion. The book also summarizes several theories of why wars happen, showing the complex interaction of economic, political, emotional, and neurological factors.

Ultimately, Coleman's goal is to move readers away from the impulses that drive us to go to war and find ways for us to act, as some cultures have, to find substitute behaviors that move us toward her 28th century dream scenario in which scholars look back on the ancient times of our day and wonder why we ever waged wars in the first place.

David Beisel, PhD, Professor Emeritus at SUNY, a founding member of the International Psychohistorical Association (IPhA) and a Research Associate of the Psychohistory Forum, has written widely on American and European history. His most recent publication is *Forging New Paths: Reflections on History, Culture, and Psyche* (Amazon, 2024) with co-author Irene Javors. He may be contacted at drbeisel1@gmail.com. □

Memorials

Jacques Szaluta: Psychohistorian and Holocaust Survivor

Paul H. Elovitz—The Psychohistory Forum

Abstract: This is the author's tribute to Jacques Szaluta, a European historian and psychohistorian who was a prominent teacher at the Merchant Marine Academy and a hidden child in the Holocaust. He recounts Szaluta's history and work, including his Psychohistory Theory in Practice.

Keywords: Holocaust, Jacques Szaluta, memorial, Pétain For and Against: A Survey of the Historical Debate, psychohistory, Psychohistory Forum, Psychohistory Theory in Practice

Jacques Szaluta (August 22, 1933–October 2024) was a hidden child in the Holocaust, a European historian and psychohistorian, a psychoanalyst, and for many years served as the moderator of the Psychohis-