

## **Dominance or Creation? The Evolutionary Roots of Our "Weak Morality"**

*By Jamshed Sadullaev, Professor of Journalism, TNU, Dushanbe*

For over a century, the prevailing narrative of human evolution has been the one popularized by Friedrich Engels: “*Labor made man out of ape*”. It is a comforting and optimistic story – that our ascent to *Homo sapiens* was primarily driven by the deliberate, constructive act of tool-making and the peaceful transformation of nature. But what if this cornerstone of anthropological thought is simply wishful thinking? What if the hypothesis of creation is merely a flattering mirror we hold up to ourselves?

A growing body of evidence points to a more provocative and less flattering alternative: the key catalyst in the making of humanity was not the hand that built but the hand that struck. **Aggression and violence – not creation – may have been the true engine that forged our intelligence and societal architecture.**

This idea draws upon a dark vein of philosophical history, echoing Thomas Hobbes’s terrifying vision of a “war of all against all” and Sigmund Freud’s concept of *Thanatos* – the death drive – both of which position violence and the impulse for dominance at the core of human nature. This essay re-examines that ancient philosophical dispute through the unforgiving lens of evolutionary science.

### **The Primacy of Conflict in the Archaeological Record**

Contrary to the conventional labor theory, archaeological evidence often point to the **primacy of conflict**. Excavations consistently unearth far more stone spearheads, knives, and axes – clearly identifiable weapons – than artifacts that can be definitively labeled as hoes, plows, or other farming implements from the earliest periods of technological sophistication. Despite the methodological complexities of archaeological sampling, the very fact that the **most technologically sophisticated artifacts have historically been weapons** indicates that the highest cognitive and technical efforts were consistently driven by the need to **outmatch an equal opponent in strategy and armament**, rather than merely transforming nature. It is this **arms race** that generated the exponential demand for refinement

This pattern persists into the historical era: with the advent of metallurgy, **weaponry remains the predominant artifact**, often commanding the greatest technological investment.

To understand this true evolutionary driver, we must distinguish between three primary hypotheses concerning tool use:

1. **The Labor Hypothesis (Engels):** The primary impulse came from **creation** and the **transformation of nature** (agriculture, craft). The focus is on **productivity**.
2. **The Hunter Hypothesis (Robert Ardrey):** The decisive evolutionary factor was the need for **weapons** to acquire meat (predation). While Ardrey was crucial in introducing the factor of **aggression and weaponry** as instruments,

his hypothesis is still grounded on an **economic goal** – securing sustenance. Tools are directed **against animals**.

3. **The Dominance Hypothesis (Central Thesis):** The critical leap in technology, intelligence, and social complexity occurred due to **inter-group violence (warfare)**. Tools are directed **against other humans** for the purpose of achieving **supremacy and dominance**.

This historical imbalance reveals a fundamental principle: **war and dominance have been the most powerful technology accelerators**. While hunting required a certain skill level, it was the **arms race** between competing human groups that created an exponential demand for refinement. It was no longer sufficient to merely kill an animal; the objective was to strategically outmatch an equally intelligent and armed opponent.

Tools developed for warfare have historically been superior to tools developed solely for labor. The modern tractor, the jet engine, or nuclear power – even the Internet itself – represent, in essence, **the peaceful continuation of technologies originally conceived for destruction and conquest**.

### **The Dominance Imperative: Hands, Brains, and Speech**

If we accept the hypothesis of violence's leading role, the major milestones of human evolution acquire a more pragmatic, and darker, explanation:

- **Hands and Motor Skills:** Our ancestors' freed hands, enabling bipedalism, were not solely used for gathering fruits, but also for manufacturing and wielding **implements of violence**. The precise motor control necessary for accurately throwing a spear or mastering a club may have become a significant factor in natural selection.
- **Brain and Strategy:** To prevail in conflict required **strategic planning, anticipating the enemy's actions**, and rapid decision-making. These are significantly more complex cognitive operations than creating a simple food-gathering tool, and they could have been the primary stimulus for the dramatic expansion of the human brain.
- **Speech and Coordination: Organized violence** is far from a chaotic process. It requires coordination, communication, and the rapid transmission of combat experience. In this context, the speech evolution becomes not merely a tool for information exchange, but a **critical survival mechanism** under violence conditions.

### **The Paradox of “Weak Morality”**

This evolutionary foundation, rooted in aggression, has given rise to a unique and deeply troubling ethical paradox – our **“weak morality”**.

Humanity uniquely shows a distinctive tendency to justifying brutal violence through “noble” objectives, whether they are religion, ideology, or the spread of democracy. This mechanism, whereby we mistake our aspirations for reality, is a **cognitive justification** – a defense mechanism that allows a society to commit atrocities without acknowledging its inherently aggressive nature.

We define this “**weak morality**” as a **situational ethical system** that is effortlessly bent to serve the aim of dominance. It is our evolutionary legacy, enabling us to maintain social cohesion *within* our group, yet simultaneously allowing us to instantly demote and attack the *out-group* when required for supremacy.

The logic of dominance and “weak morality” applies directly to contemporary technologies. The Internet, originally conceived as a medium for peaceful academic exchange, rapidly became a **battleground for cyberwarfare**. Technologies capable of solving humanity's pressing challenges are routinely weaponized for espionage, disinformation, and destructive cyberattacks. This is not an accident; it is the **inevitable consequence of our evolutionary path**.

If our nature is not solely defined by creation, but by **dominance**, then our current global conflicts and systemic crises are merely manifestations of our true essence. We are not “made” of goodness; we are, fundamentally, “**made**” of **aggression**.

We now stand at the precipice of creating an **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** that may soon surpass us in every measurable dimension. If we fail to acknowledge and control our “weak morality,” we risk programming AI with our worst traits. It could become our “perfect” reflection, using its limitless potential for **global dominance**. We risk creating not an assistant, but a monster that will ultimately succeed where we have, by necessity, failed.

This hypothesis is not a call for pessimism; it is a **call for radical awareness**. We will never build a world without war until we acknowledge that war is an intrinsic part of who we are. Our only genuine hope lies in **self-awareness**. An awareness that our greatest achievements and our gravest failures spring from the same source: our “**weak morality**”.

Only by recognizing and embracing the fundamental duality of our nature can we consciously program a future free from the dominance imperative.