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Don't you know who I am?

The history of arrogance

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Congratulations! This is probably the best book you have decided to read. It is shockingly current, it radiates immense wisdom, and it is entertaining. With this book a regular weeknight transforms into an inspiring matinee, which will shake up your fossilized conceptions of culture and the world in general.

Like most people, I generally have too high an opinion of myself.

When as a 16 year-old I announced to my grandfather that I knew quite a lot about life, his genial demeanor changed and the tongue lashing that came was as practised as only merchant, union activist, and venerated chairman of Alcoholic Anonymous group could give: "Boy, you don't know anything about life."

Have I changed as the years have passed? Do I converse sensibly with my parents? Do I listen to them? Yep. Arrogance fits juts as well at any age.

The hardest thing is to face our own limitations and especially accept them. Other people's advice is irritating. Few of us accept what the various aptitude test we take tell us about our own creativity and intelligence without gnashing of teeth. Accepting criticism is a problem for young and old.

Arrogance is always a miscalculation. How many of us evaluate other based merely on external appearance or some other single characteristic? How many of us draw conclusions about other people based on their professions, education, or social status? Or otherwise just fail to say hello?

Even though man has reached the Moon and unravelled his own gene map, our dealings with each other have not become any nobler than they were when we were hunting mammoths. Arrogance is the most useless of our feelings. History shows that arrogance has never led to anything but wars, catastrophes, hatred, and enormous numbers of failures, not least for the arrogant themselves. This book attempts to shed light on why arrogant, dismissive behaviour is so commonplace – and whether anything could be done about it.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 10 A.D. a Roman engineer, Julius Sextus Frontinus stated that inventions had long since come to the end of their road, and he saw no hope for developing anything new and revolutionary. When making a statement like that, one has to be as unyielding and inflexible as the Finnish bedrock. If Julius were alive today, then undoubtedly, he would still hold on to his view. In his ivory tower, he would laugh at computers and data communication satellites and snort about the efficacy of antibiotics as therapeutic agents.

How many of us think along the lines of Julius? Do we consider our own judgement to be supreme in quality, so that we never have to change our opinions? We know until the day we die what good taste is all about, what the best education is for our children, and which the right political party is. It is especially nice to dispense these thoughts to the younger generation. Encountering these characteristics in other people is aggravating, but naturally, our own obstinacy is only a sign of character.

Some people may even allege that this book is arrogant. Who am I to second-guess and judge other people's trials and errors? Arrogance is a feature that occasionally afflicts each and every one of us. It would be arrogant to claim that you have never been arrogant. Arrogance is an attitude that has been acknowledged early on in the epics, myths, and tragedies of several cultures.

In the Finnish national epic, *Kalevala*, the third poem is like a scene from any planning seminar oozing with testosterone, or a queue at a fast food counter where the current alpha male meets his competitor. The young Joukahainen is jealous of Väinämöinen for his reputed talent in singing the best of songs and knowing more than anyone else. Although Joukahainen's parents warn their young son about challenging his superior, he pays no heed to their advice. He claims to know more than anyone

else: "Good is the judgement of a father, Better still, a mother's counsel, Best of all one's own decision."¹

When Joukahainen encounters Väinämöinen, he pretends not to recognise him. A typical symptom of arrogance. He challenges Väinämöinen to a contest of lore. When Väinämöinen asks Joukahainen to present his wisdom, Joukahainen starts to list what he knows. Väinämöinen is amused when Joukahainen claims to have been present when the world was being created. Joukahainen loses his nerve and challenges the old-timer to a duel. Väinämöinen tries to calm him down, but in vain – Joukahainen threatens to chant a spell and turn cowards like Väinämöinen into pigs in a pigpen. He is pushing his limits. Väinämöinen gets angry at this arrogance, and as a result, "Till the copper-bearing mountains, And the flinty rocks and ledges Heard his magic tones and trembled; Mountain cliffs were torn to pieces, All the ocean heaved and tumbled; And the distant hills re-echoed."²

The old gent sings a magical chant that makes Joukahainen sink into a swamp, from which he only manages to save himself by crying for mercy and promising Väinämöinen his sister's hand in marriage.

This legend from the Finnish swamplands, sung in an archaic trochaic tetrameter, reiterates an ancient mythical narrative pattern in which arrogant behaviour gets its just desserts. Myths in different cultures are basically instructive narratives warning about vanity, stupidity, mendacity and, most of all, arrogance. The antique tragedies about Odysseus, who curses Poseidon, the sea god, and Oedipus, who is drunk with power, both repeat the familiar pattern. Healthy self-confidence is easily twisted into unhealthy arrogance. Success is self-perpetuating, and to become enchanted with oneself often leads to disaster. In ancient Greece, the most serious crime anyone could commit at the peak of success was to be overwhelmed with *hubris* (also *hybris*), that is arrogance, and to imagine oneself as equal to the gods. This referred to impudent self-esteem and ignoring one's own universal confines, governed by gods. People suffering from hubris think that they can do anything. This overwhelming self-confidence causes the person to misinterpret the surrounding world and make faulty assumptions. Finally, as a just retribution, he meets with Nemesis, the goddess of revenge.

Arrogance intrigued William Shakespeare, and many of his plays were tragedies about the destruction and suffering caused by power. One of his best known plays was about a king who lived in tenth-century Scotland, who stole the crown from his cousin, Duncan. *Macbeth* is a tragic story about a king dazzled by his own power. Macbeth uses his power ruthlessly and no longer trusts anyone. Fearing revenge, he is repeatedly driven to commit new crimes. Finally, he is dethroned by his own subjects.

¹ Original translation by John Crawford (1888)

² Original translation by John Crawford (1888)

The historian Barbara Tuchmann lists four types of behaviour that lead to divorce or getting sacked, to wars and catastrophes. The first one is tyrannical behaviour: a common characteristic in workplaces and at dinner tables. The second is unreasonable ambition. The third is the decadence and ineptitude which accompanies power, of which the fall of the Roman Empire is a good example. The fourth is abnormal stubbornness: striving to act against one's own interests. Why do people continue overfishing even though it is common knowledge that the tuna and cod are becoming extinct? Why are rainforests being destroyed even though the impact on global climate is well known?

In this book, I turn the leaves of history to point out events that have caused changes as a result of a ridiculous and trivial thing. I am looking for the catastrophic turning points of arrogance, *momenta* in the philosophical sense, that have changed the world, in one way or another. A screwed up moment can represent presumptuousness, resting on one's laurels, cultural smugness, or a feeling of self-sufficiency caused by a monopoly status. In these types of situations the tension has become unbearable, and finally an arrogant action or remark has been enough to break down existing structures. As a consequence, revolutions erupt, the air is cleared, and moral attitudes are restored – until the next breakdown...

I. When success goes to your head

In this chapter we find out why Alexander the Great wanted others to throw themselves at his feet, how the British parliament was born from bullying, and why Otto von Bismarck was involved in twenty duels.

It is a chemical process with a dramatic arc of its own when something goes to one's head. Alexander the Great conquered the whole of Central Asia, and clearly this was a task too great for him. Alexander had already declared himself the son of the Egyptian god Amon in Egypt, and tried to force his old comrades to worship him.

Conquerors usually do as they please, but there is a limit to everything. Alexander burned down the Persian capital of Persepolis in a drunken whim and killed his number one man, Cleitus, because he had overly praised Alexander's father Philip. Alexander became allergic to all kinds of comparison and criticism.

Callisthenes, Alexander's court historian, met the same fate as Cleitus. When Alexander tried to introduce the traditional Persian form of greeting royalty, *proskynesis*, his troops were convinced that something had gone to Alexander's head for good. For the Macedonian and Greek soldiers serving in Alexander's army, this form of greeting, accompanied by bowing deeply towards the king, was detestable. They only bowed like this to their gods. Callisthenes refused to greet Alexander as a god.

Some place themselves on the same level as, or even above, the gods. John Lennon stated at the height of his popularity in 1966 that Christianity would have to go. Christianity will disappear and collapse. "I am right," he declared, and continued that in the future everyone will notice that he was right. He ended his outpouring with the legendary sentence: "We are more popular than Jesus now." American radio stations began to boycott the Beatles and organised bonfires to burn their records. Death threats rained down on them. John Lennon apologised, but it did not stop the hate mail from pouring in. During their Boston gig, over 400 police officers and security guards were needed to protect the band.

Lennon had an ironic nature, but his statement that the Beatles enjoyed supra-divine popularity is a vivid example of how success can completely destroy one's sense of proportion. When this happens, it is easy to say things you will regret later. Success can go to anyone's head. After four pints, the publisher of the original Finnish version of this book admitted that after a couple of bestsellers he made a series of bad publishing decisions.

There is a specific term for this: *the victory disease*. It was used for the first time during the Second World War. The Japanese came down with the victory disease because they had successfully defeated China in 1937. In the flush of victory they attacked Pearl Harbour in 1941. After this, the

Japanese won battle after battle against the Allies in the Pacific region and Southeast Asia. These victories encouraged the Japanese to expand their secured zone, which caused significant strain on their logistics. The disease reached its peak in the Battle of Midway in 1942, when Japan suffered heavy losses.

Success is often difficult to handle mentally, which was evident in Alexander the Great's delusions of grandeur. The clinical picture includes the patient's extravagant belief in his own significance, and the impression that only the most important people are capable of understanding his particular genius. For the patient each new contact is a burden, until proven otherwise. Galileo Galilei was not necessarily the martyr to science that history remembers him to be. He was impatient and would not tolerate stupidity around him. The Pope took offence when he thought that the character Simplicio in Galileo's book about the solar system was modelled after him. In the book, Simplicio asks naïve questions and Galileo answers them in a fatherly way. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein used to consider discussions with his colleagues intolerable, since he thought the group was vulgar and had bad taste in dressing. Wittgenstein was irritated and would often even shout at other people if he perceived stupidity. Bertrand Russell, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1950, said to his mistress that when he conversed with ordinary people he felt he was using 'baby talk'. Murray Gell-Mann, the American physicist who invented the elementary particles also known as the quarks, received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1969. He stated in his modest manner: "If I have seen further than others, it is because I was surrounded by dwarves".

It is said that a snob is ashamed of his poor mother. In British universities a commoner student would have *s(ine) nob(ilitate)* 'not of noble birth' written next to his name. When the power of the royalty diminished in the 1800s, the snobs, wearing their club jackets, wanted to continue to imitate life in the court and distinguish themselves from the commoners. Arrogance is often the way people who have heightened their status anchor themselves anew in their surroundings. The impact of luck on one's own success is then forgotten. Old friends and home are then also forgotten. Gratitude dissolves like tears in rain. Then one begins to imitate the worst qualities of upper class behaviour.

One characteristic sign of success going to your head is making tacky demands. The many imaginative backstage riders serve as proof of this. This tradition was kicked off by the heavy metal band Van Halen. Once they had met with enough success, the band demanded a bowl of M&M's backstage, but also expected that all the brown coloured candies were removed from the bowl. The contract dictated that the stage area should be clean of brown coloured candies or otherwise the show was in danger of being cancelled. Barry Manilow, on the other hand, demands that the room temperature has to be constantly held at 18 degrees Celsius (around 65 degrees Fahrenheit).

The greatest diva of them all is Mariah Carey, who sometimes demands bunnies and kittens in her dressing room, but always insists that there is Evian-water and Cristal-champagne with bendy straws, and a personal assistant that caters to her every need. The assistant is, for example, required to attend to Carey's used chewing gum and make sure it ends up in the bin. During her tour in China, Mariah Carey had four cars, crammed with a total of 60 suitcases and 350 pairs of shoes. Once she sent 20 assistants to redecorate the toilets at a music store before her autograph signing session. She had to make sure that the toilet paper was the shade of pink she wanted.

From the point of view of the well-being of the planet, the riders of the entertainment business are harmless. It is considerably more dangerous when something goes to the heads of leaders, since their riders are more destructive than those of pop divas. At regular intervals someone with a larger-than-life ego pops up who wants to decide about world affairs on behalf of others. Most of the time, they have been ordered by God to do something significant. Napoleon said in 1811 to a Bavarian general: "Three more years and I will be the master of the universe."

According to Robert E. Kaplan, leaders like Napoleon who are drunk with power have blind spots: their excessive ambition, impossible goals, ergomania, and the need to be right. These are all emphasised by an overemphasised concern for their exterior appearance. These kinds of people exaggerate their own value, are arrogant and paternalistic, and interfere instead of delegate. They are dependent on gratitude and take credit for other people's accomplishments, but also blame others for their own mistakes. They worry excessively about publicity, and worship the material signs of success. They are enraged when criticised and are incapable of admitting their own errors and weaknesses.

It is often tiresome to meet ego trippers. They expect to be flattered, since silence can be interpreted as criticism. Philodemus, a philosopher of antiquity, thought that an arrogant man is always concerned about his status and abilities. He might think he is more important than other people, if he thinks he is doing important work. Or he is just convinced that his competence will ensure future success. Philodemus thought it was especially condemnable that these types of people define others through how they perceive themselves. Because an arrogant man is reluctant to work together and ask for advice, he usually carries the load of projects and tasks alone, and is very rarely capable of finishing them.

Philodemus keeps on firing: an arrogant man values his own nobility excessively. When a person like this treats other in a hierarchical and one-dimensional way, he also damages his personal relationships and erodes the structures of his own community. He is unequal in his friendships and very rarely behaves in a civilised or considerate manner. He does not want to acknowledge his weaknesses or ask for forgiveness. He is also incapable of showing gratitude to others, because he has convinced himself that he has shown his gratitude through merely accepting them. He despises philosophers, because he feels they cannot teach him anything. According to Philodemus, an arrogant man finally loses his mind, because he takes great risks that require a lot of effort and money.

Losing one's mind, ingratitude and self-sufficiency all point to the same thing. Success has changed the personality. Letting success go to your head can be looked at through brain chemistry.

When Alexander the Great and Napoleon gained power, the chemical structure of their brains changed. Their brains became flooded with neurotransmitters: dopamine and serotonin. The enormous regulating mechanism of the brain, comprising several receptor-mediated signalling networks, was activated in a new way. The nerve cells began to release neurotransmitters, which stimulated other nerve cells, and this caused the impulses to spread all over the nervous systems of Alexander and Napoleon. Something snapped in their heads.

Serotonin and dopamine affect our moods. This function is utilised in antidepressants. Dopamine induces pleasure and takes part in the regulation of emotions. It is also tightly connected to behavioural patterns in which one continually seeks rewards. Low amounts of serotonin and low numbers of serotonin receptors may even cause suicidal thoughts, whereas the serotonin levels rise in the brain of a person that is being praised and respected.

Evolutionary psychologist Robert Wright found that the leaders of chimpanzee packs had more serotonin in their blood than the other chimpanzees in the pack. The serotonin levels of the alpha male rose every time the pack responded to his boasting. Wright began to study whether hierarchy has an impact in the serotonin levels of humans as well. He discovered that those students who wielded power had more serotonin than those who could not decide on matters on the behalf of others, just like in the chimpanzees.

Serotonin and dopamine together can create the prerequisites for confident behaviour. When the nervous system is loaded with these substances, inhibitions towards other people diminish, as well as emotions of fear, anxiety and depression. Self-awareness increases and the person will feel energetic, happy and good.

Addiction to serotonin and dopamine is common to all who wish to be at the centre of attention or affect other people's lives. Relinquishing power is often impossible for them. Leaders addicted to neurotransmitters are drunk with power, and many have difficulties returning to everyday life when retirement is imminent: the need to make an impact is so big that most still want to sit on the boards of organisations or write letters to editors if there are no other ways to have an effect on things. Even grandchildren offer no joy if there are not enough neurotransmitters accumulating in the brain.

The secretion of serotonin and dopamine increases feelings of self-satisfaction. Everything seems to work out. One gets to use power. One gets to revenge. Success is followed by even greater risk-taking and a false self-security. A classic example of this is the former East Germany, whose leaders completely underestimated the frustration of their people. When the leader of East Germany, Egon Krenz, appeared on the seventh of May 1989 on television and with a straight face claimed that his socialistic party had won the support of 98.85 per cent of the voters, when the turnout percentage was only 98.77, this pushed the East Germans over the edge. The fact that the turnout percentage was only a few decimals below one hundred was so infuriatingly arrogant that for the first time hundreds of Germans reacted and demanded a recount. Protestors gathered in churches and collected lists of names to show that at least 10 per cent had voted against the government, and another 10 per cent had not voted at all. The irritation ballooned into an enormous popular movement that eventually tore down the Berlin Wall. In the ecstasy of success, the stakes get higher and higher, and eventually the sense of reality is dimmed. Then there is a risk of losing opportunity, of losing the moment.

In the year 1135, King Henry I of England died. The vast majority of the English barons lined up behind Henry's daughter Matilda and supported her as the heir to the throne, but William the Conqueror's grandson Stephen decided to fight for the crown. Matilda attacked England and conquered the western parts. Then she arrived in London. The people of London were eagerly awaiting Matilda's coronation. However, Matilda insisted she be treated like a princess. She arrived

in the city like a conqueror in a triumph, wore the marks of rank of a princess, and demanded that the higher ranking soldiers to show their respect by kissing her stirrups. She immediately imposed more taxes, contrary to her father's wishes. In the year 1148, just weeks after Matilda had arrived, she was banished from London and power was given to Stephen.

Matilda is probably one of the most short-lived monarchs in history. She was trying desperately to be a celebrity before her coronation, and psychologically put the cart before the horse. Matilda could definitely have benefitted from a good stylist.

Britain lost its prominence in world trade in the 1600s due to arrogance. The merchants collected vast profits, as much as 50 per cent. The East India Trading Company built marvellous ships, but due to the bloating caused by high profits, it began to freeze its excellent ship building engineering and gave in to corruption. Training was poor, sailors were treated badly, and experience was held in contempt. The Dutch were able to build their ships more efficiently and cheaper. In the 1600s, a fast and agile ship model called the *flyut* made the Dutch the kings of the spice trade.

Sometimes, the moment is lost even though there is nothing wrong with the product. The copy machine manufacturer Xerox had dominated the market since 1948. It was on top of the world in 1969 when its sales peaked to over a billion dollars.

The management had already been blinded by success. During the stockholders meeting the managers bragged that they could take care of all the information needs of their clients. But in 1971, the managers of Xerox decided to buy IBM, regardless of all the warnings that this attempt to buy would probably destroy Xerox. Xerox spent a billion dollars to get IBM at the same time that the company opened a research facility in Palo Alto. Xerox collapsed just five years later.

During this failed acquisition, researchers at Xerox had come up with the first personal computer, the mouse, the Ethernet-network, the pre-Windows graphic user interface, the flat screen and the laser printer. Others, like Microsoft and Apple, got rich on these innovations, but not Xerox.

It has become a habit to repeat that the faint signals from the environment need to be listened to, but whose senses are susceptible enough to catch these signals? And who is smart enough to change their opinion in time? If anything, humility and gratitude for one's own success are forgotten and replaced by the belief that success was only due to oneself, and that everyone else should show the appropriate appreciation.

Bullies at school and at work.

The cruise ship Silja Symphony is on its way from Helsinki to Stockholm on the 24th of October 2006. The Swedish bartender is closing the Atlantis Restaurant. A loud bunch of men are celebrating at a table. An Estonian man approaches the bartender and demands he keep the bar open. The bartender refuses, whereupon the Estonian begins to pour drinks himself. The bartender tries to stop him. The Estonian man tells the bartender that he is the financial director of the ship company. He points at the well-dressed but drunken bunch and tells him that they own the ship. Nevertheless, the bartender refuses to continue serving drinks. The Estonian punches the bartender, and his glasses break. The doormen are alarmed, at which point the owners stagger to the Bali

Restaurant in another part of the ship. The closing of the bar is still bothering them. The managers remind the ship's personnel that they own them, and that the staff must do as they are told. The managers threaten to fire the employees, whom they call 'chambermaids,' and sell Silja's 'rusty barge' to China. Next, the bunch marches to the tax free shop. It had already closed. The drunken bunch goes to the shop manager's cabin, wake him up, and demand that he open the shop. The men are angry because the cigars in stock are the wrong kind. They drink 800 euro worth of cognac straight from the bottle. The next morning, the bunch come to breakfast with cans of beer in their hands. The toaster catches on fire when the managing director stuffs it with fish.

When the events of the cruise reach the media, the Estonian ship company's Finnish managing director tries to play down the events by saying it was a normal cruise and that the directors were 'normally drunk'. The employees' Swedish trade union is furious and demands an apology. The managing director does not think there is anything to apologise about.

On the night of the same day, the Finnish director offers an apology. The Estonian directors do not say a word. The owners of the ship acted like all conquerors: throughout history the losers have been humiliated in one way or another. For example, in republican Rome, the fallen kings and their families were marched in chains behind the victorious general in a pageant.

According to Robert Sutton, research shows that when people gain power they begin to talk more and take what they want. They do not care what others say or want, and they also do not care how those with less power react to their behaviour. The people in power act ruder and usually start to use situations and other people as means to satisfy their own needs. Being blinded by power like this prevents them from seeing that they are acting like jerks.

Sutton wrote a book on the obnoxious people in organisations, whom he calls 'assholes'. Assholes make our work environment barbaric. Sutton states that no one needs to tolerate bad behaviour. Most of the time those guilty of it are the managers. They are not only paid more, but they also insist others show them constant homage and flattery.

In a study on the working conditions in the European Union (Third European Survey on Working Conditions) over 21 500 employees were interviewed. Nine per cent reported that they had been intimidated or bullied, mostly by their managers and superiors. Two studies from 1997 and 2003 revealed that over 90 per cent of the nurses in America had been subject to name calling and humiliation. Most of the time, those who did the humiliating were doctors.

One of the most catastrophic workplace bullies was John Lackland. The son of King Henry II and Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine, John rose to the throne in 1199 when his brother Richard the Lionheart died. John was then the ruler of the most powerful kingdom in Europe. He could not handle the vast power he wielded, and in a short time he created a reign of terror. In 1204, he lost Normandy and was given the nickname 'Lackland'. He stayed mostly in England after that, but under his reckless rule the whole land was soon in disarray.

John had inherited all the worst qualities from his father. He had been his father's pet and despised by his brothers. He had never really grown up. His behaviour was reckless. As a young man, he interrupted the priest's sermon during the Easter mass a number of times and demanded shorter

speeches. This shocked everyone. At nineteen, he was given the task of conquering Ireland with the help of his allies. When the Irish chiefs greeted John, he and his troops burst out laughing when they saw the garments and long beards of the Irish. John also tugged the soldiers' beards and made fun of them. Then he arrogated their lands and castles to the English. In just one week he had angered everyone in Ireland.

John did not trust the English barons, and he let it show. He replaced local sheriffs with rugged and ambitious chiefs from Normandy, who did not respect the local customs. The peasants were used to the King's taxes, of course, but the arrogant and cruel manner in which the taxes were collected made the sheriffs particularly detested. The sheriff of Nottinghamshire and the forester of Sherwood, Philip Marc, were particularly disliked. The savage rule made some of the peasants flee into the forests, and thus the tales of Robin Hood were born.

Of all of John's characteristics, the most destructive was his suspiciousness. As is common among people thirsty for power, John thought that others were as thirsty for power - and as untrustworthy - as he was himself. He offended his closest comrades during battles and refused to give acknowledgement to anyone. He treated prisoners of war with uncommon cruelty, even by the standards of his time. Everywhere he went, he caused anger.

Richard the Lionheart's faithful bearer of arms, William de Briouze, had initially been in John's good favour. He had proven to be a trustworthy and valuable soldier during the battles of Normandy. He had taken John's nephew Arthur, who John regarded as competition, as a prisoner. But William was too close to the centre of power. It was rumoured that William knew something about Arthur's death, a matter that would have shocked everyone. It was even believed that John had had his own nephew murdered. In 1208, John decided to take action. A popular way of keeping the barons under check was to claim their children as hostages. When the king's men came to Williams castle, his wife Matilda refused to give over her children to "the king who murdered his own nephew." For two years the farmers on William's lands were harassed, and Matilda and his eldest son starved to death. William died in exile in France in 1211. The official reason for this harassment was that William owed money to John. On the other hand, Geoffrey Hindley has calculated that under the terms of John's loan, William would have been able to pay the last of his debt only in 1917!

William had been one of the most influential barons in England, but even he was defenceless against John's fickleness. John only trusted those who were totally dependent on him.

When John tried to win back the French areas in 1214 and failed, he still hadn't looked into the mirror, but continued collecting heavy war taxes. This was the last straw for the barons, and England arose in revolt.

On the 15th of June 1215, John met the rebelling barons on the banks of the Thames in Runnymede, and he had to sign the 'Great Charter', the *Magna Carta*. The result was a 63-clause document that changed the traditions of political power. The 'Great Charter' became a sort of constitution, which defined the rights of the monarchy. The charter declares that a free man could be arrested or driven into exile only according to the laws of the country. Clause 40 was also significant: it declares that

no one can buy or withhold justice. If the king wanted to increase his income, he would have to call his vassals to a meeting. Such meetings were the starting point for the development of the English constitutional system. The regulations of the *Magna Carta* aimed at preventing the king's attempts to use his status as the supreme judge to his own economical benefit. The economy of the state began to be managed more sensibly. Very quickly the *Magna Carta* became a symbol of protection from all forms of oppression.

The oldest document in the world concerning prerogatives and freedoms was the angry outcome of a nation plagued by endless power struggles. John had not been able to negotiate with experienced and mature men, whose goals had been different from his. The fact that the barons got tired of John's reign, which lasted 15 years, was more a sign that the noteworthy families in England simply wanted to live in peace with their king.

Thanks to John's foolishness, a process began in England that led to the formation of a parliament. Originally the word *parliament* meant 'to speak', and it was used to describe the after dinner discussions of monks in monasteries. In the year 1329, a Benedictine monk called Matthew Paris from the St. Albans monastery began to use the term for the meetings of prelates, barons and earls. In 1295, the first parliament was formed, which had representatives from the clergy, the orders of knighthood, the bourgeoisie and the peasants.

The parliament was born as a counter-reaction against the bullying behaviour of the monarchs, and its task was to oversee that power was not wielded recklessly. Niccolo Machiavelli probably had monarchs like John in mind when he wrote about how simple it is for the rulers to lose their power. A prince has to keep his hands off the fortunes and women of his subjects. People forget their father's death quicker than the loss of fortune, Machiavelli states.

Then what explains the behaviour of leaders such as John Lackland?

As gregarious animals, we are used to hierarchy. We need a leader, who will assign us tasks and prevent conflicts within the group. But first we need to grapple over leadership. Competition over leadership emerges even in a group as small as three people. In larger groups the majority, those who have low status, rarely speak. They talk to those higher in the hierarchy politely and with respect, but there is not much attention paid to them. The status of a particular individual is based on how valuable he has been in the past. Those who are believed to be of some benefit are the ones who are listened to. Overly talkative, low status individuals are punished, whereas those in a leading role are asked to speak more. If the leader of the group is too dominant, the weaker members might form an alliance against the leader. After a coup, a new group is formed. A coup is in fact a counter-reaction to excessive bullying. Regrettably, hierarchies always create an opportunity to pick on the weaker, which is the greatest form of arrogance. It is based on the assumption the bullies have that they are somehow superior to those they are picking on. A king might paw the wives of his subjects. A managing director might boss around the bartenders and cleaners on the ship he owns. In its most grotesque form, it is enough for someone to feel superior if the other person is harmless enough.

In order to understand this pride that is so innate in us, we must travel to a beach in Thailand that is favoured by Europeans and observe how some tourists behave. On the coral reefs of the Andaman Sea lives a leopard shark, who is a particular favourite of the tourists. A leopard shark preys on fish, crustaceans, molluscs and worms, which it finds with the help of its whiskers from the sea bed. The leopard shark is not dangerous to humans. This is an important fact. Because the shark is quite placid, many have the temptation to show off by ill-treating the poor fish. To them, picking on a shark is heroic. These Sunday divers who splash about after this false respect are also those who are most likely workplace bullies who, without a second thought, pick on those who cannot defend themselves.

One girl at a lower secondary school in Helsinki was picked on because she was “too nice and did not object to school.” Those students who are attentive and good-hearted may be subjected to bullying more often than others. In the school world being different, for example being nice, is worthy of contempt. Children are also easily subjected to bullying if they have a disability which differentiates them from the rest, for example, wearing a hearing aid.

Unfortunately, bullying is often shrugged off by explaining that it is only a part of normal children’s behaviour. Everyone has been picked on sometime, it takes two to fight, and so on. Children are trained to defend themselves. At their worst, parents egg their children on from the bleachers like a pack of hyenas gone wild. The results of a study by the research company Ipsos about adult behaviour at children’s sports events are downright embarrassing. A total of 23 000 adults were interviewed in 22 countries. Over 35 per cent of the adults had behaved aggressively. The most staggering results were obtained from the United States. Sixty per cent of Americans had witnessed outbursts of rage by another adult.

Most worrying is the trend that bullying at school continues as bullying in the workplace. Dan Olweus has done longitudinal studies on bullies and their victims. He went over the data of more than 130 000 students. According to Olweus, seven per cent of Norwegian children are bullies, and nine per cent are victims. With the help of these results, it is possible to predict the bullies of the future. They are typically from families in which the parents are either cold or aggressive, or from families that allow their children to be aggressive. Olweus kept track of the fate of the bullies: 60 per cent of the bullies were convicted of at least one crime before the age of 24. For comparison, only 10 per cent of those who did not bully others were convicted.

Finland cannot be proud of her statistics relating to bullying. Finns are twice as likely to be bullied at work as the citizens of any other European country. According to EU 27 statistics published in 2008, the most bullying in the work place after Finland occurs in the Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium and France. The figures for workplace bullying in the other Nordic countries are notably lower than in Finland. For example, the figures for Sweden are only one-fourth those of Finland.

John Archer, who has studied violence among young men, claims that in most cases violence is based on gaining stature in situations where this cannot be reached by friendly and legal means. What could be a faster way to gain rank among mental adolescents than by tormenting those who are weaker.

Is there indeed a beast living within us, a predator embedded in our genes, that forces us to accept the idea that others need to be conquered?

The statistics of the Roman and Ottoman Empires are enough evidence of man's desire for power and his aggression. The war historian Azar Gat states that almost 70 per cent of the Roman rulers died violently, while in the Byzantine, on the other hand, the corresponding figure was 60 per cent during the years 395-1453. The Ottoman Empire tried to solve the matter in an even more pragmatic manner: the chosen ruler killed all his brothers, or at least blinded them. This made all the heirs fight for their survival with even more vigour.

Psychologists Martin Daly and Margo Wilson came to the conclusion in their 1983 research that two-thirds of murders were due to the fact that the murderers felt they had been treated with disrespect and were attempting to save face through their actions.

History is filled with examples of behavioural patterns where violence has been justified in the name of honour. Different values at various times mould our views on what is noble and what is honourable. The seventh crusade to Egypt, led by Saint Louis of France, is a cautionary example of this. Louis' brother, Robert de Artois, was a mischievous and headstrong chief, who wanted all the glory for himself. He did not wish to wait for his brother's troops when he attacked the city of El Mansura.

When the English knight William of Salisbury attempted to convince Robert of Artois to await reinforcements, Robert ridiculed him as a coward. In those times this was a grave insult that no knight could tolerate. William joined the rest of the crusaders in the fateful attack, and Saint Louis lost a third of his cavalry in one blow due to his brother's ambition. The Seventh Crusade of 1248–1254 ended in the siege of Al Mansurah and the subsequent capture of Saint Louis, who was only released in exchange for a considerable ransom.

Old women were renowned in Viking culture, but the same could not be said of old men. In Egil's saga, the heroic protagonist dies as a ridiculed aged man. Egil's greatest sin was not having died as a young man on the battlefield. Viking culture was founded on a simple idea that might is right. Every argument could be solved with a duel, and as long as blood was not drawn, everything was expected to be forgotten in the morning. Vikings seemed to fear mischievous slander more than violence. Leaving a manly saga behind was most important, above all else.

Emphasizing one's own jealous ego is a cause of violence and many wars. In his monolithic *War in Human Civilization*, Azar Gat regards humans as prideful creatures who are continuously competing for social respect. In traditional societies, even the smallest defamation led to violence. Honour was a social commodity that contributed to success: protect your honour, and the chances of choosing your partner increased.

The Duke of Sully, prime minister to King Henry IV of France, tells us how in 17th century France the tolerance for slander was so low that according to his calculations 8 000 nobles died in duels over the course of 12 years. The 'Iron Chancellor', Otto von Bismarck was always ready for combat, and during his studies at the University of Göttingen he took part in over 20 duels.

Bismarck became the head of state through his brutal understanding of power, which he called 'Realpolitik'.

The modern world has not become any more civilized since the days of Bismarck. Turn on the television at any given time of the day and you will find a program in which somebody is voted out or someone loses a worm-eating contest. Nothing can be done without competition. Those with no competitive streak are frowned upon as if they were sick or lame.

One of the incorrect presumptions about happiness is that to be happy one must make something of himself. One has to be famous or respected, preferably both. This goal is reached through power or success. Sometimes competing on television is sufficient.

Wars and social classes are all a result of overflowing egotism, claims Steven Tyler, a researcher of selfishness and egocentricity in human history.

In liberal societies, people compete vigorously – after all, this is what the market economy was created for. Not every society functions this way. The aboriginal peoples of Australia and Papua New Guinea do not acknowledge strong leadership, because their communities are democratic by nature. By the virtue of their lack of egocentricity, the aboriginals are more empathetic towards animals and have a respect for nature. Even their sport and games are non-competitive.

When missionaries tried to encourage the people of Papua New Guinea to play football, they were not at all interested in winning, but rather kept on playing until the score was even. The local aboriginals also loathed the idea of defeating one another.

The egocentric chase after happiness in our societies has led to extreme competitiveness. We lose our sense of community to self-centredness and drown in the sea of individualism. We have to fight over scarce natural resources: power and success. We educate ourselves to achieve a better status and to make more money. National and personal competitiveness has become the mantra of the 21st century. Children are indoctrinated at a young age to see the world as a Darwinist battle for survival, where the one with the most toys wins.

The thinly veiled message of reality television, business guides and consultants is that we are taking part in a race in which we never get enough money, respect, winnings or sex, and that it is we who should have more of the fruits of life than others.

To the average employee, this type of talk is completely alien. Work productivity is on everybody's lips, and those with skill are made to feel guilty for being a burden on the national economy. People are assessed and rated; strange standards are imposed on them. A fire fighter can douse a fire, but the number of fires doused cannot be set as a standard, or can it? Not everything can be tendered, although in Finland even icebreakers are supposed to be profitable.

Competition has indeed created more beauty, better sports performances and works of art, as well as better health care and medication, but at the same time, continual discontent and overwhelming competing may also be damaging to mental health, claims Richard Sutton. Competing may lead to arrogance towards those who are seen as inferiors, and on the other hand to jealousy towards those with more possessions and status.

At their worst, the rules of business culture emphasize the basic instincts of human masses: we are competitive tribal monkeys, who never cease fighting for power.

The most macabre example of the craziness of excessive competitiveness was the energy company Enron, whose bankruptcy is one of the greatest disasters in the history of economics. The bankruptcy was caused by Enron's directors' overzealous drive for competition and their blind faith in their own excellence. One of Enron's directors was Jeff Skilling: a super-intelligent powerhouse, but a horrible manager. Skilling did not truly understand the human character. He expected humans to conduct themselves purely based on logic, even though no one – not even Skilling himself – acts this way.

Skilling hired intelligent and creative theoreticians. Young MBAs were given free rein to innovate with the company's millions. Skilling believed that greed was the ultimate motivation. Those who did not want to earn the company enough money were shown the door. Loyalty was bought. Skilling wished to hire chaps who 'peaked'. This meant that if an employee was gifted in a limited area, their other shortcomings did not matter. Egotists and backstabbers were hired, as long as they had the required talent. People were not required to get along with each other either. Quite the opposite. Internal conflict created competition, which Skilling believed to increase innovation. His workers were unbelievably disdainful and they despised the company that paid their salaries. All of them had received a sophisticated title, just like on Wall Street.

Skilling invented a system in which workers were rated on a scale of 1–5. Skilling himself was not rated. Those rated with a 1 received a huge bonus. Those rated with a 5 knew they were in danger of being sacked if they did not improve their performance before the next review. Panels were arranged in hotels in which a person's teamwork and communication skills were analysed while his or her photo was projected onto the screen. If workers received a 5 for teamwork, but made money, they were rated a 1. Ultimately, the ranking depended on who could argue, rationalize or shout most convincingly. Sometimes managers intentionally sabotaged each other in order to support their own candidates. The system took a disproportionate amount of time and money: the reviewing sessions could start at eight in the morning and last until midnight.

Skilling thought that he was enhancing intellect, innovation and dedication, but in fact promoted cruelty, selfishness and greed. No one was interested in customer relations, because bonuses were not paid in accordance with the satisfaction of the customer. Enron began to reap fame as a company that steals from its customers.

Richard Sutton is particularly critical of those organizations that are continuously ranking people. Underlining hierarchy and the pecking order brings out the worst in us. Alpha males and females become selfish and disrespectful, while workers at the lowest level withdraw and become underachievers. Many organizations reinforce this type of culture by giving rewards to a chosen few and treating others as second class citizens.

The performance of a team may be reduced to in-fighting and competing if an individual's superiority over others and immediate economic results are continually accentuated. In the fast-

paced world of business mutual trust is often broken. According to Sutton, the unfortunate consequence is that friends become enemies. Challengers are taken down due to internal competition. Those organizations that forbid extreme internal competition are not only more civilized than others, but they also yield better profits. An organization that does not breed fear attracts talent. Ideas are shared more freely in them. People go through an awful lot of trouble to avoid humiliation and to ensure respect.

Sutton's views are afforded proof by statistics. Over two hundred professionals in charge of human resources were interviewed by Novations Group. These professionals worked in organizations that employed over 2500 persons and in which employees were evaluated systematically. The data was analyzed by researchers Jeff Pfeffer and Bob Stutton from Stanford University, who concluded in their 2006 article that mandatory evaluation caused lower productivity, inequality, scepticism, negative attitudes towards commitment, less teamwork and distrust in leadership.

No star can shine forever. Competing and winning are wonderful things, if it is possible to respect and help others at the same time. However, when one advances by running down others, the end result is usually a tragedy.

Neurologist and researcher Kiti Müller sees competitiveness as extremely destructive to the human psyche when it is combined with the inexperience and arrogance of youth. She has met patients during her work who have had an exceptional, speedily ascending career path, but who have lost their ability to work before their 40th birthday. Their burnout was preceded by a manic phase, during which the upstarts slept only a few hours and worked hard during weekends. They had no experience of failure, nor did they know the limits of their work capacity. Youth and limited work experience had fuelled a strong belief in their own capabilities. In addition, these young upstarts have trouble returning to the workplace, because they are assigned to less demanding duties.

Müller emphasizes the importance of empathy and self-knowledge. When I understand my own mind and moods, I am able to empathize with someone else's feelings.

Despite this, continuous internal competition is seen as normal, and even quite positive, in many organizations.

Oracle, an intelligent and extremely competitive company that sells database management software, highly resembles its CEO Larry Ellison. The company's products are used by insurance companies, libraries and airlines in their booking systems. Despite this, nothing seems to be enough for the world's sixth richest man. Ellison admitted as early as 1997 that his mission was to overtake Microsoft as the largest software company in the world. That is what he is paid for, and if he is not sufficiently aggressive in his work, they should get rid of him, proclaimed Ellison.

The mutual bravado of the American information technology giants border on being legendary. Competitive directors will not let go of rivalry even outside the workplace. Larry Ellison competed for years with Paul Allen, one of the two founders of Microsoft, over who owned the longest luxury yacht. Ellison's *Rising Sun* was originally planned to measure 120 metres in length, but when Ellison found out that Allen's *Octopus* boasted 128 metres, he changed his plans and had his own yacht built 138 metres long. Ellison's yacht is so massive that it cannot fit into most harbours in the

world, let alone the guest harbours preferred by jet-setters. Thanks to hubris, Ellison has had to content himself with docking his colossal boat between tankers and container ships in industrial harbours.

At times we are dealing with more subtle matters, such as who catches the biggest fish or who is allowed to ski at the head of the group. The skiing trips of former President of Finland Urho Kekkonen were renowned for their subtle etiquette. It was not considered proper for anyone to catch a bigger fish or to ski faster than Kekkonen. An interesting anecdote has been written by John Simon about the meeting of two alpha males. Pekka Herlin, CEO of Kone, one of the leading companies in the world manufacturing elevators and escalators, took part in one of President Kekkonen's skiing trips only once. Both men wanted their time in the spotlight just as badly, and so the trip was quite agonising for Herlin. President Kekkonen always demanded that he must not be overtaken on the skiing trail, as he always had to start from the pole position and be the first to finish. The skiing trip of 1963 was too much for Herlin, who overtook the President and skied back to the cottage before the others. This also made it certain that Herlin was never again invited on the President's skiing trips.

In the animal world the meeting of two alpha males inevitably leads to a brawl. Humans are no better. At the worst, the winner's ego is bloated to bursting by the other's loss.