

Influences on the Ideology of Eric Harris

Peter Langman, Ph.D.

Introduction

Eric Harris viewed himself as brighter and more insightful than virtually everyone else. He looked down on the masses of humanity as unthinking conformists. He celebrated instincts over society's conventions. He rejected traditional values as meaningless concepts. He believed he was going to kick-start natural selection and eliminate inferior beings. He created an ideology that in his mind justified his desire for destruction. Where did these ideas come from?

This article explores the parallels between Eric Harris's ideas and those of people he admired: Adolf Hitler, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Hobbes, and probably Charles Manson. We know that Hitler fascinated Eric from his choosing to write about him for a school research paper, the references to Hitler and the Nazis in Eric's journal (along with swastikas and SS insignia), and the testimony of Eric's friends that he idolized or worshipped Hitler.

We know nothing specific about Eric's interest in Hobbes and Nietzsche. All we have is his statement, "I just love Hobbes and Nietzsche."¹ What he read of their works remains unknown. Eric did take a philosophy class at school that may have introduced him to Hobbes and Nietzsche. He may also have done significant reading on his own. Whether or not Eric had an accurate understanding of Hobbes and Nietzsche is not relevant here. Eric would have read these philosophers from his own perspective, perhaps already knowing that he would commit mass murder, and looking for justification or validation of his worldview and intentions.

It also seems likely that Eric drew inspiration from Charles Manson. This is speculation, however, because Eric left no written record of having studied Manson. Nonetheless, Eric was a

huge fan of the movie *Natural Born Killers* and used the initials "NBK" as a code name for the attack on Columbine High School. In this movie, Manson is referred to several times as the master serial killer. In addition, Dylan Klebold wrote a research paper on Manson, and the two boys must have talked about him. There are many similarities between Eric's ideas and those espoused by Manson and his followers. Although similar thoughts could be a coincidence, the numerous parallels suggest that Eric may have modeled himself after Manson.

The idea that Eric took in ideas and made them his own is supported by a comment from his journal: "my brain is like a sponge, sucking up everything that sounds cool."² This article is an investigation to see just how much Eric absorbed from the men he admired.

Eric and Manson

There is no direct evidence that Eric Harris read *Helter Skelter* by Vincent Bugliosi, the book about Charles Manson that Dylan used as the primary source for his research paper. However, given Eric's fascination with violence and the fact that his best friend read the book, it would not be surprising if Eric read *Helter Skelter*. In addition, the number of parallels between Eric's writings and statements found within *Helter Skelter* suggests that Eric not only read the book, but also deliberately patterned himself after Manson.

Manson was said to have two enemies: the police, and African Americans.³ Eric identified the police as the "person" he hated the most.⁴ Elsewhere, in a list of people he hated, he wrote "cops! Stupid law enforcing people!!!"⁵ He also spouted racist comments and jokes,⁶ and wrote about sending blacks

back to Africa.⁷ His racism is of particular interest because as a younger boy his best friends included one who was black and one who was Asian.⁸ In fact, a friend of his at Columbine who was part Mexican commented that Eric was not racist toward him at all,⁹ and an African American classmate said Eric showed no signs of racism toward her.¹⁰ It thus appears that Eric's racism was not deeply rooted, but adopted as an attitude during adolescence.

One of Manson's followers said Manson "wanted to do a crime that would shock the world, that the world would have to stand up and take notice."¹¹ Eric wrote, "I want to leave a lasting impression on the world."¹² Helter Skelter, the race war that Manson believed he would start, was supposed to "be all the wars that have ever been fought built on top of the other."¹³ Eric wrote that his attack would be like "the LA riots, the Oklahoma bombing, WWII, Vietnam, Duke and Doom all mixed together"¹⁴ (Duke and Doom are video games). Manson "was convinced he could personally start that war himself."¹⁵ He told his followers, "I'm going to have to start the revolution."¹⁶ Similarly, Eric thought he could start a revolution: "Maybe we will even start a little rebellion or revolution."¹⁷ Elsewhere he said, "We need to fucking kick-start the revolution here! ... If we have a fucking religious war – or oil – or anything. We need to get a chain reaction going here."¹⁸

The war that Manson envisioned was to result in global destruction: "Charlie was going to bring on the ruination of the world, and this is why all the murders were committed."¹⁹ Manson himself said, "I'm going to kill as many of you as I can. I'm going to pile you up to the sky. I figure about fifty million of you."²⁰

Like Manson, Eric thought in terms of global destruction. One passage in his journal says, "If you recall your history the Nazis came up with a 'final solution' to the Jewish problem. Kill them all. Well, in case you haven't figured it out yet, I say 'KILL MANKIND' no one should survive."²¹ He also wrote:

If I can wipe a few cities off the map, and even the fuckhead holding the map, then great. Hmm, just thinking if I want all humans dead or maybe just the quote-unquote "civilized, developed, and known-of" places on Earth, maybe leave little tribes of natives in the rain forest or something. Hmm, I'll think about that.²²

Manson and his followers rejected the idea that words had real meanings. They also rejected basic concepts of right and wrong, guilt, crime, and sin. If the concepts have no meaning, then people are free to do whatever they want and feel no remorse. This rejection of values and meaning appears repeatedly in *Helter Skelter* as well as Eric's writings. For example, a Manson family member said, "Sorry is only a five-letter word."²³ Eric wrote, "Sorry is just a word."²⁴ Other quotes from *Helter Skelter* demonstrate a rejection of morality:

- "All words had no meanings to us"²⁵
- "Guilty. Not guilty. They are only words."²⁶
- "There is no crime, there is no sin, everything is all

right."²⁷

- "Whatever is necessary, you do it. When somebody needs to be killed, there's no wrong."²⁸

Eric repeatedly made statements like those from *Helter Skelter* in which he rejected traditional values and morals:

- "There is no such thing as an actual 'real world.' Its just another word like justice, sorry, pity, religion, faith, luck and so on."²⁹
- "Fuck money, fuck justice, fuck morals, fuck civilized, fuck rules, fuck laws... DIE manmade words ... There's no such thing as 'True Good or True evil.'"³⁰
- "'Morals' is just another word, and that's it."³¹
- "Just because your mumsy and dady told you blood and violence is bad, you think it's a fucking law of nature? Wrong."³²

Manson made many comments that indicate he thought of himself (literally or figuratively) as Jesus. He identified himself as "Charles Manson, also known as Jesus Christ, Prisoner."³³ A follower of his said, "Charlie claimed that he had lived before, nearly two thousand years ago, and that he had once died on the cross."³⁴ Manson referred to the court case against him as "this trile [sic] of Man's son."³⁵

Though Eric rejected Jesus, he frequently referred to himself as God or god-like. He wrote "Ich bin Gott," which is German for "I am God" in his own planner and in the yearbooks of at least four classmates.³⁶ He also wrote, "I feel like God and I wish I was."³⁷ Both Manson and Eric viewed themselves as the ones who established laws. Manson said, "I make laws. I'm the lawmaker."³⁸ Eric wrote, "My belief is that if I say something, it goes. I am the law."³⁹ When he was arrested in 1967, Manson listed his occupation as "minister."⁴⁰ According to a friend, Eric was known as "preacher."⁴¹ Eric himself identified one of his nicknames as "reverend."⁴²

Eric and Dylan, in fact, had several nicknames. The most puzzling ones are names of colors. Eric was "Indigo" and Dylan was "Green."⁴³ Why? What meaning was there in colors? Manson created the Order of the Rainbow and gave his closest disciples color nicknames.⁴⁴ For example, Squeaky Fromme was known as "Red" and Sandra Good was known as "Blue."⁴⁵ Perhaps Eric and Dylan imitated this practice.

Both Manson and Eric admired Hitler. Manson thought "Hitler had the best answer to everything."⁴⁶ In addition, Manson "said that Hitler was a tuned-in guy who had leveled the karma of the Jews."⁴⁷ Eric made clear his admiration for Hitler when he wrote, "I love the Nazis."⁴⁸

Manson preached that murder was not as bad as killing animals or plants. He valued nature over humanity: "To Manson it was not wrong to kill a human being, but it was wrong to kill an animal or plant."⁴⁹ Manson said, "I'd rather kill people than animals."⁵⁰ When Manson spoke of killing millions of people, he commented, "I might be able to save my trees and my air and my water and my wildlife."⁵¹ Eric seemed to echo Manson's ideas. He wrote about eliminating humanity but preserving nature: "the human race isn't worth fighting for, only worth killing. Give the Earth back to the animals, they deserve it infinitely

more than we do.”⁵² He also commented, “I think we are all a waste of natural resources and should be killed off.”⁵³

Thus, despite any statements from Eric that he was interested in Manson, there are many reasons to think that Manson was a significant influence on Eric.

Eric and Hitler

The day he attacked Columbine High School, Eric wore a shirt that read “Natural Selection.” Eric often wrote and spoke about survival of the fittest and natural selection.⁵⁴ In his mind, this meant eliminating “unfit” people from the planet. This desire was similar to what Hitler and the Nazis sought to do.

In the fall of his senior year, Eric wrote a research paper on the Nazis. One of the themes he focused on was the Nazi goal of eliminating people who were deemed unfit for life. In his paper, Eric wrote about “the euthanasia program that led to the killing of approximately 100,000 lives that were ‘not worth living.’”⁵⁵ He also wrote, “in Nazi Germany, all mentally disabled people or ‘incurable mental defectives’ were killed.”⁵⁶ In addition, “Arithmetic was used to show how ‘wasteful’ the mentally challenged were and how much money could be saved by euthanasia.”⁵⁷

In Eric’s journal we see these same ideas:

NATURAL SELECTION. Kill all retards, people with brain fuck ups.... Geeewd! People spend millions of dollars on saving the lives of retards, and why? I don’t buy that shit like ‘oh, he’s my son, though!’ so the fuck what, he ain’t normal, kill him. Put him out of his misery. He is only a waste of time and money.⁵⁸

Elsewhere he wrote, “Retards!!! They are a waste of time and money and effort and energy and space and lots of other stuff too! They need to DIE!!”⁵⁹

Eric also wrote about the Nazis’ belief in their racial superiority as well as their discrimination against foreigners: “The German people wanted only pure Germans in their country.”⁶⁰ These ideas appear in Eric’s journal: “Blacks ARE different ... we should ship yer black asses back to Afrifuckingca were you came from. We brought you here and we will take you back. America = white.”⁶¹ On his website Eric wrote, “Foreigners!! Get out of my country!!”⁶²

When it came to women, Eric wrote in his paper on the Nazis, “Throughout time women have tried to be treated as equals to males ... in Nazi Germany, the women were supposed to be ‘glad’ to stay home and cook and clean all day long.”⁶³ In his journal he wrote, “Women, you will always be under men. It’s been seen throughout nature, males are almost always doing the dangerous shit while the women stay back. It’s your animal instincts.”⁶⁴ (Similar views of women as second-class citizens can be found in Manson, Hobbes, and Nietzsche, too.)

The disregard for human life combined with a high regard for animal life that was noted previously with Manson is relevant here, too. Though Eric had no difficulty killing people, he wrote on his website that he will hurt anyone who is mean to

animals.⁶⁵ Was Eric a cold-blooded killer who happened to be an animal lover? Or was he influenced by the Nazis? Among Eric’s papers was a page with a quote from Himmler about his lack of concern regarding the lives of Russians, Czechs, and Jews. In the midst of the passage, however, he refers to Germans as “the only people in the world who have a decent attitude toward animals.”⁶⁶ Here we see complete callousness regarding human life, mixed with pride in treating animals well. This is the same combination of attitudes that Eric exhibited.

Finally, there is a passage on Eric’s website that is puzzling. He asks, “YOU KNOW WHAT I HATE!!!? Freedom of the press. I hate that part of the Bill of Rights.”⁶⁷ Why? Perhaps his negative attitude toward freedom of the press was derived from the Nazis. In his paper wrote about the Nazi’s opposition to freedom of the press and quoted Hitler saying, “We have to put a stop to the idea that it is part of everyone’s civil rights to say what he pleases.”⁶⁸

Thus, Eric endorsed the Nazis’ attitude towards “defective” people, their racial bigotry and ethnocentrism, their relegation of women to a subordinate position, and other attitudes. In his paper, of course, he presented the Nazis in a negative light, stating, “The Third Reich, led by Adolf Hitler, was one of the most evil and racist forms of government ever.”⁶⁹ This was merely for show, however. In his journal, Eric made the following comment: “I love the Nazis ... I fucking can’t get enough of the swastika, the SS, and the iron cross. Hitler and his head boys fucked up a few times and it cost them the war, but I love their beliefs and who they were, what they did, and what they wanted.”⁷⁰

Eric and Hobbes

A number of ideas in Eric’s writings have parallels among the works of Thomas Hobbes. A couple of these are minor similarities, and some are fundamental to Eric’s worldview. A small example is their attitudes toward math and science. Hobbes celebrated math and science as sources of truth. He wrote of “infallible rules, called Science.”⁷¹ He referred to the conclusions of geometry as being “indisputable.”⁷² Eric echoed Hobbes, “Only science and math are true, everything, and I mean everyfuckingthing else is Man made.”⁷³

Another small, but interesting, parallel is seen in their comments on bravery. According to Hobbes, “To be bold in danger when the situation demands it is *pulchrum* [Latin for noble, honorable, or glorious] ... If the situation doth not demand it, it is stupidity.”⁷⁴ Eric commented, “People who are said to be brave or courageous are usually just STUPID.”⁷⁵ Did Eric just happen to make a comment on bravery and stupidity, or was he echoing what he read in Hobbes?

More substantive similarities are seen in their preoccupation with the difference between humanity in its natural state vs. its civilized state. Eric celebrated human nature and instinct and criticized the artificial nature of society and civilization. He wrote in his journal:

Human nature is smothered out by society, job, and work and school. Instincts are deleted by laws⁷⁶ ... Society tries to make everyone act the same by burying all human nature and instincts. That's what schools, laws, jobs, and parents do ... the few who stick to their natural instincts are casted out as psychos or lunatics or strangers or just plain different. Crazy, strange, weird, wild, these words are not bad or degrading. If humans were let to live how we would naturally, it would be chaos and anarchy and the human race wouldn't probably last that long, but hey guess what, that's how its supposed to be!!!! Societies and government are only created to have order and calmness, which is exactly the opposite of pure human nature.⁷⁷

Thomas Hobbes also wrote about the artificial structure of society:

But as men, for the attaining of peace and conservation of themselves thereby, have made an artificial man, which we call a commonwealth; so also have they made artificial chains, called *civil laws*.⁷⁸

Hobbes and Eric also viewed values and concepts as nothing more than words created by society. Hobbes wrote, "A common-wealth, without sovereign power, is but a word."⁷⁹ Elsewhere he wrote:

For the Laws of Nature (as *Justice, Equity, Modesty, Mercy*, and (in sum) *doing to others, as we would be done to*,) of themselves, without the terror of some Power, to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural Passions, that carry us to Partiality, Pride, Revenge, and the like. And Covenants, without the Sword, are but Words.⁸⁰

As noted above in the discussion on Manson, Eric frequently commented that words had no real meaning, and that cherished values were nothing more than words:

Fuck money, fuck justice, fuck morals, fuck civilized, fuck rules, fuck laws ... DIE manmade words ... people think they apply to everything when they don't/can't. There's no such thing as True Good or True evil, it's all relative to the observer. It's just all nature, chemistry, and math.⁸¹

Eric's insistence that there is no true good or evil is seen in Hobbes's comments regarding war:

The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law, no justice. Force and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues.⁸²

In Eric's mind, he was involved in a "two man war against everyone else."⁸³ Thus, using Hobbes as a guide, there is no right and wrong, no justice or injustice. In war, force and fraud are virtuous. The idea that force and fraud are cardinal virtues would have been appealing to Eric. He prided himself on his ability to deceive others, and he was preoccupied with accumu-

lating, and using, force against others.

Other quotes from Hobbes may have struck Eric as he planned his attack. For example, "All men in the state of nature have a desire and will to hurt."⁸⁴ If Eric read this, it must have validated his own sadistic desires. Similarly, Hobbes wrote, "In the natural state of men ... *a sure and irresistible power confers the right of dominion and ruling over those who cannot resist*."⁸⁵ Eric's reading of this passage would have justified his grandiose desire to have power over others. The same is true of the following passage:

Nature hath given to *every one a right to all*; that is, it was lawful for every man, in the bare state of nature ... to do what he would, and against whom he thought fit.⁸⁶

Thus, in a state of nature, people could do whatever they wanted to others. Eric liked to think of himself as someone outside of society, someone living according to his natural instincts. As such a person, his reading of Hobbes may have told him that he had the right to do whatever he wanted to the people in his life. The idea that "a sure and irresistible power confers the right of dominion" brings us to a discussion of Nietzsche, who coined the phrase "a will to power."

Eric and Nietzsche

It is no surprise that Eric was drawn toward Nietzsche. The title of one of Nietzsche's books was *Beyond Good and Evil*. Eric clearly subscribed to the idea that there was no such thing as good and evil and would have liked Nietzsche's comment, "We sail right *over* morality."⁸⁷

Nietzsche, like Eric, celebrated human instincts, and identified the primary instinct in men as "the will to power." He wrote, "Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will – namely, of the will to power."⁸⁸ He also stated, "What is good? All that elevates the feeling of power, the will to power, the power itself in man."⁸⁹ Eric was driven to feel powerful. The day that he obtained his first firearms he wrote, "I am fucking armed. I feel more confident, stronger, more God-like."⁹⁰ He wanted power and created a situation in his attack in which he had the power of life and death over others.

As one who celebrated the will to power, it is perhaps natural that Nietzsche expressed disdain for weakness: "What is bad? Everything that is born of weakness."⁹¹ Eric, too, expressed disdain (and more) for people he viewed as weak. He noted that he once vandalized the house of a "weakling."⁹² He also wrote, "I want to grab some weak little freshman and just tear them apart like a wolf, show them who is god."⁹³ Here we see his will to power and his hostility toward the weak. Along the same lines, Eric would have read the following quotes with approval: "Life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, conquest of the foreign and weaker, oppression, harshness" and "Life always lives at the expense of other life."⁹⁴

Another key idea in Nietzsche's work is the concept of the

“superman,” i.e., the man who was superior to the masses of people: “What is the ape to man? A ridicule, a grievous shame. And that is just what man is to be to the Superman – a ridicule, or a grievous shame.”⁹⁵ In one passage, Eric looked down on people from a grandiose sense of superiority: “How dare you think that I and you are part of the same species when we are soooooo different. You aren’t human. You are a robot.”⁹⁶ Elsewhere he wrote, “I feel like God and I wish I was, having everyone being OFFICIALLY lower than me.”⁹⁷ He clearly viewed himself as a superior being.⁹⁸

Eric would have reveled in the following passage from Nietzsche: “He shall be greatest who can be loneliest, the most concealed, the most deviant, the human being beyond good and evil.”⁹⁹ Eric would also have subscribed to Nietzsche’s idea that “The strongest and most evil spirits have so far advanced humanity the most.”¹⁰⁰ Along the same lines, Nietzsche stated that true advance

... always appears in the guise of a will and a way to *greater power* and is always accomplished at the expense of numerous lesser powers. The extent of a ‘progress’ is even *measured* by the mass of all that had to be sacrificed for it; humanity as mass sacrificed to the growth of a single *stronger* species of man – that *would* be an advance.¹⁰¹

The idea that the measure of human progress can be gauged by the number of weaker people who had to be sacrificed fits in well with Eric’s preoccupation of making the world a better place through eliminating lesser beings.

In fact, Eric’s obsession with what he called natural selection cannot only be traced to Hitler, but to Nietzsche, too. Nietzsche stated, “Sick people are parasites on society. It is indecent to keep living in a certain state.”¹⁰² Elsewhere he wrote, “The weak and the failures shall perish ... and they should be helped to do this.”¹⁰³ Finally, Nietzsche wrote of “breeding humanity to a higher level,” which included “the ruthless extermination of everything degenerate and parasitical.”¹⁰⁴ Eric voiced similar ideas regarding getting of “retards” and other people he saw as “degenerate and parasitical.”

Similar to the ideas noted in the section on Hobbes, Nietzsche celebrated the instinctual man over the civilized man:

- “Man is the most bungled of all the animals, the sickliest, and not one has strayed more dangerously from its instincts.”¹⁰⁵
- “Hostility, cruelty, pleasure in the chase, in sudden assault, in change, in ravage – all this turning against the possessor of such instincts.”¹⁰⁶
- “The demand is, that man emasculate himself of those instincts with which he can be a foe, can injure, can be angry, can exact revenge.”¹⁰⁷

Eric, like Nietzsche, celebrated instinct: “Don’t follow your dreams or gods or any of that shit, follow your fucking animal instincts. If it moves, kill it.”¹⁰⁸ It is easy to see that Eric’s idea that laws delete instincts could well have come from his reading of Nietzsche. Eric noted, “Society tries to make everyone

act the same by burying all human nature and instincts.”¹⁰⁹ Or, as Nietzsche put it, “All ordered society puts the passions to sleep.”¹¹⁰

As noted above in the section on Manson, Eric wrote I “think we are all a waste of natural resources and should be killed off.”¹¹¹ Perhaps he was influenced not only by Manson, but Nietzsche, who wrote, “The world is beautiful, but has a disease called Man.”¹¹²

There is a passage in his journal where Eric writes about a hypothetical situation: “If [a man] crashes into a school bus full of kiddies and they all burn to death, it’s his fault. It’s only a tragedy if you think it is, and then it’s only a tragedy in *your* own mind so you shouldn’t expect others to think that way also.”¹¹³ Perhaps Eric was reflecting on Nietzsche’s comment, “There are heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to look tragic.”¹¹⁴

Eric may have taken heart in Nietzsche’s comment, “Our highest insights must – and should – sound like follies and sometimes like crimes.”¹¹⁵ Eric knew that his ideas would be seen as folly or craziness: “the majority of the audience won’t even understand my motives either! They’ll say, ‘ah, he’s crazy, he’s insane, worthless!’”¹¹⁶

Eric might have been thrilled by Nietzsche’s idea of the “beautiful terribleness” of a crime: “The lawyers defending a criminal are rarely artists enough to turn the beautiful terribleness of his deed to his advantage.”¹¹⁷ After all, Eric had written, “imagine THAT you fuckers, picture half of Denver on fire just from me and Vodka [Dylan’s nickname]. Napalm on sides of skyscrapers and car garages blowing up from exploded gas tanks ... oh man that would be beautiful.”¹¹⁸

Nietzsche’s writings could help explain a puzzling aspect of Eric’s thinking – his mocking disdain for Christianity. Though it is not unusual for adolescents to stray from their religious upbringing, Eric’s hostile comments about Jesus are extreme: “Jesus is dead ... get over it!!!”¹¹⁹ and “Go Romans! Thank God they crucified that asshole.”¹²⁰ For a boy from a Catholic family, these comments are hard to comprehend. Perhaps Eric was influenced by Nietzsche’s scathing comments about Christianity. Though it is impossible to find one passage that sums up Nietzsche’s attitude toward Christianity, the following quote demonstrates how harsh he could be: “I call Christianity the one great curse, the one enormous and innermost perversion ... I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind.”¹²¹

Nietzsche may also shed light on the question of why Eric was willing to die in the attack at Columbine. Several passages in Nietzsche’s works argue that self-preservation is weakness and that truly great men expend themselves through acts of self-abolition:

- “Wanting to preserve self is the expression of a distressed condition, a restriction of the proper fundamental instinct of life, which aims at *expansion of power* and in this desire threatens and sacrifices self-preservation.”¹²²
- “All great things perish through themselves, by an act of self-abolition.”¹²³
- “The genius – in work, in deed – is necessarily a prodigal:

that he spends himself is his greatness.... The instinct for self-preservation is unhinged as it were.”¹²⁴

It can certainly be said that Eric’s instinct for self-preservation was unhinged. Perhaps he was so immersed in Nietzsche’s ideas he convinced himself that he was destined to perish in an act of self-abolition by spending himself in his greatness. It is also interesting that Nietzsche wrote, “The thought of suicide is a great consolation.”¹²⁵

Eric’s writings are notable for the contempt he expresses toward people. He seemed to derive great pleasure from despising others. Perhaps this attitude found support in his reading of Nietzsche: “What is the greatest thing ye can experience? It is the hour of great contempt,” and “I love the great despisers.”¹²⁶

Summary

This article is an exercise in speculation and comparison. We don’t know that Eric read *Helter Skelter* or what works of Hobbes and Nietzsche he encountered. Nonetheless, this brief review of the ideas of Manson, Hitler, Hobbes, and Nietzsche suggests that many ideas Eric espoused had their roots in the thinking of men he admired: the idea of being a “superman” who was more highly evolved than others; the idea that social conventions and laws smother instincts; the idea of starting a revolution that would leave millions dead; the idea of exterminating inferior people – all of these, and more, can be traced to one or more of Eric’s heroes. In fact, this article has demonstrated that various puzzling attitudes of Eric’s might also be a result of his “sucking up” the views of others. These include his opposition to freedom of the press, his preference for killing people over animals, and his virulent anti-Christian attitude.

The ideological influences explored in this article do not explain why Eric became a murderer – that is best understood through his personality dynamics – but they do provide insight into Eric’s thought processes. His rampage was not an impulsive act, but rather a carefully considered action. In his mind, mass murder made sense. Comparing his writings to statements of his heroes gives clues to understanding the thoughts behind his rampage.

Notes

- 1 Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office, *Columbine Documents*, 1999, p. 26,017.
- 2 Jefferson County, p. 26,014.
- 3 Bugliosi, Vincent, and Curt Gentry. *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1994, p. 153.
- 4 Jefferson County, p. 26,859.
- 5 Jefferson County, p. 26,784.
- 6 Jefferson County, pp. 3,532; 10,755; 26,013; 26,015.
- 7 Jefferson County, p. 26,009.
- 8 Bartels, Lynn, and Ann Imse. “Friendly Faces Hid Kid Killers: Social, Normal Teens Eventually Harbored Dark, Sinister Attitudes.” *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, April 22, 1999; <http://denver.rockymountainnews.com/shooting/0422bdag7.shtml>.

- 9 Jefferson County, p. 10,829.
- 10 Achenbach, Joel, and Dale Russakoff. “Teen Shooter’s Life Paints Antisocial Portrait.” *Washington Post*, April 29, 1999; www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/daily/april99/antisocial04299.htm
- 11 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 123.
- 12 Jefferson County, p. 26,343.
- 13 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 249.
- 14 Jefferson County, p. 26,343.
- 15 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 294.
- 16 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 395.
- 17 Jefferson County, p. 26,343.
- 18 From the so-called Basement Tapes (videos that Eric and Dylan made about the upcoming attack). Available at <http://columbine.free2host.net/quotes.html>.
- 19 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 569.
- 20 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 651.
- 21 Jefferson County, p. 26,010.
- 22 Jefferson County, p. 26,011.
- 23 Bugliosi, p. 563.
- 24 Jefferson County, p. 26,005.
- 25 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 146.
- 26 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 511.
- 27 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 312.
- 28 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 600.
- 29 Jefferson County, p. 26,006.
- 30 Jefferson County, p. 26,010.
- 31 Jefferson County, p. 26,012.
- 32 Jefferson County, p. 26,007.
- 33 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 291.
- 34 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 315.
- 35 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 437.
- 36 Jefferson County, pp. 26,087; 960; 2,234; 10,713; Art Harris, “From Little League to Madness: Portraits of Littleton shooters,” *CNN*, April 30, 1999. <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1998/schools/they.hid.it.well/index.html>.
- 37 Jefferson County, p. 26,005.
- 38 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 651.
- 39 Jefferson County, p. 10,417.
- 40 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 315.
- 41 Jefferson County, p. 10,646.
- 42 Jefferson County, p. 26,859.
- 43 Jefferson County, pp. 26,859; 26,241; 25,989.
- 44 Sanders, Ed. *The Family*. New York: Avalon, 2002.
- 45 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 661; see also Sanders, *The Family*, p. 482.
- 46 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 479.
- 47 Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, p. 316.
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