Critical Acclaim for

Unraveling the Riddle of the Holocaust:

The New Darwinian Understanding of War, Terrorism and Genocide

By Daniel Kriegman, Ph.D.

A fascinating and expansive account of the evolutionary nature of warfare. Important reading for anyone interested in knowing more about the human desire for violence. And hopefully, this knowledge provides direction for a future that reduces the need for human conflict.

—Andrew Newberg, M.D., bestselling author of *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*, Ballantine Books.

Psychologist Kriegman presents a case for an evolutionary basis for tribalistic aggression and religious belief.

According to the author, it seems impossible to make sense of the "monstrous history of organized human violence" that reaches its grim zenith in genocidal action. However, he aims to do precisely that in these pages, relying on an evolutionary perspective that analyzes the development of human behavior due to adaptive pressures. Over time, he asserts, humans ... used their superior cognitive abilities and verbal skills to "enhance their tribal cohesion" with religious ideologies, moral belief systems, and extraordinary loyalty requirements. ... Kriegman's account distinguishes itself from the crowded field of evolutionary biology by refusing to reduce religious impulses to a particular gene, and by acknowledging that organized religion has persisted because it contributes not only to survival, but to a search for meaning. However, he avers that religion was an adaptation to facilitate conflict, making it a principal barrier to the "elimination of divisive, antagonistic group identities and the false beliefs that facilitate warfare." The best aspect of Kriegman's monumental effort is its expansive survey of relevant literature; he provides a fine synopsis of the debates among evolutionary biologists and psychologists regarding war and religious belief. ... Throughout, the book often takes for granted that religious belief is false ... and that "in the most successful religious systems, belief *without* evidence is honored."

A magisterial ... work ... presented as a defense of science and enlightenment humanism.

—Kirkus Reviews

In a world riven by competing violent ideologies untethered to reality, Dr. Kriegman fearlessly risks offending everyone to present a rethinking of the relationship of war and religion grounded in evolutionary biology. The intriguing possibilities of hitherto unimagined solutions that this new understanding opens up gives reason for hope beyond the illusions of utopian ideologies. Whether nodding in agreement or shouting in dissent, readers will be challenged and changed by *Unraveling the Riddle of the Holocaust.*

—Kevin DeLuca, Ph.D., Professor of Communication, University of Utah, author of *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*, Guilford Press.

[*Unraveling the Riddle* has] the makings of an important book. I'm very, very positive about it. It's straight, strong, courageous, and true. [It's] very courageous to directly use the Nazis as an example of either some kind of a human horror, madness or so on, or are they just perhaps an extreme example of a certain kind of selected behavior.

—Robert L. Trivers, Ph.D., renowned evolutionary biologist, winner of the Crafoord Prize "for his fundamental analysis of social evolution, conflict and cooperation," and author of *Social Evolution,* Benjamin/Cummings.

The central thesis of this book, the human capacity for mass violence is "deeply human" rather than inhuman and is the direct result of humans evolving from great apes who naturally organize into competitive groups using coordinated violence, with larger brains enabling the formation of extended identity groups based on religious and ideological beliefs. **There are plenty of deeply human stories in the book, which is the layer I enjoyed the most. The author's personal memories, observations about humanity in general, and the myriad examples of violence.** ...

The intellectual honesty [with which] he approaches the difficult question of holocausts (yes, in plural), is truly admirable. Another level is the scientific explanations and exploration of evolutionary biology and how it explains our capacity for violence. ... [T]he whole text is a rich tapestry of rhetorical, philosophical, and scientific exposition, blending historical reflection, speculative fiction, evolutionary psychology, and even political commentary. Part of the fun and challenge is to follow where the author takes you in any given paragraph. He employs a multidisciplinary voice that shifts between the eloquent skepticism, imaginative detachment of science fiction, and the analytical rigor of contemporary social science. The tone is often critical and reflective, using irony and juxtaposition to underscore the paradoxes of belief

and conflict. ... Kriegman had a lot to say about [religion] ... and it all boiled down to this: **Religion is not the root cause of war, but rather a culturally evolved tool that amplifies innate human tendencies toward group-based aggression.** It is a provocative, intellectually charged argument that challenges conventional narratives by synthesizing evolutionary theory, political history, and cognitive science. ...

[T]his approach explains a lot of why war happens and how religion plays a role in it. I want to thank the author for challenging me ... **It was the kind of mental exercise I have not done since graduate school. But it was worth it. I felt my cerebral muscles working overtime.** Just as with physical exercise, I not only got mentally stronger but also gained a lot from it. The plethora of ideas, connections, and topics I could explore now based on the references from this book, is amazing.

—Gabor Por, *Jewish Book World*

Dr. Kriegman's book goes to both the evolutionary and existential heart of what motivates and gives meaning to human warfare. Kriegman leads us to appreciate how the sacred belief that dying for one's deity confers eternal life allows humans to deny the rationally known limits of our mortal condition; and—as in the Hamas Charter—to declare and, indeed, experience the most brutal violence as the ultimate, sacred gift to one's deity. Kriegman's exploration of individual human motivation in both the clinical and evolutionary literature freed him from him from a long history of understanding fighting and warfare as bodily (innate and instinctual) and/or as a paranoid psychopathological process.

—Malcolm Owen Slavin, Ph.D., psychoanalyst and author of *The Story of Original Loss: Grieving Existential Trauma in the Arts and the Art of Psychoanalysis*, Routledge.

Unraveling the Riddle of the Holocaust is tremendously insightful. It has important implications for research on conflict resolution as well as for current policy debates ... In the scope and sweep of its argument, the book is a magisterial accomplishment.

—Matthew Levinger, Ph.D., Professor of International Affairs and Director of the National Security Studies Program at the George Washington University, former Director of the Academy for Genocide Prevention at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the author of *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions*, United States Institute of Peace Press.