00:00 [music playing]

00:14 Psychologists have been moving their work from the university

00:17 laboratory to the world of advertising and political

00:20 campaigns since the early 20th century.

00:23 If opinions could be manipulated and consent

00:26 and aesthetic preference could be engineered,

00:28 then there was money to be made and power to be gained.

00:32 If the psychologist possessed not only an understanding

00:35 of how the mind worked, but tools

00:37 that could shape its working in desirable fashions,

00:39 then they could be remunerated handsomely for it.

00:44 This may have struck some as unseemly.

00:46 But surely it wasn't harmful.

00:48 In the first half of the 20th century,

00:49 psychology had the luxury of debating whether a subconscious

00:53 mind existed and whether scientific methodology required

00:56 limiting the field of study of stimulus and response.

01:00 But after the horrors of World War II, psychology changed.

01:05 Suddenly there was a pressing question about human beings.

01:09 How could people have done this?

01:13 The specter of the Holocaust raised deep and troubling

01:16 questions about the human mind and its relation to authority.

01:20 The field of social psychology began in earnest

01:23 to take these questions very seriously and, as a result,

01:27 altered our understanding of ourselves

01:29 and our relation to the world.

01:31 The reaction to Nazi atrocities in the scientific world

01:35 is shaped by what are perhaps the three most

01:37 famous psychological experiments... Stanley Milgram's

01:40 obedience study, Solomon Asch's groupthink

01:43 study, and Philip Zimbardo's Stanford prison study.

01:47 Taken together, they stand as a significant challenge

01:51 to the Enlightenment picture of humans as rational beings

01:54 and left us with serious concerns about ourselves.

02:00 The first of these occurred in 1951

02:02 when the Polish psychologist Solomon

02:04 Asch, working at Swarthmore College,

02:06 tested the ability of people to act independently.

02:10 Asch's experiment followed a long line of work

02:13 in the 20th century on conformity.

02:15 Going back to the early 1900s, researchers

02:18 like Edward Thorndike, the president of the American

02:20 Psychological Association, noted that all one had to do

02:24 is to inform people that supposed experts or most

02:28 of the people preferred something different from them

02:31 to get them to later change their opinion.

02:36 When asked the first time by one assistant,

02:38 test subjects would give opinions and preferences.

02:41 Later, after a second assistant, whom the subject did not know

02:44 was being fed information from the first interview,

02:47 again asked about the same opinions and preferences

02:50 but this time prefaced the question with false information

02:54 that some important figure or most of his or her peers

02:58 preferred something different.

03:00 Many of the subjects reported different preferences

03:03 to the second assistant, bringing their choices in line

03:07 with the purported authority or the majority.

03:11 Thorndike thought this meant that he

03:13 was able to shape preferences.

03:14 Or could it be that he was just able to shape behavior?

03:19 If you're in marketing or if you're

03:20 a behaviorist who doesn't buy into the concept of a mind,

03:24 then who cares?

03:24 You got what you wanted... Predictable and controllable

03:28 human action.

03:31 But Asch wondered what was really going on.

03:34 So he created a similar setup.

03:36 Test subjects would enter a room and be

03:38 seated at a table with seven other supposed test subjects.

03:42 Really they were actors playing the role of test subjects

03:45 while really being confederates working with the researcher.

03:48 A researcher walked in and informed everyone

03:51 that he was studying perception and asked

03:54 that each of the participants look at the two charts

03:57 he had placed in front of the room.

03:58 Now, one of the charts had a single line on it.

04:01 The second chart had three lines, labelled one, two,

04:05 and three.

04:06 One of the lines on the second chart

04:08 was the same height as the line on the first chart.

04:11 And it was the job of the test subjects

04:13 to say which one it was.

04:14 Now, it needs to be stressed this was not Fechner's barely

04:18 noticeable difference here.

04:19 It was plainly obvious what the correct answer

04:22 was in all cases.

04:26 They would go around the table.

04:27 And the real test subject was seated so that he

04:30 would be the last person asked.

04:32 Now, for the first three go rounds,

04:34 the confederates all gave the correct answer,

04:36 and the test subject would follow.

04:38 But on the fourth, the confederates

04:41 would all give the same wrong answer.

04:44 And now the fun began.

04:46 There were 18 sets of lines.

04:47 And of those, the confederates would get six correct

04:51 and 12 wrong by design.

04:54 The question is, how often the test subject would go along

04:59 with the majority in saying something he knew to be false?

05:03 The answer was that 75%, three out of four,

05:09 answered with the faulty majority at least some

05:12 of the time.

05:13 Asch showed that once people started conforming,

05:17 they were much more likely to continue.

05:18 When people began by setting themselves out as independent,

05:22 they, too, were more likely to remain independent.

05:25 The test subjects were interviewed

05:27 after the experiment and reported

05:30 some interesting reactions.

05:34 Of those who always answered correctly,

05:36 some were simply confident in their ability

05:38 to complete the simplistic task.

05:40 But others thought they were factually wrong

05:43 in their answers, even though the right answer was obvious.

05:47 Well, I mean, if everyone sees it differently,

05:49 than they must be right since this is so simple.

05:52 They gave what they thought to be

05:53 the wrong answer out of concern for the researchers data.

05:57 They thought that science was important,

05:59 and their misperceiving might be important.

06:02 And it was, as Asch puts it, their obligation

06:05 to call the play as they saw it.

06:08 Now, of those who answered with the majority, who

06:12 answered falsely, there were some

06:16 who, like the second group of correct answerers,

06:19 became quickly convinced that they were wrong,

06:22 that the majority was right, and that it was important to be

06:25 right, either because they didn't want the data spoiled

06:28 or because they just didn't want to stick out.

06:31 Of those who answered wrong, many

06:34 believed the other people at the table

06:35 were sheep just following along because everyone else was

06:39 falling prey to some sort of optical illusion-type effect.

06:42 Yet when it came time for them to stand up,

06:46 they to followed along.

06:49 And then there was the other group who answered incorrectly.

06:52 In Asch's words, "More disquieting

06:56 were the reactions of the subjects who

06:58 construed their differences from the majority

07:01 has a sign of some general deficiency in themselves,

07:05 which at all costs they must hide.

07:08 On this basis they desperately tried

07:10 to merge with the majority, not realizing

07:13 the longer-range consequences to themselves."

07:18 Universally, everyone who participated in the test

07:21 said that independence was preferable to conformity.

07:26 Yet most conformed.

07:27 That is to say, they acted not only

07:30 counter to what they knew to be false

07:32 but also counter to their own values.

07:35 Additionally, all of the yielding subjects,

07:39 that is the ones who went along with the wrong answers,

07:42 underestimated the frequency with which they conformed.

07:46 They not only went along when they knew they shouldn't have

07:50 but believed they did it less than they really did.

07:55 Asch expanded the study to see what would happen.

07:59 He showed that the bigger the majority,

08:01 the stronger the pull to conform.

08:02 But that if even one person dissented before the test

08:07 subject that the test subject was then

08:09 more likely to also voice his different view.

08:13 Asch showed empirically that having someone else

08:16 agree with you is a powerful tool in making

08:19 people willing to take a contrary position.

08:23 But if that person were deserted by his fellow dissenter,

08:28 conformity followed rapidly and continued

08:31 even after the deserter left the group.

08:37 Notice the move we're beginning to see here,

08:39 the one we've traced in other places

08:41 in the history of science.

08:42 We began with an atomistic conception

08:45 with the elements of reality or things in themselves.

08:48 If we really want to understand reality,

08:50 we approach it as a collection.

08:52 And all knowledge of what is real

08:53 is gotten from understanding the details of these things one

08:57 at a time.

08:57 Put each under the microscope and learn everything

09:00 there is to know about it.

09:04 We then moved to see that we can't gain knowledge by looking

09:08 at things individually.

09:09 We must observe the relations between them,

09:12 their interactions, relationships between objects

09:14 that must be added to complete a description of reality.

09:19 Finally, we moved to a place where these relationships

09:22 take over and the individuality of the objects fade away.

09:27 That what's real is the whole and that what

09:30 we thought were autonomous, independent entities are really

09:34 just modes of a larger unified system.

09:38 In physics, we move from atoms and point masses

09:41 to gravitational theories with forces acting between objects,

09:46 finally, to field theories.

09:47 In biology, we started with organisms, moved to species,

09:52 and finally ecosystems.

09:53 Here we see the beginning of the same sort of movement.

09:57 Psychology began as an investigation

09:59 of the mind of the individual.

10:02 We all had minds, and we just needed

10:04 to figure out how they worked.

10:05 But Freud moved us to relationships.

10:07 We could not understand why you do what

10:09 you do by only examining you.

10:12 We also needed to understand your relationship

10:14 with other people... your parents and those who affected you

10:17 when you were developing.

10:19 Now the social psychology, we're beginning

10:22 to locate the mind, in part, outside the individual

10:26 in the group.

10:27 We'll make this step a little later

10:28 when we look at sociology, but note the move.

10:32 To understand the reality of the human mind,

10:34 we must see it as part of a larger social consciousness

10:37 which affects decisions, beliefs, and actions.

10:41 This becomes more pressing in 1963

10:45 when we have two seemingly parallel intellectual

10:47 projects coming out of one historical event...

10:51 The trial of Adolf Eichmann.

10:54 Eichmann was a lieutenant colonel in the SS

10:56 and was in charge of logistics for getting

10:58 the millions of people from their places of arrest

11:01 to the concentration camps and then to the death camps.

11:07 He was never the man who pulled the trigger, never

11:09 the person who faced the victim.

11:11 But he was the person who designed the system in which

11:15 the deaths would occur.

11:16 He was, in Simon Wiesenthal's words, a desk murderer.

11:22 Captured after having fled to Argentina,

11:24 he was tried in Israel for his crimes.

11:27 It led to the asking of the crucial question,

11:30 how could someone have done what he did?

11:34 The easy answer was that he was not human.

11:36 He was a monster.

11:37 He was insane.

11:38 He had been brainwashed or allowed

11:40 his ignorant hatred of others to warp his mind,

11:42 making him neither rationally nor morally competent.

11:46 But the trial disabused us of this easy path.

11:50 In his cage sat a small man, balding and blowing his nose.

11:55 It was not the seething anger and screaming

11:57 vitriol of the speeches we've all

11:58 seen in the film clips of Hitler addressing the crowds.

12:02 Eichmann was calm.

12:04 He was mild.

12:05 Multiple psychiatrists had come to assess him.

12:07 And all of them said he was not only sane, he was normal,

12:10 a pleasant fellow.

12:11 If you didn't know he was the architect

12:13 to the final solution, you'd never know.

12:18 Observing the proceedings was the German Jewish philosopher

12:21 Hannah Arendt who was shocked by the lack of shock

12:26 during the trial.

12:27 Eichmann was nor a raving lunatic.

12:29 He wasn't an idealogical fiend.

12:32 He was just a guy.

12:34 He was not very bright.

12:35 But that, too, is normal.

12:36 He was just doing his job.

12:38 He wanted to please his bosses and get a promotion.

12:41 He thought in terms of the corporate jargon they fed him.

12:45 He could have been working for any corporation getting widgets

12:48 from the factory to the retailers,

12:50 looking for a big bonus come Christmastime.

12:54 He was a hard working Joe just doing his job.

12:58 It just happened, Eichmann argued,

13:00 that his job was working for the Nazis during the Holocaust.

13:03 Not his choosing, but, hey, it was just my job.

13:07 I was just following orders.

13:10 Arendt realized that in important ways he was right.

13:15 This didn't mean that he was innocent.

13:17 Far from it.

13:17 But the fact is that the greatest evil

13:20 can be carried out by people who see themselves

13:22 as not inheriting any of the responsibility

13:25 because they're just doing what they're told

13:27 by those people in authority.

13:29 Those people, they have the responsibility.

13:33 Me, I'm just doing my job.

13:35 Arendt famously coined the phrase "the banality of evil"

13:39 to describe such situations in which we create structures

13:43 which shield people from the real effects of their actions.

13:47 The true horror of Eichmann is not

13:50 that such a monster could be created

13:52 but that he was completely unremarkable,

13:55 that he was just a guy who could be monstrous

13:59 without being a monster.

14:01 Maybe Eichmann knew what he was really doing,

14:03 and maybe he didn't.

14:04 But the important aspect in Arendt's work

14:07 is that we can often use social structures

14:09 to shift responsibility away from ourselves

14:12 for our own actions, actions we would never

14:15 envision ourselves taking.

14:17 Arendt's philosophical account is

14:19 supported by an experiment conducted that same year based

14:24 on the same concern.

14:25 How could people be made to do such things?

14:31 American psychologist Stanley Milgram

14:33 conducted his famous obedience studies

14:35 in the shadow of the Eichmann trial.

14:38 The setup involved three people.

14:39 One was the authority who presented himself

14:42 as the person running the experiment

14:44 on the effects of negative reinforcement on memory.

14:47 The experiment played on the public's picture

14:50 of psychologists as behaviorists,

14:52 making plausible the context that one of them,

14:55 the test subject, would be the teacher.

14:57 And the other one, who also seemed like a test subject

15:00 but was really a confederate working with the experimenter,

15:03 would be the learner.

15:06 All three walk into a room where the learner

15:08 is strapped into what looks like an electric chair.

15:12 Electrodes are attached at the wrists.

15:14 And it's explained that the teacher

15:15 will read him pairs of words he will learn to associate.

15:19 After the words are read together,

15:21 the teacher will give him the first word in the pair,

15:24 and the learner will provide the second.

15:26 If he correctly supplies the second word, they move on.

15:29 If he supplies the wrong word or no answer,

15:33 he will receive an electrical shock.

15:36 And then the experiment continues

15:37 with the shocks increasing in strength as it proceeds.

15:43 The teacher, that is the real test subject,

15:46 is then taken to an adjoining room and seated behind a panel

15:50 with 30 switches, each one clearly labeled

15:53 with a voltage ranging in order from 15 to 450 volts.

15:58 Beneath the numbers are range indicators

16:01 which read slight shock, moderate shock, strong shock,

16:05 very strong shock, intense shock, extreme intensity shock,

16:11 danger severe shock.

16:12 And finally the last switches our just marked XXX.

16:19 The teacher is instructed by the authority to begin.

16:23 And the words are read.

16:24 When an incorrect answer is given,

16:26 the authority instructs the teacher

16:28 to administer the first shock.

16:29 When the switch is thrown, there's

16:31 a buzzing, a couple of clicks, a light flashes, and then

16:34 a dial flicks across the face of a voltmeter.

16:37 There's every indication that the learner is really

16:39 being shocked, including a reaction from the learner.

16:43 Of course, in reality he isn't.

16:45 But you would never know it.

16:47 Now at first, there's little reaction.

16:49 But eventually there are verbalizations of pain

16:52 from a slight oh, to a stronger ow, to protests of, stop it!

16:56 Cut it out!

16:57 Leading eventually to the learner speaking of a heart

16:59 condition, howls of pain, followed eventually by silence.

17:04 And the test subject is led to believe

17:06 that he or she might have actually killed the learner.

17:11 Each time, the authority demands the teacher continue and apply

17:16 the shock.

17:16 In a firm, level voice, the authority clearly tells

17:19 the teacher what to do, reinforces that it is essential

17:22 they continue, and verbally accepts all responsibility

17:27 for whatever happens.

17:28 The point is simply to placing conflict,

17:31 obedience to authority, and an obviously immoral act

17:37 to see which one's going to win out.

17:40 Now, before he started, Milgram described the experiment

17:43 to a bunch of people, other professors at Yale,

17:46 19-year-old sophomore students, friends

17:48 outside the college, clinical psychologists.

17:51 Everyone thought the same thing.

17:53 Most people would stop when the learner

17:56 asked to leave the experiment.

17:57 And only a very small number of sadistic psychopaths,

18:00 4% they thought, would go all the way up

18:03 to the dangerous shocks.

18:05 That, of course, is not what happened.

18:07 In the first run, using Yale undergrads as test subjects,

18:12 25 of 40 went all the way.

18:15 That means more than 62% of the people

18:17 were willing to act in a way they thought was not only

18:20 horribly painful but would kill another person just

18:23 because someone with authority was demanding they do it.

18:30 The objection was made, well, these

18:32 are Yale students who are attending

18:33 one of the most prestigious universities in the world

18:36 precisely because they've learned

18:37 to do exactly what people in authority want them to do.

18:41 Real people wouldn't act like that.

18:43 But when other populations were tested, changing age,

18:47 socioeconomic status, nationality,

18:50 the results not only held but increased.

18:53 In Munich, a researcher found that 85% of his test subjects

18:58 threw the final switches.

19:02 The numbers were absurdly high.

19:05 And it was not, as had been originally hypothesized,

19:08 that those who would remain compliant throughout

19:10 were sadistically taking pleasure

19:12 in the suffering of the learner.

19:14 Those who continued showed obvious signs of distress

19:17 throughout the experiment... sweating,

19:19 trembling, nervously reaching for cigarettes

19:21 they had difficulty lighting.

19:22 These were people who did not want to do what they were doing

19:27 and yet did it anyway.

19:31 Authority was shown to be troublingly powerful.

19:35 In Milgram's words, "Stark authority

19:38 was pitted against the subjects' strongest moral imperatives

19:42 against hurting others, and, with the subjects' ears

19:46 ringing with the screams of the victims,

19:48 authority won more often than not.

19:51 The extreme willingness of adults

19:53 to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority

19:57 constitutes the chief finding of the study

20:01 and the fact most urgently demanding explanation."

20:07 In an interview conducted after the experiment, one

20:10 of the subjects who obeyed the authority reported

20:12 that his wife said to him, you can call yourself Eichmann.

20:17 Indeed, Milgram contends that Arendt's conclusions are closer

20:21 to true than he dared believe.

20:24 Again in his words, "This is, perhaps,

20:27 the most fundamental lesson of our study:

20:30 ordinary people, simply doing their jobs,

20:33 and without any particular hostility on their part,

20:36 can become agents in a terrible destructive process.

20:40 Moreover, even when the destructive effects

20:43 of their own work become patently clear,

20:46 and they are asked to carry out actions

20:47 incompatible with fundamental standards of morality,

20:52 relatively few people have the resources

20:55 needed to resist authority."

20:59 A decade later in 1973, Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo

21:05 demonstrated that this authority does not even

21:08 have to be real to be effective.

21:11 Zimbardo took a bunch of graduate students at Stanford

21:14 and randomly assigned some to be prisoners and others

21:17 to be guards in a fake prison he built

21:19 in the basement of the psychology building.

21:22 The participants were screened so

21:23 that those who might have sadistic tendencies

21:26 were weeded out.

21:26 Indeed, the subjects were all well-educated, middle-class,

21:30 and white.

21:30 The guards and the prisoners in this experiment

21:33 were incredibly homogeneous.

21:36 There were none of the standard markers of division present

21:39 in American society here.

21:41 The experiment was to take two weeks

21:44 but was cut short, ending after six

21:46 days, because the effects were so shocking and potentially

21:51 harmful.

21:54 Zimbardo went to pains to recreate the elements

21:57 of the criminal justice system.

21:59 Those selected to be prisoners were

22:01 arrested, taken to local police stations

22:03 where they were fingerprinted and had mug shots taken,

22:06 then escorted to the fake jail on campus.

22:09 They were given badly-fitting smocks which they

22:12 had to wear and ankle chains.

22:14 They were given numbers, which would

22:16 be used instead of their names.

22:17 The guards were given uniforms with mirrored sunglasses,

22:20 batons, and instructions that they

22:22 could do whatever they wanted in order to create discomfort

22:27 for the prisoners.

22:28 Zimbardo would be the warden.

22:30 And if he did not object to the action, it was fine.

22:35 At first, the prisoners didn't take the experiment seriously,

22:38 acting goofy in a way that showed a lack of respect

22:41 for the guards' authority.

22:42 But the guards soon asserted themselves

22:44 in a way that enforced their authority.

22:46 And when this caused an open revolt amongst the prisoners,

22:50 the guards quashed it with the aggressive use

22:53 of fire extinguishers.

22:54 The guards decided that they needed to constantly reinforce

22:57 their authority with demeaning and dehumanizing activities

23:01 designed to make sure the prisoners were kept

23:04 in a place of subservience.

23:05 Their loss of their former identity

23:08 was reinforced when they were made to report their prison

23:12 numbers over and over again, mindlessly,

23:16 for no other reason.

23:17 Treatment became increasingly brutal

23:20 and punishments increasingly vicious.

23:22 It came to the point where the study had to be ended.

23:28 One prisoner had a breakdown.

23:30 He was removed.

23:31 But the study continued.

23:32 Indeed, the experiment should likely

23:34 have ended sooner than it did.

23:35 Remember that these are not real guards and not real prisoners.

23:38 These are graduate students playing pretend.

23:41 They're not real criminals.

23:42 They'd done nothing wrong.

23:43 There was no sense of justice being served here.

23:46 Zimbardo was describing the effects

23:48 to his girlfriend, who would later become his wife,

23:50 and she was astonished that he'd allowed this behavior

23:54 to continue.

23:54 She demanded that he end it for humanitarian reasons,

23:58 something he admits had not even crossed his mind.

24:02 He, too, had gotten swept up in it.

24:05 His own authority had clouded his judgment.

24:10 But he did end it.

24:11 And the result was that the usual claims

24:14 that prison mistreatment was a function

24:16 of a few sadistic guards with personality problems

24:20 seemed false.

24:21 It's not that there were a few sadists out there.

24:23 And when they ended up in positions of authority,

24:26 bad things happened.

24:27 Rather it was concluded that it was the structure itself.

24:31 The establishment of the system where

24:33 some had authority over others that created the conditions

24:37 for inhumane treatment.

24:39 These three experiments, taken together,

24:41 formed an empirical approach to a question

24:43 that had been around since at least the 17th century.

24:47 Are human beings inherently good or inherently evil?

24:51 What is the real human nature?

24:55 Are we blank slates?

24:55 Or do we have a predilection toward altruism or selfishness?

25:00 Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher,

25:03 argued that we needed a strong central government

25:05 to keep us in check from our dark and nasty natural selves.

25:09 He began by thinking about humanity

25:11 before there was any social structure, putting us in what

25:14 he called the state of nature.

25:17 Here there were no rules.

25:17 There was no social safety net or even basic cooperation.

25:22 Each was on his or her own.

25:23 And the key was simply to survive.

25:25 We would seek that which would help

25:27 us survive and try to eliminate that which

25:29 was a threat to our survival.

25:30 Since everything could be useful in some way or other,

25:34 we were in constant conflict with everyone else

25:37 over literally everything.

25:39 Similarly, everyone else was a potential mortal threat.

25:43 And so we found that the state of nature

25:45 was a constant state of war, each against everyone else.

25:49 Life in the state of nature, he famously said,

25:52 was "solitary, nasty, brutish, and short."

25:59 We would soon realize that we would

26:01 be more likely to survive if we ended the state of nature.

26:06 And so we created the state by entering into a social contract

26:10 that took away our natural rights

26:11 and gave them to a central government, which

26:14 we expected would keep order.

26:15 Any oppression we experience from a central government

26:18 would be preferable to the state of nature.

26:20 And so we willingly allow for the power

26:23 to be located outside of us in order

26:25 to create the order which is needed for human survival

26:29 and flourishing.

26:30 We are brutal, nasty animals underneath it all.

26:33 And the glory of human culture needs a strong authority

26:37 to keep us in check, to force us to act civilly.

26:42 The 18th century French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau

26:46 disagreed.

26:47 He was a romantic.

26:48 To him, the state of nature was idyllic.

26:50 Without a political structure keeping us down and restricting

26:54 our natural freedom, we would blossom

26:56 into the wonderful, creative beings we really

26:58 are underneath.

26:59 If we're nasty and brutal, it's in reaction

27:02 to the authority of the state.

27:04 It's the existence of private property

27:06 and keeping things for ourselves that we fence off

27:08 land and other people, creating envy, jealousy, and greed that

27:12 turns us into the terrible selfish, modern atomistic

27:16 creatures we've become.

27:18 We did not cease to be savages when we became civilized.

27:22 Civilization turned us into savages.

27:26 What these psychology experiments contend

27:29 is that it's not the structure of civilization itself

27:32 that made us or corrupted us.

27:34 But rather it's the distribution of that power and authority

27:39 that corrupts.

27:42 Artistically, we find this represented

27:44 at the beginning of the 20th century in the Polish writer

27:47 Joseph Conrad's work Heart of Darkness

27:50 and even more so in its film adaptation

27:52 by Francis Ford Coppola, Apocalypse Now.

27:55 The character of Mr. Kurtz in the book

27:57 leaves the civilized world of Europe to the barbaric Africa,

28:02 looking for ivory.

28:03 While Colonel Kurtz in the film is

28:05 sent from the civilized world of America

28:07 into the dark jungles of Vietnam and then illegally

28:10 across the border into Cambodia.

28:14 In both, the character Kurtz is sent

28:17 into the land Westerners consider

28:19 to be controlled by the savage in order

28:22 to secure something of value to those with power

28:25 in the civilized world.

28:26 But Kurtz goes off the rails.

28:28 Instead of subduing the savages for the profit of those

28:32 who sent them, he instead lives among them, learning from them,

28:37 and establishing himself as a deity to them.

28:40 Through sheer brutality, he becomes the ultimate authority

28:45 over them.

28:46 They become his people.

28:49 Kurtz does not become one of them.

28:51 He does not, as contemporary anthropologists say, go native.

28:55 He remains Western, reciting poetry and writing philosophy.

28:59 But in adopting the position of ultimate authority,

29:03 he also sheds the moral restraints

29:06 that guide our interpersonal relations.

29:11 To the narrator of the book and the film,

29:13 Kurtz explains how he's learned from his so-called barbarians

29:18 how the facade of civilization has weakened us

29:20 and how in his position of authority

29:22 he's achieved a sense of wisdom he could never

29:25 have learned otherwise.

29:27 But that insight into human nature

29:30 discloses the savage truth lying beneath the mask

29:33 of civilization.

29:34 And as Kurtz dies, his last words

29:38 echo the sentiments we, too, may glean

29:40 from the findings of post-Holocaust social

29:43 psychology... the horror, the horror.

29:48 But surely human nature isn't reducible to such horror.

29:52 There's care.

29:53 There's love.

29:54 These are essential elements of our being.