



UNIVERSITY  
OF CENTRAL ASIA

# NEGOTIATING HUMAN NATURE



AGA KHAN HUMANITIES PROJECT





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**Bishkek - Dushanbe - Almaty**

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## CONTRIBUTORS TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

- Rafique Keshavjee**, *Anthropology (USA)*  
**Shiraz Allibhai**, *Architecture (USA)*  
**Kamol Abdullaev**, *History (Tajikistan)*  
**Munira Ahtamova**, *Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Amriyazdon Alimardonov**, *Oriental Studies (Tajikistan)*  
**Abdurahman Alymbaev**, *Literature (Kyrgyzstan)*  
**Brian Averbush**, *Near Eastern Languages and Civilisations (USA)*  
**Nurmagambet Ayupov**, *Philosophy (Kazakhstan)*  
**Norma Jo Baker**, *Social and Political Thought (USA)*  
**William Beeman**, *Anthropology (USA)*  
**Komil Bekzoda**, *Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Gulmira Bilyalova**, *Philosophy, Religion (Kazakhstan)*  
**Muso Dinorshoev**, *Consultant, Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Jyldyz Doolbekova**, *Political Sciences (Kyrgyzstan)*  
**Hamza Elboev**, *Cultural Studies (Tajikistan)*  
**Mohira Faizullaeva**, *Political Sciences (Tajikistan)*  
**Abdurahim Juraev**, *Cultural Studies (Tajikistan)*  
**Sunatullo Jonboboev**, *Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Max Hamon**, *History (Canada)*  
**Michael Hall**, *Islamic Studies (USA)*  
**Khayriddin Idiev**, *Social Sciences (Tajikistan)*  
**Sharofiddin Imomov**, *History and International Relations (Tajikistan)*  
**Victoria Ivanenko**, *English Language Teacher (Tajikistan)*  
**Kurbon Giyoev**, *Social Sciences (Tajikistan)*  
**Sakina Karmaly**, *Ethics (UK)*  
**Nataliya Khafizova**, *Political Sciences (Tajikistan)*  
**Obidkhon Kurbonkhonov**, *Sociology (Tajikistan)*  
**Olga Parinova**, *Phylology (Tajikistan)*  
**Yasmin Lodi**, *Political Philosophy (India)*  
**Annamaria Kiss**, *Social Anthropology (Hungary)*  
**Merdan Khalilov**, *Economics and Busyness (Turkmenistan)*  
**Firuz Mahmadjanova**, *Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Ahmadjan Mahmadkhajev**, *Philosophy (Sufism) (Tajikistan)*  
**Mejuev Vadim Mikhailovich**, *Consultant, Cultural Studies (Russia)*
- Akmal Mirshakar**, *Art - Painting (Tajikistan)*  
**Muhammad Ali Muzaffar**, *Anthropology and Psychology (Tajikistan)*  
**Svetlana Mahkamova**, *Literature (Tajikistan)*  
**Sharofat Mamadambarova**, *Literature and Assessment (Tajikistan)*  
**Stepanyantc Marietta**, *Consultant, Eastern Philosophical Traditions (Russia)*  
**Akram Mukhamatkulov**, *Political Sciences (Uzbekistan)*  
**Zayniddin Nabotov**, *Theology (Tajikistan)*  
**Ramazan Nazariyev**, *History of Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Sharon Powel**, *International Education (USA)*  
**Lola Pulatova**, *Art - Music (Tajikistan)*  
**Muhsin Rahimov**, *Philosophy and Psychology (Tajikistan)*  
**Sadullo Rahimov**, *Cinema (Tajikistan)*  
**Muhabbatshoh Ruzadorov**, *Sociology (Tajikistan)*  
**Madiso Sa'dullaev**, *Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Abdulvahid Shamolov**, *Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Shonazar Shoismatulloev**, *Sociology (Tajikistan)*  
**Alexandra Spektor**, *Philology (Tajikistan)*  
**Mekhmansho Sharipov**, *Islamic Studies (Tajikistan)*  
**Pulat Shozimov**, *Social Sciences (Tajikistan)*  
**Eraj Sodatsairov**, *Political Sciences (Tajikistan)*  
**Joomart Sulaimanov**, *Philosophy and Ecology (Kyrgyzstan)*  
**Sanjarbek Tajimatov**, *Ethnology (Kyrgyzstan)*  
**Chad Thompson**, *Social and Political Thought (Canada)*  
**John O'connell**, *Musicology (UK)*  
**Karomatullo Olimov**, *Eastern Philosophical Traditions (Tajikistan)*  
**Firuz Tursun-Zadeh**, *Aesthetics (Tajikistan)*  
**Olimsho Vatanshoev**, *International Educational Development (Tajikistan)*  
**Khurshed Ziyoev**, *Sufism (Tajikistan)*  
**Samira Rakhimova**, *Human Rights (Tajikistan)*  
**Mavjigul Dushanbieva**, *Cultural Anthropology (Tajikistan)*  
**Ibodov Mahmadullo**, *Philosophy (Tajikistan)*  
**Marifat Alifbekova**, *Education (Tajikistan)*  
**Ajamsho Kalonov**, *Political Sciences (Tajikistan)*

*Artwork on cover: "Game", by Batour Alabergenov*

*Designed by Mikhail Romanyuk, Mansur Khojiboboev, Amir Isaev*

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## PREFACE

Central Asia is undergoing profound cultural changes with new foundations for identity emerging as the recently independent states face broader economic and political challenges. Central Asians are reaching into their past for inspiration and seek assistance in drawing upon the rich traditions of their societies to anchor a new system of values. Responding to a widely felt need by educationalists for initiatives to foster to a deeper understanding of ethical issues and the moral choices facing society, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture established the Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP) in 1997. In 2007 AKHP became part of the University of Central Asia (UCA). UCA was founded as an international educational organization in 2000 by the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, and His Highness the Aga Khan.

AKHP promotes pluralism in ideas, cultures, and peoples by initiating and supporting the creation and implementation of an interdisciplinary undergraduate humanities curriculum, pedagogical and professional development of faculty in Central Asian universities and community outreach projects. AKHP builds bridges across communities in the region and helps Central Asians explore and share their traditions and establish links with the outside world.

An appreciation and understanding of the breadth of their cultural heritage will enable the people of Central Asia to identify those aspects that can help them adjust to rapid change. Central Asia has interacted with many different cultures, including Buddhist, Chinese, Greek, Indian, Iranian, Islamic, Jewish, Mongol, Russian, Turkic and Zoroastrian. In addition, the impact of the more recent Soviet experience on shaping values and identities should not be underestimated. In all cases students are encouraged to develop the skills of critical thinking to help them understand the diversity within each culture and the similarities between different cultures.

Educators at partner universities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have been trained to teach AKHP courses, assess curriculum materials, co-ordinate student projects, and conduct further teacher training. Students explore a variety of media and genres through divergent classroom techniques, designed to promote active learning, encouraging students to come to their own critical and insightful understanding of key issues.

The curriculum material has been developed, tested and revised over a period of ten years. Such piloting took place within Central Asian classrooms at AKHP's partner universities, where intensive training in student-centred learning was provided. The material was subsequently reviewed by two external committees of international scholars. Based on this input, final editorial revisions were completed in 2008.

The final version of the eight courses that comprise the AKHP curriculum will move beyond the AKHP partner universities and are flexible enough to be utilised in a variety of settings including secondary schools where the pilot testing has already commenced. Each institution has its own needs and expectations, and instructors are encouraged to adapt the materials contained within these courses to their own particular classrooms and the needs of their own students. Such creative adaptation to specific needs forms the basis of a critical education, and is a key step in encouraging Central Asian teachers and students to respond to the needs of their own region.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Human nature” is a controversial term. The term suggests that something within humans is “natural,” outside of the power of individuals or societies to change. This idea of a human nature further suggests that if such a thing does exist, it should be shared by all people, across time, across places, and across cultures. In this version, human nature comprises the “essence” of what it means to be human.

But not everyone agrees that such an “essence” exists. Some writers have argued that humans are shaped not by nature, but by “culture.” What we consider to be natural about humans is actually the result of our social development: how we are raised, how we are educated, and the experiences and expectations of the world in which we live. Claims to “human nature,” in this perspective, are actually claims which express particular ideas of cultural, social, and political power. For people who support this position, claims about human nature are not about how humans actually are, but how certain people think they should be.

Most people would probably agree that some things about humanity are natural – but these people would disagree greatly as to just what these constant elements of our nature might be. In this course, you will look at twelve different sets of readings, including ancient Hindu and Buddhist writings, medieval Christian and Islamic authors, and modern writers from Europe, India, and the Arab world. The different texts present a variety of aspects of the issue of human nature, exploring human virtue, relationships with the divine, gender, evolution, creativity, reason and identity. This is only a short list of possible themes; you as the reader will need to interpret each text to decide what you think is important.

You will need to determine what arguments are presented in the different works, and how they relate to one another. As always, be alert for the variety of perspectives that are found among the different authors, within cultures as well as between cultures.

Perhaps these issues, and these texts, may seem remote and abstract from everyday life in Central Asia. But remember, how we define human nature – what it includes, what it excludes, what is eternal, and what can be changed – has immediate practical consequences. The decisions we make about human nature can be used to decide basic questions about education – who should be educated? How should people be educated? Our thoughts on human nature can determine what we think is possible in all aspects of human life, in terms of family relationships, economic organisation, individual development, and much, much more. As you read and compare the different texts, and develop your own arguments about human nature, give thought to what the consequences are of your own answers to these questions.

We have named this book *Negotiating Human Nature* because there is no simple answer to the questions that are raised. You will need to negotiate between the different readings, to decide for yourself what you think makes sense, what does not, and how these different perspectives could fit together. Central Asia’s own history has been one of such a negotiation, drawing on aspects of many different traditions, cultures, and civilisations. We are asking you to continue this negotiation, within the classroom, with these texts, with your classmates, and with yourself.

## CHAPTER ONE: CLASSICAL PERCEPTION OF HUMAN NATURE

### INTRODUCTION

In antiquity, all inquiry into human nature also involved understanding the nature of all things in the world. Human beings were not set apart from the rest of the world. In other words, humans were not privileged automatically over nature or other aspects of nature.

The selected texts in this first chapter are different analyses of human nature arrived at through dialogical understanding of the subject. This sets this understanding of human nature apart from others since meaning and understanding are arrived at socially and not by an individual speculating in splendid isolation. Socially constructed meaning and concepts are based in common sense as well as shared understanding and context, and therefore are readily accessible to the readers.

The common thread in this set of readings is the notion of human ability to attain and live in wisdom or justice. While each writer offers different perspectives on the nature of wisdom and/or justice and the process of achieving it, none doubts its existence or doubts human ability to attain it. Hence the reader must not only understand human nature from this perspective but must also glean what our early progenitors meant by wisdom/justice.

The reader also needs to critically examine the notion that human nature is universal, malleable, and self-transcending. Is it humanly possible to select our best course of action at every moment so that we act wisely and justly at all times? Is wisdom a state of being which can be arrived at through right living, just like achieving Nirvana? Or are wisdom and justice different from Nirvana?

Readers are also urged to examine the context and culture in which these ideas were born. Are classical western ideas of human nature different from classical eastern notions? Do all cultures share a common ground in understanding human nature or are they radically different from each other?

In most classical perspectives, humans mirrored nature but had an opportunity to express the best aspects of their nature and control the worst. Any kind of notion of determinism, such as biological or genetic, was absent in their arguments. Arguments in support of predetermined aspects of human nature were developed in modern times. Yet, modern human beings attribute notions of karma (pre-determined fate in Indian thought), kismet (similar notion from the middle-east), and destiny to peoples of antiquity. Are any of these notions of pre-determinism present in the readings of this chapter?

Finally, readers can decide if there is a common classical perspective or are there many perspectives that are radically different from each other and are mutually exclusive. Readers can identify shared notions on human nature as well as identify diverging notions on human nature. This will make it possible for readers to conclude if human nature is a social construct or a universal concept based in reality.





## JAMI ROSE GARDEN

### MAWLANA NUR AL-DIN ABD AL-RAHMAN JAMI

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Nur al-Din Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492) was a Sufi Persian – Tajik poet of high repute in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. His major works include *Baharistan (Abode of Spring)*, *Nafahat al-Uns (a treatise on Fellowship)*, *Yusuf and Zulaykho (a famous romantic tale)*, and *Lawa'ih (a treatise on Sufism)*.

#### THE SCORPION AND THE TORTOISE

A scorpion, with harmful poison in his sting like an arrow in a quiver, resolved to go on a journey. Suddenly he reached the bank of a river. Here he remained paralyzed, having no power to advance, no sense to retreat. A tortoise, having noted his condition, took pity upon him, mounted him on his own back, plunged himself into the water, and began to swim to the opposite bank. In the meantime some sound fell on his ears, as if the scorpion was striking something on his back. On inquiring as to what that sound was, he was thus told: This is the sound of my own sting on your back. However much I know that it will produce no effect thereon, I cannot forsake my habit, as is said:

The scorpion stings not out of any rancor: such is the impulse, (lit., requirement), of his nature.

The tortoise said to himself: Nothing is better than this that I should liberate this ill-natured creature from this ugly habit, and preserve good-natured persons from his harm. Then he dived into the water, and the scorpion was carried away by the waves (and disappeared) as if he had never existed.

For every oppressor, who, in this pavilion of evil and sedition, takes pride in performing a hundred tricks, nothing is better than this, that he should be drowned into the wave of annihilation, (so that) he may be liberated from his (own) evil nature and the people may be rescued from him.

**SOURCE:** Mawlana Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Jami. *The Eighth Garden*.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

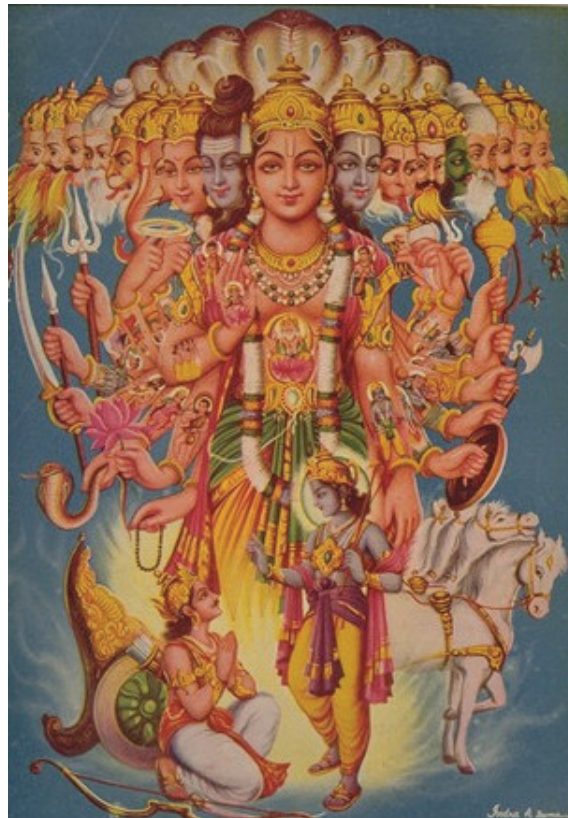
1. What happened to the scorpion when he started his journey? What did the tortoise do when he saw the scorpion? What happened when the tortoise decided to help the scorpion?
2. What did you understand from this story? Does the fable inspire you to discuss the issue of human nature? Is human nature changeable? Is human nature wicked or good by nature?



3. Is this concept the main concept of that particular period of time and culture? Were there any other concepts related to human nature? What is the message of the author? Could the fable have different interpretations? Do you know any other old stories about human nature? Could the story be related to our daily life? Can you bring any examples, based on your own experience? Are debates on human nature important for the present time?

### ADDITIONAL READING:

- Tuhfat ul Ahror: [digit.nkp.cz/samples/Persiana/EN/COLLEC\\_1/BIBL\\_105/BIBLDESC.htm](http://digit.nkp.cz/samples/Persiana/EN/COLLEC_1/BIBL_105/BIBLDESC.htm)
- Usuf and Zulaykha: [www.ishkbooks.com/database/YUZUI.html](http://www.ishkbooks.com/database/YUZUI.html)
- Jami, His life and works: [www.1911encyclopedia.org/Jami](http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Jami)
- Maulana 'Abdurrahman Jami. Nafahat al-uns. Edited by M. Tauhidipur. Tehran, 1336 sh./1957. NS) Reynold A. Nicholson. Studies in Islamic ... [www.sufismjournal.org/history/historysaintsmiracles.html](http://www.sufismjournal.org/history/historysaintsmiracles.html)



**LORD KRISHNA SHOWS HIS VISHWA-RUPA TO ARJUNA ON THE KURUSHESTRA FIELD. KRISHNA GIVES THE DISCOURSE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA**

## THE BHAGAVAD GITA

There is no way to know the exact age of the *Bhagavad Gita*, or that of the larger work from which it is drawn, the *Mahabharata*. The latter work reached its present form between 300 BCE and 200 CE, although the earliest stories in it are probably far older. The *Bhagavad Gita* was probably composed between 500 and 200 BCE. The *Mahabharata* is the tale of an epic war between two related families. The search for wisdom and truth by some of the main characters of the *Mahabharata* is one of its most prominent themes, and it is with this theme that the *Bhagavad Gita* is concerned. The following excerpt identifies the main characteristics in human nature.

### THREE GUNAS OF NATURE

The Supreme Lord said: I shall further explain to you that **supreme** knowledge, the best of all knowledge, knowing that all the sages have attained supreme perfection after this life. (14.01)

Those who have taken **refuge** in this knowledge attain unity with me, and are neither born at the time of creation nor **afflicted** at the time of **dissolution**. (14.02)

O Arjuna, My Prakriti (or the material nature) is the **womb** wherein I place the seed (of spirit or Purusha) from which all beings are born. (See also 9.10) (14.03)

Whatever forms are produced in all different wombs, O Arjuna, the great Prakriti is their (body-giving) mother, and the Purusha is the (seed or life-giving) father. (14.04)

Sattva (or goodness), Rajas (or activity), and Tamas (or inertia); these three Gunas (or states) of mind (or Prakriti) bind the imperishable soul to the body, O Arjuna. (14.05)

Of these, Sattva, being calm, is illuminating and ethical. It fetters the embodied being, the Jeevaatma or Purusha, by attachment to happiness and knowledge, O Arjuna. (14.06)

O Arjuna, know that Rajas is characterized by intense (selfish) activity and is born of desire and attachment. It binds the Jeeva by attachment to the fruits of work. (14.07)

Know, O Arjuna that Tamas, the deluder of Jeeva, is born of inertia. It binds by **ignorance**, laziness, and (excessive) sleep. (14.08)

O Arjuna, Sattva attaches one to happiness, Rajas to action, and Tamas to ignorance by covering the knowledge. (14.09)

Sattva dominates by suppressing Rajas and Tamas; Rajas dominates by suppressing Sattva and Tamas; and Tamas dominates by suppressing Sattva and Rajas, O Arjuna. (14.10)

When the lamp of knowledge shines through all the (nine) gates of the body, then it should be known that Sattva is **predominant**. (14.11)

Greed, activity, restlessness, passion, and undertaking of (selfish) works arise when Rajas is predominant, O Arjuna. (14.12)

Ignorance, inactivity, carelessness, and delusion arise when Tamas is predominant, O Arjuna. (14.13)

#### epic -

extended narrative poem in elevated or dignified language, celebrating the feats of a legendary or traditional hero

#### supreme -

dominant, having power over all others

#### refuge -

place or state of safety.

#### afflict -

to cause someone pain, suffering or distress

#### dissolution -

extinction of life; death

#### womb -

uterus; the major female reproductive organ of most mammals, including humans

#### ignorance -

the condition of being uninformed or uneducated, lacking knowledge or information

#### predominant -

the most common or widespread; prevalent ; the most significant or important

One who dies during the **dominance** of Sattva goes to heaven, the pure world of the knower of Supreme. (14.14)

When one dies during the dominance of Rajas, one is reborn as attached to action (or the utilitarian type); and dying in Tamas, one is reborn as ignorant (or lower creatures). (14.15)

The fruit of good action is said to be Saattvika and pure, the fruit of Raajasika action is pain, and the fruit of Taamasika action is ignorance. (14.16)

Knowledge arises from Sattva; desires arise from Rajas; and **negligence, delusion**, and ignorance arise from Tamas. (14.17)

Those who are established in Sattva go to heaven; Raajasika persons are reborn in the mortal world; and the Taamasika persons, abiding in the lowest Guna, go to hell (or born as lower creatures). (14.18)

When **visionaries** perceive no doer other than the Gunas (or the power of Brahman), and know that which is above and beyond the Gunas; then they attain nirvana. (See also 3.27, 5.09, and 13.29) (14.19)

When one transcends (or rises above) the three Gunas that originate in the mind; one is freed from birth, old age, disease, and death; and attains **nirvana**. (14.20)

Arjuna said: What are the characteristics of those who have transcended the three Gunas, and what is their conduct? How does one transcend these three Gunas, O Lord Krishna? (14.21)

The Supreme Lord said: the one who neither hates the presence of enlightenment, activity, and delusion nor desires for them when they are absent; and (14.22)

The one who remains like a witness; who is not moved by the Gunas, thinking that the Gunas only are operating; who stands firm and does not waver; and (14.23)

The one who depends on the Lord and is indifferent to pain and pleasure; to whom a clod, a stone, and gold are alike; to whom the dear and the unfriendly are alike; who is of firm mind; who is calm in **censure** and in praise; and (14.24)

The one who is indifferent to honor and **disgrace**; who is the same to friend and **foe**; that has renounced the sense of doer-ship; is said to have transcended the Gunas. (14.25)

The one who offers service to me with love and unswerving devotion transcends Gunas, and becomes fit for realizing Brahman. (See also 7.14 and 15.19) (14.26)

Because, I am the abode of the **immortal** and **eternal** Brahman, of everlasting Dharma, and of the absolute **bliss**. (14.27)

**SOURCE:** Bhagavad Gita, Three Gunas of Nature, Translated by Ramanand Prasad, <http://www.realization.org/page/namedoc0/gita/gita14.htm>

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the Bhagavad Gita? When and where was it written? How were the problems of human beings described in this text? What is Prakriti and what is Purusha? What do they symbolize?
2. Explain the meaning of the states of the human mind: Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. How do you interpret them in accordance with modern understanding? Express your ideas based on your own experience.
3. Which of the nine gates of the body do you know? Can you show different ways of gaining knowledge? Is knowledge really important for individual behavior and people's everyday actions?

### dominance -

being in a position of power, authority or ascendancy over others

### negligence -

the failure to exercise a standard of care that a reasonable person would have in a similar situation

### delusion -

a belief that is either false, fanciful or derived from deception

### visionary -

someone who has visions; person with unusual powers of foresight; a seer

### nirvana -

(Hinduism and Buddhism)  
the ultimate state of spiritual enlightenment and bliss that transcends the cycle of reincarnation; characterized by the extinction of desire and suffering and individual consciousness

### censure -

the act of blaming, criticizing, or condemning as wrong

### disgrace -

the state of being dishonored, or covered with shame; dishonor; shame; ignominy

### foe -

an enemy

### immortal -

one that is not susceptible to death

### eternal -

lasting forever; unending

### bliss -

perfect happiness

4. How, according to the Bhagavad-Gita, does one transcend the three Gunas and attain nirvana? What kind of condition is nirvana in Hinduism? What do you think about this condition? What do you think about the conversation between Arjuna and Krishna? Can you personify them by interpreting their positions? What was the answer of Krishna to the question on human freedom and development raised by Arjuna?

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**REVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Compare the ideas of the two texts on human nature: “Three Gunas of Nature” and “The scorpion and the tortoise”. Is human nature changeable, or is a human born with a fixed nature?
2. What approach to human development can be seen in the Bhagavad Gita? What is your opinion on it?
3. Do you accept the explanation of the issues of human nature based on a deterministic approach? To what extent is the concept of three Gunas applicable to modern time and human beings? Can you find similarities between this concept of human nature and any other concepts?

**ADDITIONAL READING:**

1. Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 7, three Gunas. [http://www.hindunet.org/srh\\_home/1995\\_12/msg00123.html](http://www.hindunet.org/srh_home/1995_12/msg00123.html)
2. The 3 Gunas of Nature, Bhagavad Gita. <http://www.yogabasics.com/learn/the-3-gunas-of-nature.html>
3. Bhagavad Gita. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhagavad\\_Gita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhagavad_Gita)



## THERAVADA BUDDHISM

### THE ETHICS OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM

Buddhism arose at a time when a great many thinkers were challenging the concepts of the ancient Vedic religion that the Aryans had brought to India. The teachings of Mahavira (the founder of Jainism), and those of the Buddha questioned the importance of sacrifice, ritual, obedience, and duty that were at the core of Vedic practice. The emphasis of Buddhism on the problem of suffering, both highly personal and at the same time universal, proved highly attractive to men and women from every social station. And it was in the wake of the new mercantile trade along the Silk Road that Buddhism would be carried all the way to Japan, becoming, en route, a world religion. To read the texts of Buddhism is to gain insight into a way of thought and life that has been shaping the course of humanity for the last two thousand five hundred years. No understanding of the civilizations of East Asia is possible without some understanding of Buddhism. The impact of Buddhist ethics and philosophy in the modern world has been powerful indeed, inspiring writers like Hermann Hesse and Nikos Kazantzakis, and politicians such as Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama. Some scholars see a pronounced Buddhist influence on the teachings of Sufism.

The following extract is part of a long panegyric of the Buddha, leading up to a description of his perfect wisdom. The moral virtues attributed to him in the earlier part of the passage, which is quoted here, are those after which every monk should strive; and, allowing for their different circumstances, the monk's example should be followed as far as possible by the layman...

### THE MORALS OF THE MONK

The monk Gautama has given up injury to life, he has lost all inclination to it; he has laid aside the **cudgel** and the sword, and he lives modestly, full of mercy, desiring in compassion the welfare of all things living.

He has given up taking what is not given, he has lost all inclination to it. He accepts what is given to him and waits for it to be given; and he lives in honesty and purity of heart. ...

He has given up the **unchaste**, he has lost all inclination to it. He is **celibate** and **aloof**, and has lost all desire for sexual intercourse, which is vulgar. ...

He has given up false speech, he has lost all inclination to it. He speaks the truth, he keeps faith, he is faithful and trustworthy, he does not break his word to the world. ...

He has given up **slander**, he has lost all inclination to it. When he hears something in one place he will not repeat it in another in order to cause **strife**, ... but he unites those who are divided by strife, and encourages those who are friends. His pleasure is in peace, he loves peace and delights in it, and when he speaks, he speaks words that make for peace. ...

He has given up harsh speech, he has lost all inclination to it. He speaks only words that are blameless, pleasing to the ear, touching the heart, cultured, pleasing the people, loved by the people. ...

He has given up **frivolous** talk, he has lost all inclination to it. He speaks at the right time, in accordance with the facts, with words full of meaning, His speech is memorable, timely, well illustrated, measured, and to the point.

#### panegyric -

oration or eulogy in praise of some person or achievement

#### virtue -

any admirable quality or attribute

#### layman -

person who is not a cleric

#### cudgel -

short thick stick used as a weapon

#### unchaste -

immoral; impure

#### celibate -

one who abstains from sexual intercourse, especially by reason of religious vows

#### aloof -

distant physically or emotionally

#### slander -

a false and malicious statement or report about someone

#### strife -

struggle, fight, or quarrel

#### frivolous -

unworthy of serious attention

He does no harm to seeds or plants. He takes only one meal a day, not eating at night, or at the wrong time. He will not watch shows, or attend fairs with song, dance, and music. He will not wear ornaments, or adorn himself with garlands, scents, or cosmetics. He will not use a high or large bed. He will not accept gold or silver, raw grain or raw meat. He will not accept women or girls, bondmen or bondwomen, sheep or goats, fowls or pigs, elephants or cattle, horses or mares, fields or houses. He will not act as go-between or messenger. He will not buy or sell, or falsify with scales, weights, or measures. He is never crooked, will never bribe, or cheat, or defraud. He will not injure, kill, or put on bonds, or steal, or do acts of violence...

## CARE OF THE BODY

The Buddhist Order was very **solicitous** about the bodily health of its members, and the Buddha is reported to have said on one occasion: "He who would care for me should care for the sick." Buddhist monasteries often served as dispensaries, and it has been suggested that one of the reasons for the spread of Buddhism in South-east Asia and elsewhere was the medical lore of the Buddhist monks, which, though of course primitive by modern standards, was superior to anything known to the local inhabitants and thus added to the reputation of the new religion.

The Questions of King Menander explains the apparent anomaly that a system that stressed so strongly the evils of the things of the flesh should also value physical well-being so highly...

The King said: "**Reverend** Nâgasena, is the body dear to you wanderers?"

"No, your Majesty."

"Then why do you feed it and care for it so well?"

"Have you ever gone to battle, and been wounded by an arrow?"

"Yes, your **Reverence**, I have."

"And in such a case isn't the wound **smear**ed with ointment, **anoint**ed with oil, and bound with a bandage?"

"Yes, that's what is done."

"And is the wound dear to you, your Majesty, that you care for it so well?"

"Certainly not! All those things are done to make the flesh grow together again."

"So, you see, wanderers do not hold the body dear, your Majesty! Without clinging to it they bear the body in **contine**nce, for the Lord declared that the body was like a wound. . . . 'Covered with **clammy** skin, with nine openings, a great wound, The body **ooze**s from every pore, unclean and stinking.' "

"Well spoken, Reverend Nâgasena!"

## LAY NOT UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES UPON EARTH.

In theory, "right views" about the nature of the world are the first step along the Eightfold Path. But the Buddhist literature meant chiefly for laymen tends to emphasize right actions rather than right views. Whatever the beliefs of a man may be, his good deeds and self-discipline are an unfailing source of merit and lead to a happier rebirth, which may give him the opportunity for further spiritual

### solicitous -

anxious or concerned

### Reverend -

used as a respectful form of address for certain religious leaders

### smear -

to apply by spreading or daubing

### anoint -

to apply oil, ointment, or a similar substance to

### continence -

self-restraint; moderation

### clammy -

disagreeably moist, sticky, and cold to the touch

### ooze -

to flow or leak out slowly, as through small openings



progress. We quote the following short passage partly because it recalls a famous verse of the **Sermon on the Mount**. Notice that the treasure “cannot be given to others.” This is the doctrine of the Theravâda sect. The Mahâyâna teaches that the merit accruing from good deeds can be transferred by a voluntary act of will, and men are encouraged, by the example of the compassionate **bodhisattvas**, to make such transfers of merit...

A man buries a treasure in a deep pit, thinking: “It will be useful in time of need, or if the king is displeased with me, or if I am robbed or fall into debt, or if food is scarce, or bad luck befalls me.”

But all this treasure may not profit the owner at all, for he may forget where he has hidden it, or **goblins** may steal it, or his enemies or even his kinsmen may take it when he is careless.

But by charity, goodness, restraint, and self-control man and woman alike can store up a well-hidden treasure – a treasure which cannot be given to others and which robbers cannot steal. A wise man should do good – that is the treasure which will not leave him.

## THE VIRTUE OF FRIENDLINESS

The following poem is evidently a **conflation** from two sources, for, in the middle of the third verse, its whole tone changes, and, in place of a rather **pedestrian** enumeration of the Buddhist virtues, we have an impassioned **rhapsody** on the theme of friendliness (*mettâ*), the first of the four cardinal virtues. “Mindfulness of friendliness” is among the daily exercises of the monk and can also be practiced by the layman; the practitioner detaches himself in imagination from his own body and, as though looking down on himself, pervades himself with friendliness directed toward himself, for it is impossible to feel true friendliness or love for others unless, in the best sense of the term, one feels it for oneself; then he proceeds in imagination to send waves of friendliness in every direction, to reach every being in every corner of the world. After pervading the world with love he may repeat the process with the three other cardinal virtues – compassion, joy, and **equanimity**. These forms of the practice of “right mindfulness” are known as *brahma-vihâras*, freely translated as “sublime moods.” They are still practiced by Buddhists throughout the world, and it is believed, especially among the Mahâyânist sects, that the waves of friendliness constantly poured out by many thousands of meditating monks have a very positive effect on the welfare of the world...

This a man should do who knows what is good for him,  
Who understands the meaning of the Place of Peace [i.e., Nirvâna] –  
He should be able, upright, truly straight,  
Kindly of speech, mild, and without **conceit**.

### **Sermon on the Mount -**

discourse of Jesus, epitomizing his moral teaching, including the teaching: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth”

### **bodhisattva -**

an enlightened being who, out of compassion, forgoes nirvana in order to save others

### **goblin -**

a grotesque elfin creature of folklore, thought to work mischief or evil

### **conflation -**

to combine (two variant texts, for example) into one whole

### **pedestrian -**

undistinguished; ordinary

### **rhapsody -**

exalted or excessively enthusiastic expression of feeling in speech or writing

### **equanimity -**

the quality of being calm and even-tempered

### **conceit -**

a favourable and especially unduly high opinion of one's own abilities or worth

He should be well content, soon satisfied,  
Having few wants and simple tastes,  
With composed senses, discreet,  
Not **arrogant** or grasping. . . .

In his deeds there should be no meanness  
For which the wise might blame him.  
May all be happy and safe!  
May all beings gain inner joy –  
All living beings whatever  
Without exception, weak or strong,  
Whether long or high  
Middling or small, **subtle** or gross,  
Seen or unseen,  
Dwelling afar or near,  
Born or yet unborn –  
May all beings gain inner joy.

May no being deceive another,  
Nor in any way **scorn** another,

Nor, in anger or ill-will,  
Desire another's sorrow

As a mother cares for her son,  
Her only son, all her days,  
So toward all things living  
A man's mind should be all-embracing.  
Friendliness for the whole world,  
All-embracing, he should raise in his mind,  
Above, below, and across,  
**Unhindered**, free from hate and ill-will.

Standing, walking or sitting,  
Or lying down, till he falls asleep,  
He should remain firm in this mindfulness,  
For this is the **sublime** mood.  
Avoiding all false views,  
Virtuous, filled with insight,  
Let him conquer the **lust** of the passions,  
And he shall never again be born of the womb.

## HATRED AND LOVE

The idea of “turning the other cheek” in one's personal relations is frequently to be found in Buddhist literature. Nevertheless there are few condemnations of warfare, as distinct from acts of violence on the part of individuals, and the THERAVÂDA scriptures contain no passages on this latter topic as forthright as Ashoka's Thirteenth Rock-Edict. The following verses from the Way of Righteousness exemplify these points.

### arrogant -

having or displaying a sense of  
overbearing self-worth or self-  
importance

### subtle -

so slight as to be difficult to  
detect or describe

### scorn -

to consider or treat as  
contemptible or unworthy

### unhindered -

not slowed or blocked or  
interfered with

### sublime -

of high spiritual, moral, or  
intellectual worth

### lust -

an overwhelming desire or  
craving

### appeased -

satisfied or relieved

[From Dhammapada, 3-5, 201]

“He insulted me, he struck me,  
He defeated me, he robbed me!”

Those who harbor such thoughts  
Are never **appeased** in their hatred. . . .

But those who do not harbor them  
Are quickly appeased.

Never in this world is hate  
Appeased by hatred; it is only appeased by love –  
This is an eternal law (sanantana-dhamma).

Victory breeds hatred  
For the defeated lie down in sorrow.

Above victory or defeat  
The calm man dwells in peace.

## BUDDHISM AND EVERYDAY LIFE

The **Admonition** to Singâla is the longest single passage in the Pali scriptures devoted to lay morality. Though attributed to the Buddha, it is probably not **authentically** his; parts of it, however, may be based on a few transmitted recollections of his teaching. Like many other Discourses it seems to **emanate** from more than one source, for the earlier part, enumerating the many sins and faults to which the layman is liable, and describing the true friend, is divided by a series of verses from the later and finer passage, defining the duties of the layman in his six-fold relationship with his fellows.

The reader should notice the solid, frugal, mercantile virtues that are especially in the first part. This **sermon** is evidently not directed chiefly at the very poor or the very rich, but at the prosperous middle class. Also noteworthy paragraphs on the duties of husbands and wives and masters and servants in the second part of the sermon – if read in terms of rights rather than of duties they seem to imply the wife's right to full control of household affairs and to an adequate allowance, and the employee's right to fair wages and conditions, regular holidays, and free medical attention...

Once when the Lord was staying in the Bamboo Grove at Râjagaha, Singâla, a householder's son, got up early, went out from Râjagaha, and with his clothes and hair still wet from his morning **ablutions**, joined his hands in reverence and worshiped the several quarters of earth and sky – east, south, west, north, above, and below. Now early that same morning the Lord dressed himself, and with bowl and robe went into Râjagaha to beg his food. He saw Singâla worshiping the quarters, and asked him why he did so.

"When my father lay dying," Singâla replied, "he told me to worship the quarters thus. I honor my father's words, and respect and **revere** them, and so I always get up early and worship the quarters in this way."

"But to worship the six quarters thus is not in accordance with noble conduct."

"How then, Sir, should they be worshiped in accordance with noble conduct? Will the Lord be so good as to tell me?"

"Listen then," said the Lord, "and I'll tell you. Mark well what I say!"

"I will, Sir," Singâla replied. And the Lord spoke as follows:

"If the noble lay-disciple has given up the four vices of action, if he does no evil deed from any of the four motives, if he doesn't follow the six ways of **squandering** his wealth, if he avoids all these fourteen evils – then he embraces the six quarters, he is ready for the conquest of both worlds, he is fortunate both in this world and the next, and when his body breaks up on his death he is reborn to bliss in heaven.

"What are the four vices of action that he gives up? They are injury to life, taking what is not given, base conduct in sexual matters, and false speech. . . .

"What are the four motives of evil deeds which he avoids? Evil deeds are commit-

### admonition -

cautionary advice or warning

### authentically -

having a claimed and verifiable origin or authorship; not counterfeit or copied

### emanate -

proceed or issue forth, as from a source

### sermon -

a religious discourse

### ablution -

the act of washing or cleansing

### revere -

to regard with awe, deference, and devotion

### squandering -

spending resources lavishly and wastefully

<b>partiality -</b>	favourable prejudice or bias
<b>enmity -</b>	deep-seated, often mutual hatred
<b>indecent -</b>	offensive to public moral values; immodest
<b>insatiable -</b>	impossible to satisfy
<b>incur -</b>	to become liable or subject to as a result of one's actions
<b>rogue -</b>	an unprincipled, deceitful, and unreliable person; a scoundrel or rascal
<b>libertine -</b>	one who acts without moral restraint
<b>swindler -</b>	one who makes a practice of defrauding others by imposition or deliberate artifice
<b>tough -</b>	a violent or rowdy person
<b>guise -</b>	false appearance; pretense
<b>smooth-spoken -</b>	flattering; smooth-tongued
<b>wastrel -</b>	one who wastes, especially one who wastes money
<b>roam -</b>	to move about without purpose or plan
<b>in weal and woe -</b>	in good times and bad; in prosperity and suffering

ted from **partiality**, **enmity**, stupidity, and fear.

“And what are the six ways of squandering wealth? They are addiction to drink, the cause of carelessness; roaming the streets at improper times; frequenting fairs; gambling; keeping bad company; and idleness.

There are six dangers in addiction to drink: actual loss of wealth; increased liability to quarrels; liability to illness; loss of reputation; **indecent** exposure; and weakened intelligence.

There are six dangers in roaming the streets at improper times: the man who does so is unprotected and unguarded; so are his wife and children; likewise his property; he **incurs** suspicion of having committed crime; he is the subject of false rumors; in fact he goes out to meet all kinds of trouble.

There are six dangers in frequenting fairs: the man who does so becomes an **insatiable** addict of dancing; singing; music; story-telling; jugglers; or acrobats.

“There are six dangers in gambling: the winner **incurs** hatred; the loser regrets his lost money; there is obvious loss of wealth; a gambler's word is not respected in the law courts; he is scorned by his friends and counselors – and he is not cultivated by people who want to marry their daughters, for the **rogue** who's always dicing isn't fit to keep a wife.

“There are six dangers in keeping bad company: a man who does so has as his friends and companions rogues; **libertines**; drunkards; confidence men; **swindlers**; and **toughs**.

“And there are six dangers in idleness; A man says, ‘it's too cold’ and doesn't work; or he says, ‘it's too hot’; or ‘it's too early’; or ‘it's too late’; or ‘I'm too hungry’; or ‘I'm too full.’ And so all the while he won't do what he ought to do, and he earns no new wealth, but fritters away what he has already earned.

“There are four types who should be looked on as enemies in the **guise** of friends: a grasping man; a **smooth-spoken** man; a man who only says what you want to hear; and a man who helps you waste your money.

“The grasping man is an enemy on four grounds: he is grasping; when he gives a little he expects a lot in return; what duty he performs he does out of fear; and he only serves his own interests.

“The smooth-spoken man is an enemy on four grounds: he speaks to you fair about the past; he speaks to you fair about the future; he tries to win you over by empty promises; but when there's something to be done he shows his shortcomings.

“The man who only says what you want to hear is an enemy on four grounds: he consents to an evil deed; he doesn't consent to a good one; he praises you to your face; but he runs you down behind your back.

“The **wastrel** is an enemy on four grounds: he is your companion when you drink; when you **roam** the streets at improper times; when you go to fairs; and when you gamble.

“But there are four types who should be looked on as friends true of heart, a man who seeks to help you; a man who is the same **in weal and woe**; a man who gives good advice; and a man who is sympathetic. ...

The friend who is a helper,  
The friend in weal and woe,  
The friend who gives good counsel,  
The friend who sympathizes –  
These the wise man should know

And should devote himself to them  
As a mother to the child of her body.  
  
The wise and moral man  
Shines like a fire on a hilltop,

Making money like the bee,  
As his four true friends,  
Who does not hurt the flower.

Such a man makes his pile as an anthill, gradually. The man grown wealthy thus can help his family and firmly bind his friends to himself. He should divide his money in four parts; on one part he should live, with two expand his trade, and the fourth he should save against a rainy day.

“And how does the noble lay-disciple embrace the six quarters? He should recognize these as the six quarters: mother and father as the east; teachers as the south; wife and children as the west; friends and counselors as the north; slaves and servants as below; and **ascetics** and **brāhmans** as above.

“A son should serve his mother and father as the eastern quarter in five ways: having been maintained by them in his childhood he should maintain them in their old age; he should perform the duties which formerly devolved on them; he should maintain the honor and the traditions of his family and **lineage**; he should make himself worthy of his heritage; and he should make offerings to the spirits of the departed. And thus served by their son as the eastern quarter his mother and father should care for him in five ways: they should restrain him from evil; encourage him to do good; have him taught a profession; arrange for his marriage to a suitable wife; transfer his inheritance to him in due time. Thus he embraces the eastern quarter and makes it safe and **propitious**.

“A pupil should serve his teacher as the southern quarter in five ways: by rising [to greet him when he enters]; by waiting upon him; by willingness to learn; by attentive service; and by **diligently** learning his trade. And thus served by his pupil as the southern quarter a teacher should care for him in five ways: he should train him in good conduct; teach him in such a way that he remembers what he has been taught; thoroughly instruct him in the lore of every art [of his trade]; speak well of him to his friends and counselors; and protect him in every quarter. Thus he embraces the southern quarter and makes it safe and propitious.

“A husband should serve his wife as the western quarter in five ways: by honoring her; by respecting her; by remaining faithful to her; by giving her charge of the home; and by duly giving her adornments. And thus served by her husband as the western quarter a wife should care for him in five ways: she should be efficient in her household tasks; she should manage her servants well; she should be chaste; she should take care of the goods he brings home; and she should be skilful and untiring in all her duties. Thus he embraces the western quarter and makes it safe and propitious.

“A gentleman should serve his friends and counselors as the northern quarter in five ways: by **generosity**; by courtesy; by helping them; by treating them as he would treat himself; and by keeping his word to them. And thus served by a gentleman as the northern quarter his friends and counselors should care for him in five ways: they should protect him when he is careless; they should guard his property on such occasions; they should be a refuge for him in trouble; in misfortune they should not

**ascetic -**

person who renounces material comforts and leads a life of austere self-discipline, especially as an act of religious devotion

**brāhman -**

member of traditional Indian society, responsible for officiating at religious rites and studying and teaching the Vedas

**lineage -**

the descendants of a common ancestor considered to be the founder of the line

**propitious -**

kindly; gracious

**diligently -**

marked by persevering, painstaking effort

**generosity -**

nobility of thought or behaviour

**luxury -**  
pleasure and comfort

leave him; and they should respect other members of his family. Thus he embraces the western quarter and makes it safe and propitious.

“A master should serve his slaves and servants as the lower quarter in five ways: he should assign them work in proportion to their strength; he should give them due food and wages; he should care for them in sickness; he should share especially tasty **luxuries** with them; and he should give them holidays at due intervals. Thus served by their master as the lower quarter they should care for him in five ways: they should get up before him; they should go to bed after him; they should be content with what generosity he gives them; they should do their work well; and they should spread abroad his praise and nobility of thought or good name. Thus he embraces the lower quarter and makes it safe and propitious.

“In five ways a gentleman should serve ascetics and brāhmins as the upper quarter: by affectionate acts; by affectionate words; by affectionate thoughts; by not closing his doors to them; and by duly supplying them with food. Thus served by a gentleman as the upper quarter they should care for him in six ways: they should restrain him from evil; they should encourage him to do good; they should feel for him with a friendly mind; they should teach him what he has not heard before; they should encourage him to follow what he has already learned; and they should show him the way to heaven. Thus he embraces the upper quarter and makes it safe and propitious.”

**SOURCE:** “THERAVĀDA Buddhism.” *Sources of Indian Tradition*. Edited by Ainslie T. Embree. New York: Columbia University, 1988.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of any other religious or philosophical schools of thought that espouse a similar attitude towards the body as that found in “Care of the Body?”
2. The “Care of the Body” passage comes from a larger work, the “Questions of King Menander,” and is presented as a series of dialogues between a king who is interested in Buddhism, and a monk who answers his questions. What do you think was the purpose in writing a religious text in a dialogue format?
3. The last line of the passage “Lay Not Up For Yourselves Treasures on Earth,” is as follows: “A wise man should do good – that is the treasure that will not leave him.” What do you suppose is meant by this last part? Where does it fit into the larger framework of Buddhist philosophy?
4. As the introduction notes, the section on “The Virtue of Friendliness” seems to be a conflation of two separate works. Why do you suppose the compiler or author decided to combine these two sources? If he did combine two different works, does it challenge the way people perceive sacred texts today?
5. What does the statement, “May all beings gain inner joy,” imply about the cosmological views of the author? Does this idea differ from or resonate with statements from other religious works you have read?
6. Can you think of any modern examples of the statement “Victory breeds hatred, for the defeated lie down in sorrow?”
7. What does the statement “Above victory or defeat, the calm man dwells in peace,” imply about Buddhist attitudes towards conflict? How does the statement fit into Buddhist ideas about the path to enlightenment?

8. The last passage in this series of readings is very different from the preceding ones in tone and in structure. Who was it written for, and why? Do you see in this passage any compromises with the Buddhist ideals set forth in the earlier passages? Are the concerns with worldly life that are addressed here concerns that would have been important to the very first Buddhist monks?

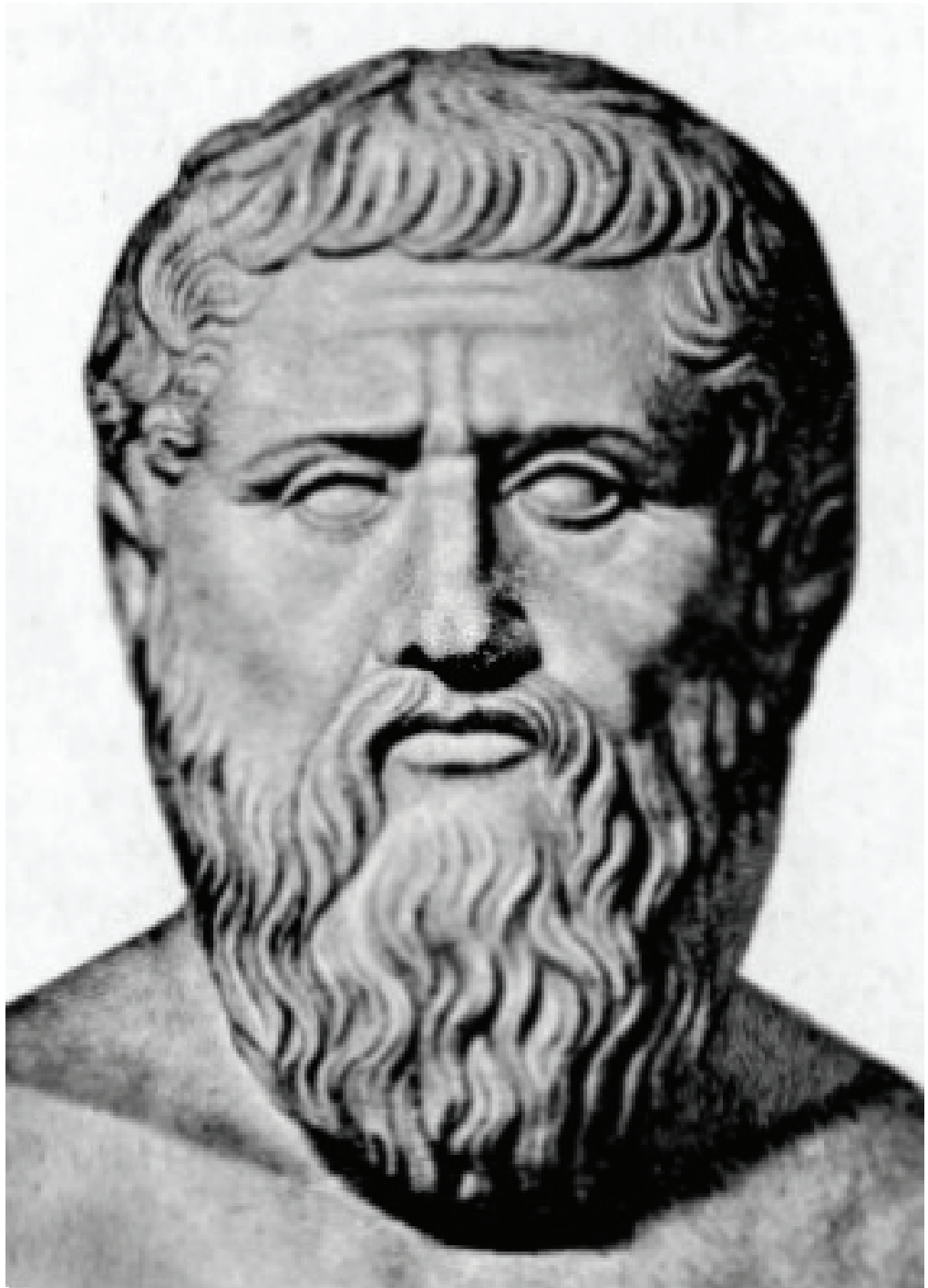
### REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. In the passage “The Morals of the Monk,” a set of guidelines for ethical conduct is presented. What are some differences in the ethics of this passage, and those of the *Bhagavad Gita*?
2. Can you draw a brief comparison between the moral tone of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Theravada Buddhist texts that you have just read? It is believed that the author(s) of the *Bhagavad Gita* were very familiar with the ideas of early Indian Buddhism. What evidence can you find in the *Bhagavad Gita* for this?
3. Is there a common concern with human nature that underlies both the Theravada Buddhist texts and the *Bhagavad Gita*? If so, what do you think it is?

### ADDITIONAL READING:

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## PLATO

**Plato (428/427 BC – 348/347 BC), whose original name was Aristocles, was an ancient Greek philosopher, the second of the great trio of ancient Greeks. Plato was also a mathematician, writer of philosophical dialogues, and founder of the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the western world. The main areas of his focus were Art, Education, Epistemology, Literature, Militarism, Politics and Virtue (Ethics).**

## THE REPUBLIC

## BOOK IV.

And so by reason of the smallest part or class, and of the knowledge which resides in this presiding and ruling part of itself, the whole State, being thus constituted according to nature, will be wise; and this, which has the only knowledge worthy to be called wisdom, has been ordained by nature to be of all classes the least.

Most true.

Thus, then, I said, the nature and place in the State of one of the four virtues has somehow or other been discovered.

And, in my **humble** opinion, very satisfactorily discovered, he replied.

Again, I said, there is no difficulty in seeing the nature of courage and in what part that quality resides which gives the name of courageous to the State.

How do you mean?

Why, I said, every one who calls any State courageous or cowardly, will be thinking of the part which fights and goes out to war on the State's behalf.

No one, he replied, would ever think of any other.

The rest of the citizens may be courageous or may be cowardly, but their courage or cowardice will not, as I conceive, have the effect of making the city either the one or the other.

Certainly not.

The city will be courageous in virtue of a portion of herself which preserves under all circumstances that opinion about the nature of things to be feared and not to be feared in which our legislator educated them; and this is what you term courage.

I should like to hear what you are saying once more, for I do not think that I perfectly understand you.

I mean that courage is a kind of salvation.

Salvation of what?

Of the opinion respecting things to be feared, what they are and of what nature, which the law **implants** through education; and I mean by the words 'under all circumstances' to **intimate** that in pleasure or in pain, or under the influence of desire or fear, a man preserves, and does not lose this opinion. Shall I give you an illustration?

If you please.

**epistemology -**

the branch of philosophy dealing with the study of knowledge; theory of knowledge

**humble -**

thinking lowly of one's self; claiming little for one's self; not proud, arrogant, or assuming

**implant -**

to fix firmly or set securely or deeply; to insert (something) surgically into the body

**intimate -**

to suggest or disclose discreetly

You know, I said, that dyers, when they want to dye wool for making the true sea-purple, begin by selecting their white color first; this they prepare and dress with much care and pains, in order that the white ground may take the purple **hue** in full perfection. The dyeing then proceeds; and whatever is dyed in this manner becomes a fast color and no washing either with lyes or without them can take away the bloom. But, when the ground has not been **duly** prepared, you will have noticed how poor the look either of purple or of any other colour is.

Yes, he said; I know that they have a washed-out and **ridiculous** appearance.

Then now, I said, you will understand what our object was in selecting our soldiers, and educating them in music and gymnastic; we were **contriving** influences which would prepare them to take the dye of the laws in perfection, and the color of their opinion about dangers and of every other opinion was to be indelibly fixed by their nurture and training, not to be washed away by such potent lyes as pleasure – mightier agent far in washing the soul than any soda or lye; or by sorrow, fear, and desire, the mightiest of all other solvents. And this sort of universal saving power of true opinion in conformity with law about real and false dangers I call and maintain to be courage, unless you disagree.

But I agree, he replied; for I suppose that you mean to exclude mere uninstructed courage, such as that of a wild **beast** or of a slave – this, in your opinion, is not the courage which the law **ordains**, and ought to have another name.

Most certainly.

Then I may infer courage to be such as you describe?

Why, yes, said I, you may, and if you add the words ‘of a citizen,’ you will not be far wrong; hereafter, if you like, we will carry the examination further, but at present we are seeking not for courage but justice; and for the purpose of our enquiry we have said enough.

You are right, he replied.

Two virtues remain to be discovered in the State – first, **temperance**, and then justice which is the end of our search.

Very true.

Now, can we find justice without troubling ourselves about temperance?

I do not know how that can be accomplished, he said, nor do I desire that justice should be brought to light and temperance lost sight of; and therefore I wish that you would do me the favor of considering temperance first.

Certainly, I replied, I should not be justified in refusing your request.

Then consider, he said.

Yes, I replied; I will; and as far as I can at present see, the virtue of temperance has more of the nature of harmony and symphony than the preceding.

How so? He asked.

Temperance, I replied, is the ordering or controlling of certain pleasures and desires; this is curiously enough implied in the saying of ‘a man being his own master;’ and other **traces** of the same notion may be found in language.

No doubt, he said.

There is something ridiculous in the expression ‘master of himself;’ for the master is also the servant and the servant the master; and in all these modes of speaking the same person is **denoted**.

Certainly.

The meaning is, I believe, that in the human soul there is a better and also a worse principle; and when the better has the worse under control, then a man is said to be master of himself; and this is a term of praise: but when, owing to evil education or association, the better principle, which is also the smaller, is **overwhelmed** by the greater mass of the worse – in this case he is blamed and is called the slave of self and unprincipled.

Yes, there is reason in that.

And now, I said, look at our newly-created State, and there you will find one of these

**hue -**

colour or shade of color; tint; dye; character; aspect

**duly -**

in a due, fit, or becoming manner; as it ought to be; properly; regularly; at the proper time

**ridiculous -**

deserving of ridicule; foolish

**contrive -**

to form by an exercise of ingenuity; to devise; to invent; to design; to plan

**beast -**

any animal other than a human; usually only applied to vertebrates, sometimes excluding birds; A person who behaves in a violent, antisocial or uncivilised manner

**ordain -**

to prearrange unalterably; to decree

**temperance -**

moderation of passion; patience; calmness; sedateness

**trace -**

a mark left as a sign of passage of a person or animal; A very small amount

**denote -**

to indicate; to mark

**overwhelm -**

to engulf, surge-over and submerge

two conditions realized; for the State, as you will acknowledge, may be justly called master of itself, if the words 'temperance' and 'self-mastery' truly express the rule of the better part over the worse.

Yes, he said, I see that what you say is true.

Let me further note that the manifold and complex pleasures and desires and pains are generally found in children and women and servants, and in the freemen so called who are of the lowest and more numerous class.

Certainly, he said.

Whereas the simple and moderate desires which follow reason, and are under the guidance of mind and true opinion, are to be found only in a few, and those the best born and best educated.

Very true.

These two, as you may perceive, have a place in our State; and the meaner desires of the many are held down by the virtuous desires and wisdom of the few.

That I perceive, he said.

Then if there be any city which may be described as master of its own pleasures and desires, and master of itself, ours may claim such a designation?

Certainly, he replied.

It may also be called temperate, and for the same reasons?

Yes.

And if there be any State in which rulers and subjects will be agreed as to the question who are to rule, that again will be our State?

Undoubtedly.

And the citizens being thus agreed among themselves, in which class will temperance be found – in the rulers or in the subjects?

In both, as I should imagine, he replied.

Do you observe that we were not far wrong in our guess that temperance was a sort of harmony?

Why so?

Why, because temperance is unlike courage and wisdom, each of which resides in a part only, the one making the State wise and the other **valiant**; not so temperance, which extends to the whole, and runs through all the notes of the scale, and produces a harmony of the weaker and the stronger and the middle class, whether you suppose them to be stronger or weaker in wisdom or power or numbers or wealth, or anything else. Most truly then may we **deem** temperance to be the agreement of the naturally **superior** and **inferior**, as to the right to rule of either, both in states and individuals.

I entirely agree with you.

And so, I said, we may consider three out of the four virtues to have been discovered in our State. The last of those qualities which make a state virtuous must be justice, if we only knew what that was.

The inference is **obvious**.

The time then has arrived, Glaucon, when, like huntsmen, we should surround the cover, and look sharp that justice does not steal away, and pass out of sight and escape us; for beyond a doubt she is somewhere in this country: watch therefore and strive to

**valiant** -

showing courage or determination

**deem** -

to consider; to evaluate according to one's beliefs; to hold as a personal opinion

**superior** -

higher in rank or quality

**inferior** -

lower rank or quality

**obvious** -

easily discovered, seen, or understood; self-explanatory

catch a sight of her, and if you see her first, let me know.

Would that I could! But you should regard me rather as a follower who has just eyes enough to see what you show him – that is about as much as I am good for.

Offer up a prayer with me and follow.

I will, but you must show me the way.

Here is no path, I said, and the wood is dark and perplexing; still we must push on.

Let us push on.

Here I saw something: Halloo! I said, I begin to perceive a track, and I believe that the quarry will not escape.

Good news, he said.

Truly, I said, we are stupid fellows.

Why so?

Why, my good sir, at the beginning of our enquiry, ages ago, there was justice tumbling out at our feet, and we never saw her; nothing could be more ridiculous. Like people who go about looking for what they have in their hands – that was the way with us – we looked not at what we were seeking, but at what was far off in the distance; and therefore, I suppose, we missed her.

What do you mean?

I mean to say that in reality for a long time past we have been talking of justice, and have failed to recognize her.

I grow impatient at the length of your **exordium**.

Well then, tell me, I said, whether I am right or not: You remember the original principle which we were always laying down at the foundation of the State, that one man should practice one thing only, the thing to which his nature was best adapted – now justice is this principle or a part of it.

Yes, we often said that one man should do one thing only.

Further, we **affirmed** that justice was doing one's own business, and not being a busybody; we said so again and again, and many others have said the same to us.

Yes, we said so.

Then to do one's own business in a certain way may be assumed to be justice. Can you tell me whence I **derive** this inference?

I cannot, but I should like to be told.

Because I think that this is the only virtue which remains in the State when the other virtues of temperance and courage and wisdom are abstracted; and, that this is the ultimate cause and condition of the existence of all of them, and while remaining in them is also their preservative; and we were saying that if the three were discovered by us, justice would be the fourth or remaining one.

That follows of necessity.

If we are asked to determine which of these four qualities by its presence contributes most to the excellence of the State, whether the agreement of rulers and subjects, or the preservation in the soldiers of the opinion which the law ordains about the true nature of dangers, or wisdom and watchfulness in the rulers, or whether this other which I am mentioning, and which is found in children and women, slave and freeman, artisan, ruler, subject – the quality, I mean, of every one doing his own work, and not being a busybody, would claim the palm – the question is not so easily answered.

Certainly, he replied, there would be a difficulty in saying which.

Then the power of each individual in the State to do his own work appears to compete with the other political virtues, wisdom, temperance, courage.

Yes, he said.

And the virtue which enters into this competition is justice?

Exactly.

Let us look at the question from another point of view: Are not the rulers in a State

**exordium -**

beginning; the introduction to a paper or discourse

**affirm -**

to agree, verify or concur; to answer positively; to support or encourage

**derive -**

to obtain or receive (something) from something else

those to whom you would **entrust** the office of determining suits at law?

Certainly.

And are suits decided on any other ground but that a man may neither take what is another's, nor be **deprived** of what is his own?

Yes; that is their principle.

Which is a just principle?

Yes.

Then on this view also justice will be admitted to be the having and doing what is a man's own, and belongs to him?

Very true.

Think, now, and say whether you agree with me or not. Suppose a carpenter to be doing the business of a cobbler, or a cobbler of a carpenter; and suppose them to exchange their implements or their duties, or the same person to be doing the work of both, or whatever be the change; do you think that any great harm would result to the State?

Not much.

But when the cobbler or any other man whom nature designed to be a trader, having his heart lifted up by wealth or strength or the number of his followers, or any like advantage, attempts to force his way into the class of **warriors**, or a warrior into that of legislators and guardians, for which he is unfitted, and either to take the implements or the duties of the other; or when one man is trader, legislator, and warrior all in one, then I think you will agree with me in saying that this interchange and this meddling of one with another is the ruin of the State.

Most true.

Seeing then, I said, that there are three distinct classes, any meddling of one with another, or the change of one into another, is the greatest harm to the State, and may be most justly termed evil-doing?

Precisely.

And the greatest degree of evil-doing to one's own city would be termed by you injustice?

Certainly.

This then is injustice; and on the other hand when the trader, the auxiliary, and the guardian each do their own business, that is justice, and will make the city just.

I agree with you.

We will not, I said, be over-positive as yet; but if, on trial, this conception of justice be verified in the individual as well as in the State, there will be no longer any room for doubt; if it be not verified, we must have a fresh enquiry. First let us complete the old investigation, which we began, as you remember, under the impression that, if we could previously examine justice on the larger scale, there would be less difficulty in **discerning** her in the individual. That larger example appeared to be the State, and accordingly we constructed as good a one as we could, knowing well that in the good State justice would be found. Let the discovery which we made be now applied to the individual – if they agree, we shall be satisfied; or, if there be a difference in the individual, we will come back to the State and have another trial of the theory. The **friction** of the two when rubbed together may possibly strike a light in which justice will shine forth, and the vision which

**entrust -**

to trust to the care of

**deprive -**

to take something away; deny someone of something

**warrior -**

person who is aggressively or energetically involved in a cause or conflict

**discern -**

to detect with the senses, especially with the eyes; to distinguish something as being different from something else; to differentiate

**friction -**

the rubbing of one object or surface against another; Conflict, as between persons having dissimilar ideas or interests; clash

is then revealed we will fix in our souls.

That will be in regular course; let us do as you say.

I proceeded to ask: When two things, a greater and less, are called by the same name, are they like or unlike in so far as they are called the same?

Like, he replied.

The just man then, if we regard the idea of justice only, will be like the just State?

He will.

And a State was thought by us to be just when the three classes in the State severally did their own business; and also thought to be temperate and valiant and wise by reason of certain other affections and qualities of these same classes?

True, he said.

And so of the individual; we may assume that he has the same three principles in his own soul which are found in the State; and he may be rightly described in the same terms, because he is affected in the same manner?

Certainly, he said.

Once more then, O my friend, we have alighted upon an easy question – whether the soul has these three principles or not?

An easy question! Nay, rather, Socrates, the proverb holds that hard is the good.

Very true, I said; and I do not think that the method which we are employing is at all adequate to the accurate solution of this question; the true method is another and a longer one. Still we may arrive at a solution not below the level of the previous enquiry.

May we not be satisfied with that? He said – under the circumstances, I am quite content.

I too, I replied, shall be extremely well satisfied.

Then faint not in pursuing the speculation, he said.

Must we not acknowledge, I said, that in each of us there are the same principles and habits which there are in the State; and that from the individual they pass into the State? How else can they come there? Take the quality of passion or spirit – it would be ridiculous to imagine that this quality, when found in States, is not derived from the individuals who are supposed to possess it, e.g. the Thracians, Scythians, and in general the northern nations; and the same may be said of the love of knowledge, which is the special characteristic of our part of the world, or of the love of money, which may, with equal truth, be attributed to the Phoenicians and Egyptians.

Exactly so, he said.

There is no difficulty in understanding this.

None whatever.

But the question is not quite so easy when we proceed to ask whether these principles are three or one; whether, that is to say, we learn with one part of our nature, are angry with another, and with a third part desire the satisfaction of our natural appetites; or whether the whole soul comes into play in each sort of action – to determine that is the difficulty.

Yes, he said; there lies the difficulty.

Then let us now try and determine whether they are the same or different.

How can we? He asked.

I replied as follows: The same thing clearly cannot act or be acted upon in the same part or in relation to the same thing at the same time, in contrary ways; and therefore whenever this contradiction occurs in things apparently the same, we know that they are really not the same, but different.

Good.

For example, I said, can the same thing be at rest and in motion at the same time in the same part?



Impossible.

Still, I said, let us have a more precise statement of terms, lest we should hereafter fall out by the way. Imagine the case of a man who is standing and also moving his hands and his head, and suppose a person to say that one and the same person is in motion and at rest at the same moment – to such a mode of speech we should object, and should rather say that one part of him is in motion while another is at rest.

Very true.

And suppose the objector to refine still further, and to draw the nice distinction that not only parts of tops, but whole tops, when they spin round with their pegs fixed on the spot, are at rest and in motion at the same time (and he may say the same of anything which revolves in the same spot), his objection would not be admitted by us, because in such cases things are not at rest and in motion in the same parts of themselves; we should rather say that they have both an axis and a circumference, and that the axis stands still, for there is no deviation from the perpendicular; and that the circumference goes round. But if, while revolving, the axis inclines either to the right or left, forwards or backwards, then in no point of view can they be at rest.

That is the correct mode of describing them, he replied.

Then none of these objections will confuse us, or incline us to believe that the same thing at the same time, in the same part or in relation to the same thing, can act or be acted upon in contrary ways.

Certainly not, according to my way of thinking.

Yet, I said, that we may not be compelled to examine all such objections, and prove at length that they are untrue, let us assume their absurdity, and go forward on the understanding that hereafter, if this assumption turn out to be untrue, all the consequences which follow shall be withdrawn.

Yes, he said, that will be the best way.

Well, I said, would you not allow that assent and dissent, desire and aversion, attraction and repulsion, are all of them opposites, whether they are regarded as active or passive (for that makes no difference in the fact of their opposition)?

Yes, he said, they are opposites.

Well, I said, and hunger and thirst, and the desires in general, and again willing and wishing – all these you would refer to the classes already mentioned. You would say – would you not – that the soul of him who desires is seeking after the object of his desire; or that he is drawing to himself the thing which he wishes to possess: or again, when a person wants anything to be given him, his mind, longing for the realization of his desire, intimates his wish to have it by a nod of assent, as if he had been asked a question?

Very true.

And what would you say of unwillingness and dislike and the absence of desire; should not these be referred to the opposite class of repulsion and rejection?

Certainly.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the genre/style of this writing of Plato's? Can such a form of writing help to understand the content? If yes, how?
2. What is the relationship between nature and state according to the teaching of Plato? Why does Plato point out this relationship, and why is it important for his theory of state and human nature?
3. Why is wisdom (one of four virtues) central for the State and ruling class?
4. How important is courage for State governing? How does Plato define the nature of courage? Do you accept his ideas?
5. Why does Plato believe that not only wisdom and courage but also temperance and justice are very important for governing? Do you accept Plato's definitions of temperance and justice?
6. Why is the analogy between human and State conditions so important for the ancient scholars and philosophers like Plato?
7. Why does Plato define the temperance as harmony? What is the difference between courage, wisdom and temperance, what are their roles in human life and State? Comment this quotation from the dialog: "...temperance is unlike courage and wisdom, each of which resides in a part only, the one making the State wise and the other valiant; not so temperance, which extends to the whole, and runs through all the notes of the scale, and produces a harmony of the weaker and the stronger and the middle class, whether you suppose them to be stronger or weaker in wisdom or power or numbers or wealth, or anything else".
8. What do you think about Plato's expression: "Every one must do his own work"?
9. How can you answer Plato's question: "Which of these four qualities are more important for a strong State: agreement between the ruler and people, soldiers' belief in the idea that law ordains the true nature of danger, or wisdom and watchfulness of the ruler"?

### COMPARISON QUESTIONS :

1. What is different and what is similar in the concepts presented in the Bhagavad-Gita and in Plato's theory of human nature and state? What parallels can we find in them?
2. Can we find these concepts useful for modern interpretations of state and human being, or implement some aspects of the afore-mentioned theories and concepts?
3. Show the strong and weak sides of concepts/theories presented in the Bhagavad-Gita, Theravada Buddhism and in the Republic. Write an argumentative essay on the correlation between human beings and the art of maintaining a state.

### ADDITIONAL READING:

- Three interpretations of Plato's Republic: [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato's\\_Republic](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato's_Republic) - 102k
- The Republic by Plato: [classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html) - 8k
- Ancient History Sourcebook: Plato, [www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/plato-republic-philosopherking.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/plato-republic-philosopherking.html)
- Complete text of this dialogue by Plato: [www.acnise.fr/philo/textes/Plato-Works/19-Republic.htm](http://www.acnise.fr/philo/textes/Plato-Works/19-Republic.htm)

## MENCIUS (MENG K'O)

Mencius (Meng K'o), a teacher in the Confucian tradition (Chinese classic) who lived in the fourth century B.C. The selected sayings clearly express an optimistic view of the natural goodness of man, and a concern with the conditions that will allow this goodness to flourish (in "human-heartedness").

These extracts are from the translation by E. R. Hughes, in *Chinese Philosophy in Classical Times* (Everyman's Library: Dent and Dutton, 1942; in the United States, E. P. Dutton).

### THE GOODNESS OF HUMAN NATURE, AND THE CONDITIONS FOR IT TO FLOURISH

Master Kao said that that which is born in men is their nature, and when Master Meng asked him whether the meaning of this statement was like the meaning of "white is white," Kao answered that that was his meaning.

Master Kao said, "Men's nature is like a current of water. If you open a channel for the current to the east, it will flow east. If you open a channel to the west, it will flow west. Men's nature makes no distinction between the good and the not good, just as water makes no distinction between east and west." Master Meng replied, "Water can be trusted not to make a distinction between east and west: but is this so in relation to up and down? Men's natural tendency towards goodness is like the water's tendency to find the lower level. Now if, for example, you strike the water and make it leap up, it is possible to force it over your head. . . . But this surely is not the nature of water, and it is only if force is applied that it acts in this way. That men can be made to do evil is due to their nature also being like this." . . .

Kung Tu [a disciple of Mencius] said, "Master Kao says that men's nature is neither good nor evil . . . whilst there are others who say that some men have a good nature and some have an evil nature. . . . Now you [i.e. Mencius] say that men's nature is good. If this is the case, then are all these others wrong?"

Master Meng replied, "Speaking realistically, it is possible for men to be good, and that is what I mean when I say that (men's nature) is good. If they become evil, it is not the fault of their natural powers. Thus all men have a sense of **compassion**, also a sense of shame over **wickedness**, a sense of reverence, and a sense of truth and error. The sense of compassion is equivalent to individual morality, the sense of shame to public morality, the sense of **reverence** to ritual propriety, and the sense of right and wrong equal's wisdom! These four, individual morality, public morality, ritual propriety, and wisdom, are not **fused** into us from without. We **invariably** are possessed of them and that without reflecting on them. This



- compassion -**  
deep awareness of the suffering of another, coupled with the wish to relieve it
- wickedness -**  
the state of being wicked; evil; disposition; immorality
- reverence -**  
veneration; respect, normally in a sacred context; act of showing respect such as a bow
- fuse -**  
to melt together; to blend; to mix indistinguishably
- invariably -**  
in an inevitable manner; not varying at all

is why I maintain that if we seek for them, then we find them: if we neglect them, we lose them. That contrasts can be made between men of twice and five times and even to an incalculable degree is due to the fact that men fail fully to carry out their natural powers. ...”

Master Meng said, “All men have the sense of compassion for others. The former kings, having this sense of compassion, thereby ruled compassionately. Having the sense of compassion and practicing this compassionate rule, their control of the Great Society was as easy as rolling things in the hand. What I mean by all men having a sense of compassion is that if, for instance, a child is suddenly seen to be on the point of falling into a well, everybody without exception will have a sense of distress. It is not by reason of any close intimacy with the parents of the child, nor by reason of a desire for the praise of neighbors and friends, nor by reason of disliking to be known as the kind of man (who is not moved by compassion). From this point of view we observe that it is inhuman to have no sense of compassion, inhuman to have no sense of shame over wickedness, inhuman to have no sense of modesty and the need for yielding place to a better man, inhuman not to distinguish right and wrong. The sense of compassion represents the tender shoot of individual morality, the sense of shame that of public morality, the sense of modesty that of ritual propriety, the sense of truth and error that of wisdom. Men have these four tender shoots just as they have their four limbs; and the man who in spite of having these tender shoots in him says of his own accord ‘I am unable,’ that man plays the thief with himself; and when he says it of his ruler, he plays the thief of his ruler. . . . Everyone with these four tender shoots knows how to **nourish** and expand them, just like fire bursting into flame and a spring **gushing** forth on all sides. Let them expand to the full, and they alone **suffice** to protect all within the Four Seas. Should they be prevented from expansion, they do not suffice for the service of a man’s father and mother.”

Master Meng said, “... With those who do violence to themselves it is impossible to **converse**, with those who throw themselves away it is impossible to act. The meaning of doing violence to oneself is **contravention** of ritual and righteousness, the meaning of throwing oneself away is inability in oneself to dwell in human-heartedness and follow righteousness. For human-heartedness is man’s abode of peace and righteousness is man’s true path. Alas, that that abode is left empty and desolate and that path is abandoned and not followed!”

Kun-sun Ch’ou [a disciple] asked if he might learn from his Master what his idea of an unperturbed mind was and what Master Kao’s was. The reply was, “Kao’s idea is, do not try to get in the mind what you cannot put into words: do not try to get from the vital energy in you what you cannot get from your mind. Now the second statement is permissible but the first is not. Purpose in the mind is the teaching power (needed by) the vital energy, as this energy is the power developing cohesion (needed by) the body; and of these purpose is of the first importance, the vital energy of secondary importance. The result is that I maintain that we have to hold fast to our purposes, but not if these injure the vital energy in us. ... If the purposes be integrated, they can **stir up** the vital energy in us; and (equally) if the vital energy in our limbs be integrated, it can stir up purpose in the mind. For example, when a man **stumbles** or gets hurried, this is due to (unintegrated) energy in his limbs, and it has a reversing [paralyzing] effect on the mind.”

Kung-sun Ch’ou then asked in what way (spiritual) growth was achieved. The reply was, “By our understanding (the significance of) speech, and by skill in

**nourish -**

to feed and cause to grow; to support; to maintain

**gush -**

to flow forth suddenly, in great volume; To make an excessive display of enthusiasm or sentiment

**suffice -**

to be enough, or sufficient; to meet the need (of anything); to be equal to the end proposed; to be adequate

**converse -**

to talk; to engage in conversation

**contravention -**

the act of contravening a rule, regulation, or law, or of not fulfilling an obligation, promise, or agreement

**stir up -**

arouse or excite passion or action; mix ingredients

**stumble -**

to trip or fall; to make a mistake or have trouble

nourishing the vast-flowing vital energy in man.” When Kung-sun Ch’ou asked him what he meant by “the vast-flowing energy,” the reply was, “It is difficult to put it into words. Such is the nature of this energy that it is **immensely** great and immensely strong, and if it be nourished by uprightness and so sustains no injury, and then it **pervades** the whole space between the heavens and the earth. Such is the nature of this force that it marries righteousness with truth [Tao] and without it (material and spiritual) corruption would set in. It is the product of accumulated righteousness, though not of righteousness handed down and casually caught at. (For) if human conduct be possessed of no (divine) discontent in the mind, then corruption would set in. Here is a duty which must be accomplished, and that without ceasing. The mind must not forget it. And yet the mind must not deliberately help the growth, as the Sung farmer did. There was a man there who was **vexed** with his growing corn because it was not tall; so he pulled it up. When he returned home in a state of **exhaustion** he told his people, ‘I am very tired today: I have been helping the corn to grow.’ His son ran out to see – the corn of course was all withered away. Now in our Great Society there are very few who (in relation to the vast-flowing vital energy) either do not help the corn to grow, or neglect it as being of no use. . . . The people who help the vast-flowing vital energy to grow are the people who pull it up. Not only is their labor in vain, it is actually injurious.”

Master Meng said, “Those who have the Mean nurture those who have not, and those who have natural gifts nurture those who have not. Thus it is that men are glad over the possession of worthy fathers and elder brothers. If those who had the Mean and natural gifts were to forsake those who had not, the difference between the worthy and unworthy could not amount to the space of an inch.”

Master Meng said, “... An enlightened man builds on the deep foundation of the Way [Tao]. His wish is to possess it of himself. If he comes to possess it, then he dwells at peace in it and so comes to have a profound confidence in it, and so gets it on every hand and makes contact with its bubbling spring. This is the cause of an enlightened man’s wishing to possess it of himself.”

**immensely** -  
hugely; extremely; vastly

**pervade** -  
to be in every part of; to  
spread through

**vex** -  
to annoy; to cause (mental)  
suffering; to distress; syn:  
irritate; agitate

**exhaustion** -  
supreme tiredness; having  
exhausted energy

**SOURCE:** The Study of Human Nature, selected, edited by Leslie Stevenson,  
New York – Oxford, 1981, pp.25-29

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How did Mencius interpret Master's Kao idea: "which is born in men is their nature; men's nature is like current of water; men's nature makes no distinction between the good and not good, just as water makes no distinction between east and west"? Do you have your own thoughts about it?
2. What is the attitude of people towards Master Meng? Why do some people have good nature and some people have evil nature? What does Master Kao think about this argument? What is your opinion?
3. Explain what Master Meng said of compassion? Do all people have the sense of compassion?
4. What did Master Meng say about inhuman (brutal) behavior? How do you understand the four 'tender shoots' (the sense of compassion, the sense of shame, the sense of modesty and the sense of truth) which Master Meng talked about? What is Master's Meng opinion on violence and peace?
5. What are the main points of the text? Does Meng's philosophy correspond to the present situation? If yes, please bring your own examples.

### COMPARISON QUESTIONS:

1. Please compare different texts presented in the textbook: what is similar in the texts?
2. How do different civilizations/cultures influence on interpretation of human nature? What factors create the similar approaches towards human nature in different civilizations?

### ADDITIONAL READING:

1. Mencius (Selections), Translated by Charles Muller, Toyo Gakuen University, Updated: August 14, 2003; <http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/contao/mencius.html>
2. Chinese Literature  
Comprising the Analects of Confucius, the Sayings of Mencius, the Shi-King, the Travels of Fâ-Hien, and the Sorrows of Han (English); <http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/m#a7977>

## CHAPTER TWO: SOCIETY AND HUMAN NATURE

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### INTRODUCTION

Many thinkers would argue that many of the rules that govern society have been developed in response to human nature, mainly to prevent the negative impulses of humanity from being expressed. Others would argue that society is rooted in the gregarious nature of humanity and best represents the natural human tendency to cooperate, share, and live in harmony with fellow beings. The debate between the proponents of these two perspectives preoccupied Western thinkers in early modernity.

In particular, the social contract theorists tried to explain the establishment and development of society as a consequence of human nature. Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, all offer their idea of the state of nature and human nature. In the selected excerpts from their writings, the readers will encounter ideas that are everywhere in society as well as ideas that are little known. For instance, Hobbes' ideas of humans being 'nasty, short and brutish' are even today accepted by many people, while few people think about Locke's idea that even in the state of nature man is governed by the rule of reason and that it is against human nature not to be ruled by reason.

The guiding tool in all the texts in this chapter is reason. But given the different texts and writers, the readers will encounter the reality of reasoned arguments that are contradictory. How do we distinguish which arguments are truer or more convincing? Further, a careful examination of why some ideas seem truer than others and/or more pleasing than others would help identify one's own biases. That would be the first step in self-knowledge and self-improvement. But would that necessarily lead to social reform?

Reformists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, critically examine the gendered roles that are said to be rooted in the different natures of men and women. Are feminist reformers right in demanding a reexamination of this gendered understanding of humanity? Other reformists, such as Abay Qunanbayuli, believe education derived from other traditions and cultures serves to improve one's knowledge, understanding and skills. Was knowledge of Russian language, literature, and education necessary for the development and modernization of Central Asia?

Readers need to weigh and examine the ideas and theories presented in these texts. In this chapter, the texts focus on the development of society, the justification for its development, stratification and its roots in human nature as well as exhorting humanity to reform itself and thereby reform society. Readers are encouraged to critically examine their own ideas on human nature, the rationalization that supports it, and explore the possibility of truth value in other perspectives and ideas.





### JAPANESE FABLE MEGAN POWELL

Megan grew up in the state of New York, and graduated from Bryn Mawr College with a degree in history. As a small press editor, her work includes several anthologies and two webzines, *Fables* and *Shred of Evidence*. Her short fiction has appeared in various magazines and anthologies. She has also published two novels.

#### THE THREE CROW

When fledgling crows reach a certain age, their fellow crows question them to determine whether or not they are worthy to join the flock.

On a day when three fledglings were to receive their examination, the leader of the flock perched before the first. "Tell me," he asked, "what is the most fearsome thing in the entire world?"

Almost immediately, the young crow answered "An arrow," to the approval of the surrounding crows.

The leader flew on to the next fledgling, perched in a different tree, and repeated his question.

This time, the fledgling paused for a moment in thought. "A skillful archer," he said. "For, while it is the arrow which injures or kills, it is the archer who chooses his target."

The leader nodded in approval; the surrounding crows cawed their acceptance.

The leader moved on to the final fledgling, and again repeated his question.

After an even longer, more thoughtful pause, the third fledgling replied: "I fear the unskilled archer."

The nearby crows looked puzzled. "Why do you choose such an answer?" asked the leader.

"Because a skilled archer will aim truly. By flying just a little to the right or left, one can avoid the arrow. But there is no way to predict where the arrow of the unskilled archer will fly."

The flock loudly cawed its approval, and the leader flew dejectedly away. He knew that his days as leader were numbered: the flock already recognized the wisdom of this young fledgling.

**SOURCE:** Megan Powell, *The Three Crows*, [http://www.fables.org/crown\\_thistle/threecrows.html](http://www.fables.org/crown_thistle/threecrows.html)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Retell the story in your own words. What did the leader of the flock ask the first fledgling crow and what was the answer? How did you understand the answers of the three crows? Which answer was the best?
2. Was the third fledgling cleverer than others? Can you explain the role of wisdom in this story? Can wisdom change human nature? What is the role of wisdom in society?
3. What do you think about the proverb: “Think first – then speak”? Is this saying related to this story? What did the leader of the flock think about himself when he heard the last answer? What is the role of a leader in society?
4. Does this story relate to your life? If yes, bring an example. What is the difference between individual and collective responsibility?

**COMPARISON QUESTIONS:**

1. Compare this story with the texts presented in chapter one. What new approaches to the issue of human nature can you adopt from Japanese culture? Find similarities between Greek, Indian, Islamic and Japanese interpretations of human nature. Try to find differences within each of the afore-mentioned cultural traditions and explain their reasons.

**ADDITIONAL READING:**

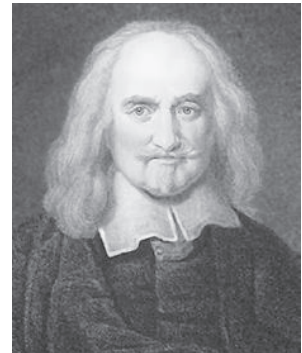
- Megan Powell. Homepage: <http://www.meganpowell.net>
- [www.shredofevidence.com/bios/powell.html](http://www.shredofevidence.com/bios/powell.html)
- [www.shredofevidence.com/category/author/megan-powell](http://www.shredofevidence.com/category/author/megan-powell)

## THOMAS HOBBS: LEVIATHAN

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Thomas Hobbes was an English Philosopher (1588-1679) and classical scholar of political and legal thought. He was first educated in a parochial school in Malmesbury, and in 1603 entered one of the colleges of Oxford University where he studied the logic of Aristotle and physics, and also mastered the Greek and Latin languages. Hobbes intensively worked on the realization of his plan – to create a philosophical scheme which would cover three areas of reality: the world of inanimate bodies, Man and civil society. However, the final part of “Elements of Law” appeared first. It was “De Cive” (On the Citizen) issued in Latin in 1642 in Paris. Hobbes most famous work is “Leviathan”. He uses the image of “Leviathan” for the description of a powerful commonwealth and its role in human life.

Hobbes's concept of human nature as a whole is materialistic. According to Hobbes, human nature is in the state of nature, it is not kind (in other words “it is war of all against all”), and only a society and creation of a commonwealth is capable of calming this nature, to change the state of nature from chaos to order. While reading this text we should find out the reasons behind bad human nature from the point of view of Hobbes's materialistic approach, how Hobbes came to such a conclusion, and analyze in detail his system of argument.



Nature (the art whereby God **hath** made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within, why may we not say that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have an artificial life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the **Artificer**? Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of Nature, man. For by art is created that great *Levithian* called a *Commonwealth*, or *State* (in Latin, *Civitas*), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defense it was intended; and in which the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the magistrates and other officers of judicature and execution, artificial joints; reward and punishment (by which fastened to the seat of the sovereignty, every joint and member is moved to perform his duty) are the nerves, that do the same in the body natural; the wealth and riches of all the particular members are the strength; *salus populi* (the people's safety) its business; counselors, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the memory; equity and laws, an artificial reason and will; concord, health; sedition, sickness; and civil war, death. Lastly, the pacts and **covenants**, by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that fiat, or the Let us make man, pronounced by God in the Creation.

To describe the nature of this artificial man, I will consider First, the matter thereof, and the artificer; both which is man. Secondly, how, and by what covenants it is made; what are the rights and just power or authority of a sovereign; and what it is that

**hath** -

has

**artificer** -

a skilled worker; a creator

**covenant** -

binding agreement

preserveth (Editor's note perseveres) and dissolveth (dissolves) it. Thirdly, what is a Christian *Commonwealth*. Lastly, what is the *Kingdom of Darkness*.

Concerning the first, there is a saying much usurped of late, that wisdom is acquired, not by reading of books, but of men. Consequently whereunto, those persons, that for the most part can give no other proof of being wise, take great delight to show what they think they have read in men, by uncharitable censures of one another behind their backs. But there is another saying not of late understood, by which they might learn truly to read one another, if they would take the pains; and that is, *nosce te ipsum*, Read thyself: which was not meant, as it is now used, to countenance either the barbarous state of men in power towards their inferiors, or to encourage men of low degree to a saucy behavior towards their betters; but to teach us that for the similitude of the thoughts and passions of one man, to the thoughts and passions of another, whosoever looketh (looks) into himself and considereth (considers) what he doth when he does think, opine, reason, hope, fear, etc., and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon the like occasions. I say the similitude of passions, which are the same in all men- desire, fear, hope, etc.; not the similitude of the objects of the passions, which are the things desired, feared, hoped, etc...

## CHAPTER VI

### OF THE INTERIOR BEGINNINGS OF VOLUNTARY MOTIONS, COMMONLY CALLED THE PASSIONS; AND THE SPEECHES BY WHICH THEY ARE EXPRESSED

There be in animals two sorts of motions peculiar to them: One called vital, begun in generation, and continued without interruption through their whole life; such as are the course of the blood, the pulse, the breathing, the concoction, nutrition, excretion, etc.; to which motions there needs no help of imagination: the other is animal motion, otherwise called voluntary motion; as to go, to speak, to move any of our limbs, in such manner as is first fancied in our minds. That sense is motion in the organs and interior parts of man's body, caused by the action of the things we see, hear, etc., and that fancy is but the relics of the same motion, remaining after sense, has been already said in the first and second chapters. And because going, speaking, and the like voluntary motions depend always upon a precedent thought of whither, which way, and what, it is evident that the imagination is the first internal beginning of all voluntary motion. And although unstudied men do not conceive any motion at all to be there, where the thing moved is invisible, or the space it is moved in is, for the shortness of it, insensible; yet that doth not hinder but that such motions are. For let a space be never so little, that which is moved over a greater space, whereof that little one is part, must first be moved over that. These small beginnings of motion within the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called endeavor.

This endeavor, when it is toward something which causes it, is called appetite, or desire, the latter being the general name, and the other oftentimes restrained to signify the desire of food, namely hunger and thirst. And when the endeavor is from something, it is generally called aversion. These words appetite and aversion we have from the Latins; and they both of them signify the motions, one of approaching, the other of retiring. So also do the Greek words for the same, which are *orime* and *aphorme*.

For Nature itself does often press upon men those truths which afterwards, when they look for somewhat beyond Nature, they **stumble** at. For the Schools find in mere appetite to go, or move, no actual motion at all; but because some motion they must acknowledge, they call it metaphorical motion, which is but an absurd speech; for though words may be called metaphorical, bodies and motions cannot.

That which men desire they are said to love, and to hate those things for which they have aversion. So that desire and love are the same thing; save that by desire, we signify the absence of the object; by love, most commonly the presence of the same. So also by aversion, we signify the absence; and by hate, the presence of the object.

Of appetites and **aversions**, some are born with men; as appetite of food, appetite of excretion, and exoneration (which may also and more properly be called aversions, from somewhat they feel in their bodies), and some other appetites, not many. The rest, which are appetites of particular things, proceed from experience and trial of their effects upon themselves or other men. For of things we know not at all, or believe not to be, we can have no further desire than to taste and try. But aversion we have for things, not only which we know have hurt us, but also that we do not know whether they will hurt us, or not.

Those things which we neither desire nor hate, we are said to **contemn**: contempt being nothing else but an immobility or **contumacy** of the heart in resisting the action of certain things; and proceeding from that the heart is already moved otherwise, by other more potent objects, or from want of experience of them. And because the constitution of a man's body is in continual mutation, it is impossible that all the same things should always cause in him the same appetites and aversions: much less can all men consent in the desire of almost any one and the same object.

But whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth (calls) good; and the object of his hate and aversion, evil; and of his contempt, vile and inconsiderable. For these words of good, evil, and contemptible are ever used with relation to the person that useth (uses) them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves; but from the person of the man, where there is no Commonwealth; or, in a Commonwealth, from the person that representeth (represents) it; or from an arbitrator or judge, whom men disagreeing shall by consent set up and make his sentence the rule thereof.

## CHAPTER XIII

### OF THE NATURAL CONDITION OF MANKIND AS CONCERNING THEIR FELICITY AND MISERY

*Nature* hath made men so equal in the faculties of body and mind as that, though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together the difference between man and man



DESTRUCTION OF LEVIATHAN

**aversion** -

fixed, intense dislike

**contemn** -

to view with contempt

**contumacy** -

stubborn rebelliousness

is not so considerable as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit to which another may not pretend as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself.

And as to the faculties of the mind, setting aside the arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon general and infallible rules, called science, which very few have and but in few things, as being not a native faculty born with us, nor attained, as prudence, while we look after somewhat else, I find yet a greater equality amongst men than that of strength. For prudence is but experience, which equal time equally bestows on all men in those things they equally apply themselves unto. That which may perhaps make such equality incredible is but a vain conceit of one's own wisdom, which almost all men think they have in a greater degree than the vulgar; that is, than all men but themselves, and a few others, whom by fame, or for concurring with themselves, they approve. For such is the nature of men that howsoever they may acknowledge many others to be more witty, or more eloquent or more learned, yet they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves; for they see their own wit at hand, and other men's at a distance. But this proveth (proves) rather that men are in that point equal, than unequal. For there is not ordinarily a greater sign of the equal distribution of anything than that every man is contented with his share.

From this equality of ability ariseth (arises) equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only) endeavor to destroy or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass that where an invader hath no more to fear than another man's single power, if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united to dispossess and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labor, but also of his life or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.

And from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself so reasonable as anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can so long till he see no other power great enough to endanger him: and this is no more than his own conservation requireth (requires), and is generally allowed. Also, because there be some that, taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires, if others, that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds, should not by invasion increase their power, they would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defense, to subsist. And by consequence, such augmentation of dominion over men being necessary to a man's conservation, it ought to be allowed him.

Again, men have no pleasure (but on the contrary a great deal of grief) in keeping company where there is no power able to **overawe** them all. For every man looketh (looks) that his companion should value him at the same rate he sets upon himself, and upon all signs of contempt or undervaluing naturally endeavours, as far as he dares (which amongst them that have no common power to keep them in quiet is far enough to make them destroy each other), to extort a greater value from his contemners, by damage; and from others, by the example.

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

The first maketh (makes) men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's per-

**overawe** -  
to cause someone to feel a  
mixture of extreme respect  
and fear



sons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth (consists) not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth (lies) not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth (consists) not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

It may seem strange to some man that has not well weighed these things that Nature should thus dissociate and render men apt to invade and destroy one another: and he may therefore, not trusting to this inference, made from the passions, desire perhaps to have the same confirmed by experience. Let him therefore consider with himself: when taking a journey, he arms himself and seeks to go well accompanied; when going to sleep, he locks his doors; when even in his house he locks his chests; and this when he knows there be laws and public officers, armed, to revenge all injuries shall be done him; what opinion he has of his fellow subjects, when he rides armed; of his fellow citizens, when he locks his doors; and of his children, and servants, when he locks his chests. Does he not there as much accuse mankind by his actions as I do by my words? But neither of us accuses man's nature in it. The desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions that proceed from those passions till they know a law that forbids them; which till laws be made they cannot know, nor can any law be made till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it.

It may peradventure be thought there was never such a time or condition of war as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places where they live so now. For the savage people in many places of America, except the government of small families, the concord whereof dependeth (depends) on natural lust, have no government at all, and live at this day in that brutish manner,

as I said before. Howsoever, it may be perceived what manner of life there would be, where there were no common power to fear, by the manner of life which men that have formerly lived under a peaceful government use to degenerate into a civil war.

But though there had never been any time wherein particular men were in a condition of war one against another, yet in all times kings and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their forts, garrisons, and guns upon the frontiers of their kingdoms, and continual spies upon their neighbors, which is a posture of war. But because they uphold thereby the industry of their subjects, there does not follow from it that misery which accompanies the liberty of particular men.

To this war of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice. Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues. Justice and injustice are none of the faculties neither of the body nor mind. If they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world, as well as his senses and passions. They are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude. It is consequent also to the same condition that there be no propriety, no dominion, no mine and **thine** distinct; but only that to be every man's that he can get, and for so long as he can keep it. And thus much for the ill condition which man by mere nature is actually placed in; though with a possibility to come out of it, consisting partly in the passions, partly in his reason.

The passions that incline men to peace are: fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth (suggests) convenient articles of peace upon which men may be drawn to agreement. These articles are they which otherwise are called the laws of nature, whereof I shall speak more particularly in the two following chapters.

## CHAPTER XIV OF THE FIRST AND SECOND NATURAL LAWS, AND OF CONTRACTS

The right of nature, which writers commonly call *jus naturale*, is the liberty each man hath to use his own power as he will himself for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing anything which, in his own judgment and reason, he shall conceive to be the **aptest** means thereunto.

By liberty is understood, according to the proper signification of the word, the absence of external **impediments**; which impediments may oft take away part of a man's power to do what he would, but cannot hinder him from using the power left him according as his judgment and reason shall dictate to him.

A law of nature, *lex naturalis*, is a precept, or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life, or taketh (takes) away the means of preserving the same, and to omit that by which he thinketh (thinks) it may be best preserved.

For though they that speak of this subject use to confound *jus* and *lex*, right and law, yet they ought to be distinguished, because right consisteth (consists) in liberty to do, or to forbear; whereas law determineth (determines) and bindeth (binds) to one of them: so that law and right differ as much as obligation and liberty, which in one and the same matter are inconsistent.

**thine** -  
yours

**apt** -  
suitable or right for a  
particular situation

**impediment** -  
something that obstructs the  
making of a legal contract

And because the condition of man (as hath been declared in the precedent chapter) is a condition of war of every one against every one, in which case every one is governed by his own reason, and there is nothing he can make use of that may not be a help unto him in preserving his life against his enemies; it followeth (follows) that in such a condition every man has a right to every thing, even to one another's body. And therefore, as long as this natural right of every man to every thing endureth (endures), there can be no security to any man, how strong or wise soever he be, of living out the time which nature ordinarily alloweth (allows) men to live. And consequently it is a precept, or general rule of reason: that every man ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek and use all helps and advantages of war.

The first branch of which rule containeth (contains) the first and fundamental law of nature, which is: to seek peace and follow it. The second, the sum of the right of nature, which is: by all means we can to defend ourselves.

From this fundamental law of nature, by which men are commanded to endeavor peace, is derived this second law: that a man be willing, when others are so too, as far forth as for peace and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself. For as long as every man holdeth (holds) this right, of doing anything he liketh (likes); so long are all men in the condition of war. But if other men will not lay down their right, as well as he, then there is no reason for anyone to divest himself of his: for that were to expose himself to prey, which no man is bound to, rather than to dispose himself to peace. This is that law of the gospel: Whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them. And that law of all men, *quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*.

To lay down a man's right to anything is to divest himself of the liberty of hindering another of the benefit of his own right to the same. For he that renounceth (renounces) or passeth (passes) away his right giveth (gives) not to any other man a right which he had not before, because there is nothing to which every man had not right by nature, but only standeth (stands) out of his way that he may enjoy his own original right without hindrance from him, not without **hindrance** from another. So that the effect which **redoundeth (redounds)** to one man by another man's defect of right is but so much diminution of impediments to the use of his own right original.

Right is laid aside, either by simply renouncing it, or by transferring it to another. By simply renouncing, when he cares not to whom the benefit thereof redoundeth. By transferring, when he intendeth (intends) the benefit thereof to some certain person or persons. And when a man hath in either manner abandoned or granted away his right, then is he said to be obliged, or bound, not to hinder those to whom such right is granted, or abandoned, from the benefit of it: and that he ought, and it is duty, not to make void that voluntary act of his own: and that such hindrance is injustice, and injury, as being *sine jure*; the right being before renounced or transferred.

**hindrance** -  
something that makes  
it difficult for you to do  
something

**redound** -  
to have an effect for good or ill

So that injury or injustice, in the controversies of the world, is somewhat like to that which in the disputations of scholars is called absurdity. For as it is there called an absurdity to contradict what one maintained in the beginning; so in the world it is called injustice, and injury voluntarily to undo that which from the beginning he had voluntarily done. The way by which a man either simply renounceth (renounces) or transferreth (transfers) his right is a declaration, or signification, by some voluntary and sufficient sign, or signs, that he doth so renounce or transfer, or hath so renounced or transferred the same, to him that accepteth (accepts) it. And these signs are either words only, or actions only; or, as it happeneth (happens) most often, both words and actions. And the same are the bonds, by which men are bound and obliged: bonds that have their strength, not from their own nature (for nothing is more easily broken than a man's word), but from fear of some evil consequence upon the **rupture**.

Whensoever a man transferreth (transfers) his right, or renounceth (renounces) it, it is either in consideration of some right reciprocally transferred to himself, or for some other good he hopeth (hopes) for thereby. For it is a voluntary act: and of the voluntary acts of every man, the object is some good to himself. And therefore there be some rights which no man can be understood by any words, or other signs, to have abandoned or transferred. As first a man cannot lay down the right of resisting them that assault him by force to take away his life, because he cannot be understood to aim thereby at any good to himself. The same may be said of wounds, and chains, and imprisonment, both because there is no benefit consequent to such patience, as there is to the patience of suffering another to be wounded or imprisoned, as also because a man cannot tell when he seeth (sees) men proceed against him by violence whether they intend his death or not. And lastly the motive and end for which this renouncing and transferring of right is introduced is nothing else but the security of a man's person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life as not to be weary of it. And therefore if a man by words, or other signs, seem to despoil himself of the end for which those signs were intended, he is not to be understood as if he meant it, or that it was his will, but that he was ignorant of how such words and actions were to be interpreted. The mutual transferring of right is that which men call contract.

There is difference between transferring of right to the thing, the thing, and transferring or tradition, that is, delivery of the thing itself. For the thing may be delivered together with the translation of the right, as in buying and selling with ready money, or exchange of goods or lands, and it may be delivered some time after.

Again, one of the contractors may deliver the thing contracted for on his part, and leave the other to perform his part at some determinate time after, and in the meantime be trusted; and then the contract on his part is called pact, or covenant: or both parts may contract now to perform hereafter, in which cases he that is to perform in time to come, being trusted, his performance is called keeping of promise, or faith, and the failing of performance, if it be voluntary, violation of faith.

When the transferring of right is not mutual, but one of the parties transferreth (transfers) in hope to gain thereby friendship or service from another, or from his friends; or in hope to gain the reputation of charity, or magnanimity; or to deliver his mind from the pain of compassion; or in hope of reward in heaven; this is not contract, but gift, free gift, grace: which words signify one and the same thing.

Signs of contract are either express or by inference. Express are words spoken with understanding of what they signify: and such words are either of the time present or

past; as, I give, I grant, I have given, I have granted, I will that this be yours: or of the future; as, I will give, I will grant, which words of the future are called promise.

Signs by inference are sometimes the consequence of words; sometimes the consequence of silence; sometimes the consequence of actions; sometimes the consequence of forbearing an action: and generally a sign by inference, of any contract, is whatsoever sufficiently argues the will of the contractor.

Words alone, if they be of the time to come, and contain a bare promise, are an insufficient sign of a free gift and therefore not obligatory. For if they be of the time to come, as, tomorrow I will give, they are a sign I have not given yet, and consequently that my right is not transferred, but remaineth (remains) till I transfer it by some other act. But if the words be of the time present, or past, as, I have given, or do give to be delivered tomorrow, then is my tomorrow's right given away today; and that by the virtue of the words, though there were no other argument of my will. And there is a great difference in the signification of these words, *volo hoc tuum esse cras*, and *cras dabo*; that is, between I will that this be thine (your) tomorrow, and, I will give it thee tomorrow: for the word I will, in the former manner of speech, signifies an act of the will present; but in the latter, it signifies a promise of an act of the will to come: and therefore the former words, being of the present, transfer a future right; the latter, that be of the future, transfer nothing. But if there be other signs of the will to transfer a right besides words; then, though the gift be free, yet may the right be understood to pass by words of the future: as if a man **propound** a prize to him that comes first to the end of a race, the gift is free; and though the words be of the future, yet the right passeth (passes): for if he would not have his words so be understood, he should not have let them run.

In contracts the right passeth, not only where the words are of the time present or past, but also where they are of the future, because all contract is mutual translation, or change of right; and therefore he that promiseth (promises) only, because he hath already received the benefit for which he promiseth, is to be understood as if he intended the right should pass: for unless he had been content to have his words so understood, the other would not have performed his part first. And for that cause, in buying, and selling, and other acts of contract, a promise is equivalent to a covenant, and therefore obligatory.

He that performeth (performs) first in the case of a contract is said to merit that which he is to receive by the performance of the other, and he hath it as due. Also when a prize is propounded to many, which is to be given to him only that winneth (wins), or money is thrown amongst many to be enjoyed by them that catch it; though this be a free gift, yet so to win, or so to catch, is to merit, and to have it as due. For the right is transferred in the propounding of the prize, and in throwing down the money, though it be not determined to whom, but by the event of the contention. But there is between these two sorts of merit this dif-

**propound -**

to suggest a theory, belief or opinion for other people to consider

ference, that in contract I merit by virtue of my own power and the contractor's need, but in this case of free gift I am enabled to merit only by the benignity of the giver: in contract I merit at the contractor's hand that he should depart with his right; in this case of gift, I merit not that the giver should part with his right, but that when he has parted with it, it should be mine rather than another's. And this I think to be the meaning of that distinction of the Schools between *meritum congrui* and *meritum condigni*. For God Almighty, having promised paradise to those men, hoodwinked with carnal desires, that can walk through this world according to the precepts and limits prescribed by him, they say he that shall so walk shall merit *paradise ex congruo*. But because no man can demand a right to it by his own righteousness, or any other power in himself, but by the free grace of God only, they say no man can merit *paradise ex condigno*. This, I say, I think is the meaning of that distinction; but because disputers do not agree upon the signification of their own terms of art longer than it serves their turn, I will not affirm anything of their meaning: only this I say; when a gift is given indefinitely, as a prize to be contended for, he that winneth meriteth (merits), and may claim the prize as due.

If a covenant be made wherein neither of the parties perform presently, but trust one another, in the condition of mere nature (which is a condition of war of every man against every man) upon any reasonable suspicion, it is void: but if there be a common power set over them both, with right and force sufficient to compel performance, it is not void. For he that performeth first has no assurance the other will perform after, because the bonds of words are too weak to bridle men's ambition, avarice, anger, and other passions, without the fear of some coercive power; which in the condition of mere nature, where all men are equal, and judges of the justness of their own fears, cannot possibly be supposed. And therefore he which performeth first does but betray himself to his enemy, contrary to the right he can never abandon of defending his life and means of living.

But in a civil estate, where there a power set up to constrain those that would otherwise violate their faith, that fear is no more reasonable; and for that cause, he which by the covenant is to perform first is obliged so to do.

The cause of fear, which maketh such a covenant invalid, must be always something arising after the covenant made, as some new fact or other sign of the will not to perform, else it cannot make the covenant void. For that which could not hinder a man from promising ought not to be admitted as a hindrance of performing.

He that transferreth any right transferreth the means of enjoying it, as far as lieth in his power. As he that selleth (sells) land is understood to transfer the herbage and whatsoever grows upon it; nor can he that sells a mill turn away the stream that drives it. And they that give to a man the right of government in sovereignty are understood to give him the right of levying money to maintain soldiers, and of appointing magistrates for the administration of justice.

To make covenants with brute beasts is impossible, because not understanding our speech, they understand not, nor accept of any translation of right, nor can translate any right to another: and without mutual acceptation, there is no covenant.

To make covenant with God is impossible but by mediation of such as God speaketh (speaks) to, either by revelation supernatural or by His lieutenants that govern under Him and in His name: for otherwise we know not whether our covenants be accepted or not. And therefore they that vow anything contrary to any law of nature, vow in vain, as being a thing unjust to pay such vow. And if it be a thing commanded by the law of nature, it is not the vow, but the law that binds them.

The matter or subject of a covenant is always something that falleth (falls) under deliberation, for to covenant is an act of the will; that is to say, an act, and the last act, of deliberation; and is therefore always understood to be something to come, and which judged possible for him that covenanteth to perform.

And therefore, to promise that which is known to be impossible is no covenant. But if that prove impossible afterwards, which before was thought possible, the covenant is valid and bindeth (binds), though not to the thing itself, yet to the value; or, if that also be impossible, to the unfeigned endeavor of performing as much as is possible, for to more no man can be obliged.

Men are freed of their covenants two ways; by performing, or by being forgiven. For performance is the natural end of obligation, and forgiveness the restitution of liberty, as being a retransferring of that right in which the obligation consisted.

Covenants entered into by fear, in the condition of mere nature, are obligatory. For example, if I covenant to pay a ransom, or service for my life, to an enemy, I am bound by it. For it is a contract, wherein one receiveth (receives) the benefit of life; the other is to receive money, or service for it, and consequently, where no other law (as in the condition of mere nature) forbiddeth (forbids) the performance, the covenant is valid. Therefore prisoners of war, if trusted with the payment of their ransom, are obliged to pay it: and if a weaker prince makes a disadvantageous peace with a stronger, for fear, he is bound to keep it; unless (as hath been said before) there ariseth (arises) some new and just cause of fear to renew the war. And even in Commonwealths, if I be forced to redeem myself from a thief by promising him money, I am bound to pay it, till the civil law discharges me. For whatsoever I may lawfully do without obligation, the same I may lawfully covenant to do through fear: and what I lawfully covenant, I cannot lawfully break.

A former covenant makes void a later. For a man that hath passed away his right to one man today hath it not to pass tomorrow to another: and therefore the later promise passeth (passes) no right, but is null.

A covenant not to defend myself from force, by force, is always void. For (as I have shown before) no man can transfer or lay down his right to save himself from death, wounds, and imprisonment, the avoiding whereof is the only end of laying down any right; and therefore the promise of not resisting force, in no covenant transferreth any right, nor is obliging. For though a man may covenant thus, unless I do so, or so, kill me; he cannot covenant thus, unless I do so, or so, I will not resist you when you come to kill me. For man by nature chooseth (chooses) the lesser evil, which is danger of death in resisting, rather than the greater, which is certain and present death in not resisting. And this is granted to be true by all men, in that they lead criminals to execution, and prison, with armed men, notwithstanding that such criminals have consented to the law by which they are condemned.

A covenant to accuse oneself, without assurance of pardon, is likewise invalid. For in the condition of nature where every man is judge, there is no place for ac-



cusation: and in the civil state the accusation is followed with punishment, which, being force, a man is not obliged not to resist. The same is also true of the accusation of those by whose condemnation a man falls into misery; as of a father, wife, or benefactor. For the testimony of such an accuser, if it be not willingly given, is presumed to be corrupted by nature, and therefore not to be received: and where a man's testimony is not to be credited, he is not bound to give it. Also accusations upon torture are not to be reputed as testimonies. For torture is to be used but as means of conjecture, and light, in the further examination and search of truth: and what is in that case confessed tendeth (tends) to the ease of him that is tortured, not to the informing of the torturers, and therefore ought not to have the credit of a sufficient testimony: for whether he deliver himself by true or false accusation, he does it by the right of preserving his own life.

The force of words being (as I have formerly noted) too weak to hold men to the performance of their covenants, there are in man's nature but two imaginable helps to strengthen it. And those are either a fear of the consequence of breaking their word, or a glory or pride in appearing not to need to break it. This latter is a generosity too rarely found to be presumed on, especially in the pursuers of wealth, command, or sensual pleasure, which are the greatest part of mankind. The passion to be reckoned upon is fear; whereof there be two very general objects: one, the power of spirits invisible; the other, the power of those men they shall therein offend. Of these two, though the former be the greater power, yet the fear of the latter is commonly the greater fear. The fear of the former is in every man his own religion, which hath place in the nature of man before civil society. The latter hath not so; at least not place enough to keep men to their promises, because in the condition of mere nature, the inequality of power is not discerned, but by the event of battle. So that before the time of civil society, or in the interruption thereof by war, there is nothing can strengthen a covenant of peace agreed on against the temptations of avarice, ambition, lust, or other strong desire, but the fear of that invisible power which they every one worship as God, and fear as an avenger of their perfidy. All therefore that can be done between two men not subject to civil power is to put one another to swear by the God he feareth (fears): which swearing, or oath, is a form of speech, added to a promise, by which he that promiseth signifieth that unless he perform he renounceth (renounces) the mercy of his God, or calleth (calls) to him for vengeance on himself. Such was the heathen form, Let Jupiter kill me else, as I kill this beast. So is our form, I shall do thus, and thus, so help me God. And this, with the rites and ceremonies which every one useth (uses) in his own religion, that the fear of breaking faith might be the greater.

By this it appears that an oath taken according to any other form, or rite, than his that sweareth (swears) is in vain and no oath, and that there is no swearing by anything which the swearer thinks not God. For though men have sometimes used to swear by their kings, for fear, or flattery; yet they would have it thereby understood they attributed to them divine honor. And that swearing unnecessarily by God is but **profaning** of his name: and swearing by other things, as men do in common **discourse**, is not swearing, but an impious custom, gotten by too much vehemence of talking.

It appears also that the oath adds nothing to the obligation. For a covenant, if lawful, binds in the sight of God, without the oath, as much as with it; if unlawful, bindeth (binds) not at all, though it be confirmed with an oath.

**profane -**

showing a lack of respect  
for a god or a religion, often  
through language

**discourse -**

verbal exchange; conversation

## CHAPTER XVII OF THE CAUSES, GENERATION, AND DEFINITION OF A COMMONWEALTH

*The final cause, end, or design of men (who naturally love liberty, and dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, in which we see them live in Commonwealths, is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war which is necessarily consequent, as hath been shown, to the natural passions of men when there is no visible power to keep them in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants, and observation of those laws of nature set down in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters.*

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 and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore, notwithstanding the laws of nature (which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely), if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security, every man will and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art for caution against all other men. And in all places, where men have lived by small families, to rob and spoil one another has been a trade, and so far from being reputed against the law of nature that the greater spoils they gained, the greater was their honour; and men observed no other laws therein but the laws of honor; that is, to abstain from cruelty, leaving to men their lives and instruments of **husbandry**. And as small families did then; so now do cities and kingdoms, which are but greater families (for their own security), enlarge their dominions upon all pretences of danger, and fear of invasion, or assistance that may be given to invaders; endeavor as much as they can to subdue or weaken their neighbors by open force, and secret arts, for want of other caution, justly; and are remembered for it in after ages with honor.

Nor is it the joining together of a small number of men that gives them this security; because in small numbers, small additions on the one side or the other make the advantage of strength so great as is sufficient to carry the victory, and therefore gives encouragement to an invasion. The multitude sufficient to confide in for our security is not determined by any certain number, but by comparison with the enemy we fear; and is then sufficient when the odds of the enemy is not of so visible and conspicuous moment to determine the event of war, as to move him to attempt.

And be there never so great a multitude; yet if their actions be directed according to their particular judgments, and particular appetites, they can expect

**husbandry** -  
the act or practice of cultivating

thereby no defense, nor protection, neither against a common enemy, nor against the injuries of one another. For being distracted in opinions concerning the best use and application of their strength, they do not help, but hinder one another, and reduce their strength by mutual opposition to nothing: whereby they are easily, not only subdued by a very few that agree together, but also, when there is no common enemy, they make war upon each other for their particular interests. For if we could suppose a great multitude of men to consent in the observation of justice, and other laws of nature, without a common power to keep them all in awe, we might as well suppose all mankind to do the same; and then there neither would be, nor need to be, any civil government or Commonwealth at all, because there would be peace without subjection.

Nor is it enough for the security, which men desire should last all the time of their life, that they be governed and directed by one judgment for a limited time; as in one battle, or one war. For though they obtain a victory by their unanimous endeavor against a foreign enemy, yet afterwards, when either they have no common enemy, or he that by one part is held for an enemy is by another part held for a friend, they must needs by the difference of their interests dissolve, and fall again into a war amongst themselves.

It is true that certain living creatures, as bees and ants, live sociably one with another (which are therefore by Aristotle numbered amongst political creatures), and yet have no other direction than their particular judgements and appetites; nor speech, whereby one of them can signify to another what he thinks expedient for the common benefit: and therefore some man may perhaps desire to know why mankind cannot do the same. To which I answer,

First, that men are continually in competition for honor and dignity, which these creatures are not; and consequently amongst men there ariseth on that ground, envy, and hatred, and finally war; but amongst these not so.

Secondly, that amongst these creatures the common good differeth (differs) not from the private; and being by nature inclined to their private, they procure thereby the common benefit. But man, whose joy consisteth in comparing himself with other men, can relish nothing but what is eminent.

Thirdly, that these creatures, having not, as man, the use of reason, do not see, nor think they see, any fault in the administration of their common business: whereas amongst men there are very many that think themselves wiser and abler to govern the public better than the rest, and these strive to reform and innovate, one this way, another that way; and thereby bring it into distraction and civil war.

Fourthly, that these creatures, though they have some use of voice in making known to one another their desires and other affections, yet they want that art of words by which some men can represent to others that which is good in the likeness of evil; and evil, in the likeness of good; and augment or diminish the apparent greatness of good and evil, discontenting men and troubling their peace at their pleasure.

Fifthly, irrational creatures cannot distinguish between injury and damage; and therefore as long as they be at ease, they are not offended with their fellows: whereas man is then most troublesome when he is most at ease; for then it is that he loves to show his wisdom, and control the actions of them that govern the Commonwealth.

Lastly, the agreement of these creatures is natural; that of men is by covenant only, which is artificial: and therefore it is no wonder if there be somewhat else required, besides covenant, to make their agreement constant and lasting; which is a common power to keep them in awe and to direct their actions to the common benefit.

The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort as that by their own industry and by the fruits of the earth they may nourish themselves and live contentedly, is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person; and every one to own and acknowledge himself to be author of whatsoever he that so beareth (bears) their person shall act, or cause to be acted, in those things which concern the common peace and safety; and therein to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgments to his judgment. This is more than consent, or concord; it is a real unity of them all in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner as if every man should say to every man: I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition; that thou give up, thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a *Commonwealth*; in Latin, *Civitas*. This is the generation of that great *Leviathan*, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god to which we owe, under the immortal God, our peace and defense. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the Commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him that, by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to peace at home, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad. And in him consisteth the essence of the Commonwealth; which, to define it, is: one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all as he shall think expedient for their peace and common defense.

And he that carryeth (carries) this person is called sovereign, and said to have sovereign power; and every one besides, his subject.

The attaining to this sovereign power is by two ways. One, by natural force: as when a man maketh his children to submit themselves, and their children, to his government, as being able to destroy them if they refuse; or by war **subdueth** (subdues) his enemies to his will, giving them their lives on that condition. The other, is when men agree amongst themselves to submit to some man, or assembly of men, voluntarily, on confidence to be protected by him against all others. This latter may be called a political Commonwealth, or Commonwealth by Institution; and the former, a Commonwealth by acquisition.

**SOURCE:** Thomas, Hobbes. The Leviathan. <<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-contents.html>>

**subdue -**

to quiet or bring under control  
by physical force or persuasion

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS :

1. What is natural and artificial man? Why does Hobbes use the analogy of mechanisms when giving an interpretation of human nature? Is there a commonality between man and machine?
2. Why did Hobbes choose the image of “Leviathan” for the interpretation of human nature and a commonwealth? How correct is it to compare a human being with the structure of society?
3. How do organic and strong-willed motions differ in a man? Do you agree with the definition of sensation and representations given by the author? Why does he consider that representation is the first voluntary motion?
4. Do you agree with the explanation of desire and disgust given by Hobbes? Why does Hobbes explain all mental and moral phenomena (e.g. love, hatred, and etc.) from the point of view of the concept of motion and mechanics? How is Hobbes’ concept of motion connected to the problem of human nature?
5. What is the value of Hobbes’s doctrine about the natural equality of people? According to Hobbes why doesn’t this natural equality exist in people in both a physical and a spiritual sense? Doesn’t it convey an existence of inequality?
6. Is the idea of equality a source of enmity? If yes, why? What is the source of mistrust between people and why do wars break out according to Hobbes? Name three principal causes of war which, according to Hobbes, are connected to human nature.
7. Explain the difference between natural and civil conditions. Why does a “war of every man against every man” start? How does absence of property affect human nature in the state of nature?
8. What did considering desires and passions as sinful depend upon? What is an agreement and law?
9. Do you agree with Hobbes’s statement that natural passions such as the fear of death make people seek peace?
10. What are the natural right and law? What is the difference between the right and law? Comment on Hobbes’s position: “a contract is the mutual transfer or exchange of rights”
11. How did Hobbes explain the necessity of procreation of a commonwealth and how is it connected to human nature? Why is the authority that holds people at bay so important in a civil condition?
12. How do people come to a uniform agreement? How do you understand Hobbes’s idea that: “a good many people incorporated into one person refers to a commonwealth”, or the mortal God, Leviathan? Does such a mechanical association create a commonwealth?
13. Compare Hobbes’s idea of the connection of human nature with procreation and the functioning of a commonwealth? Compare this with the opinions of other thinkers discussed in this course. Using the social-cultural context, write a short essay about the connection between human passions, society and commonwealth.

## ADDITIONAL READING:

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- Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes-moral> >
- Thomas Hobbes. *Moral and Political Philosophy*. <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/h/hob-moral.htm>>
- Gauthier, David P. (1969). *The Logic of 'Leviathan': the Moral and political Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, Oxford.
- Lloyd, S.A. (1992). *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes's 'Leviathan': the Power of Mind over Matter*, Cambridge.
- Edwards, Alistair (2002). "Hobbes" in *Interpreting Modern Political Philosophy: From Machiavelli to Marx*, eds. A Edwards and J Townshend (Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills) – a very helpful overview of key interpretative debates about Hobbes in the twentieth century.
- Hill, Christopher (1961/1980). *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*, second ed. (Routledge, London) – the classic work on the history and repercussions of England's civil war.
- Hobbes, Thomas (1998 [1642]). *On the Citizen*, ed. & trans. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) – the best translation of Hobbes's most straightforward book, *De Cive*.
- Hobbes, Thomas (1994 [1651/1668]). *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Hackett, Indianapolis) – the best edition of Hobbes's magnum opus, including extensive additional material and many important variations (ignored by all other editions) between the English text and later Latin edition.
- Sorrell, Tom (1986). *Hobbes* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London) – a concise and well-judged account of Hobbes's life and works.
- Sorrell, Tom, ed (1996). *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) – an excellent set of essays on all aspects of Hobbes's intellectual endeavours.

DU CONTRAT  
SOCIAL;  
OU  
PRINCIPES  
DU DROIT  
POLITIQUE.

Par J. J. ROUSSEAU, Citoyen  
de Geneve.

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Dicamus leges. Faderis æquas  
Æneid. XI.

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*Edition Sans Cartons, à laquelle on a ajouté  
une Lettre de l'Auteur au seul Ami qui lui  
reste dans le monde.*



A AMSTERDAM,  
Chez MARC - MICHEL REY.

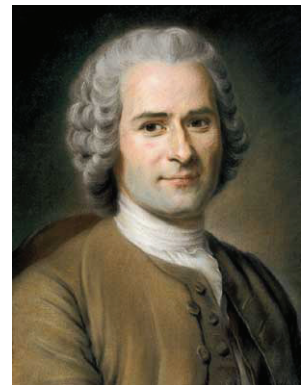
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M. DCC. LXII.



## JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU THE SOCIAL CONTRACT OR PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL RIGHT

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the great French philosopher, was born on July 28, 1712 in Geneva (Switzerland) to a family of French handicraftsmen, who fled their native land to escape religious prosecution. Having meetings in the Parisian interiors and conducting debates in Paris with well known people he became friends with Denis Diderot d'Alembert and contributed articles to his "Encyclopedia" – all this formed his strong protest against the 17th century skepticism that all problems of modern society resulted from the baseness of human nature. The theme of human nature excited the thinker throughout his whole life. He died on July 2, 1778, remaining a well-known stickler for the doctrine about the natural goodness of men. The text below, "On Social Contract or Principles of Political Law" will introduce the reader to sociopolitical questions about human nature, concerning the natural condition of a person and whether people are equal and free or slaves by nature. While reading the text pay attention to how Rousseau justifies the idea of the natural goodness of man, whether this statement is supported with adequate scientific facts, and whether his argument proceeds logically.



### I. SUBJECT OF THE FIRST BOOK

Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? That question I think I can answer.

If I took into account only force, and the effects derived from it, I should say: "As long as a people is compelled to obey, and obeys, it does well; as soon as it can shake off the **yoke**, and shakes it off, it does still better; for, regaining its liberty by the same right as took it away, either it is justified in resuming it, or there was no justification for those who took it away." But the social order is a sacred right which is the basis of all other rights. Nevertheless, this right does not come from nature, and must therefore be founded on conventions. Before coming to that, I have to prove what I have just asserted.

### 2. THE FIRST SOCIETIES

The most ancient of all societies, and the only one that is natural, is the family: and even so the children remain attached to the father only so long as they need him for their preservation. As soon as this need ceases, the natural bond is dissolved. The children, released from the obedience they **owed** to the father, and the father, released from the care he owed his children, return equally to independence. If they remain united, they continue so no longer naturally, but voluntarily; and the family itself is then maintained only by convention.

This common liberty results from the nature of man. His first law is to provide for his own preservation, his first cares are those which he owes to himself; and, as soon as he reaches years of discretion, he is the sole judge of the proper means of preserving himself, and consequently becomes his own master.

**yoke** –  
harness; chains; a burden  
**owe** –  
need to pay a debt

**Hugo Grotius -**

jurist in the Dutch Republic and laid the foundations for international law, based on natural law

**Thomas Hobbes -**

English philosopher, famous for his book 'Leviathan'

**herd -**

large group of animals of the same type

**devour-**

to eat something eagerly and in large amounts

**Philo -**

(20 BCE - 40 CE), Hellenized Jewish philosopher born in Egypt

**Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus -**

(August 31, 12 - January 24, 41), most commonly known as Caligula, who was the third Roman Emperor

**Ulysses -**

the Latin language name for Odysseus, a character in ancient Greek literature

**Noah -**

described in the Bible's Book of Genesis, built an ark to save his family and the animals from the great flood which destroyed all other living things

**Adam -**

the first man created by Elohim (Allah) according to the Abrahamic religious tradition

**Saturn -**

the Roman god *Saturnus* (that became the namesake of Saturday), equated to the Greek god *Kronos*

**Robinson Crusoe -**

novel by Daniel Defoe, about an English castaway who spends 28 years on a remote island

The family then may be called the first model of political societies: the ruler corresponds to the father, and the people to the children; and all, being born free and equal, alienate their liberty only for their own advantage. The whole difference is that, in the family, the love of the father for his children repays him for the care he takes of them, while, in the State, the pleasure of commanding takes the place of the love which the chief cannot have for the peoples under him.

**Grotius** denies that all human power is established in favor of the governed, and quotes slavery as an example. His usual method of reasoning is constantly to establish right by fact.<sup>1</sup> It would be possible to employ a more logical method, but none could be more favorable to tyrants.

It is then, according to Grotius, doubtful whether the human race belongs to a hundred men, or that hundred men to the human race: and, throughout his book, he seems to incline to the former alternative, which is also the view of **Hobbes**. On this showing, the human species is divided into so many **herds** of cattle, each with its ruler, who keeps guard over them for the purpose of **devouring** them.

As a shepherd is of a nature superior to that of his flock, the shepherds of men, i.e., their rulers, are of a nature superior to that of the peoples under them. Thus, **Philo** tells us, the **Emperor Caligula** reasoned, concluding equally well either that kings were gods, or that men were beasts.

The reasoning of Caligula agrees with that of Hobbes and Grotius. Aristotle, before any of them, had said that men are by no means equal naturally, but that some are born for slavery, and others for dominion.

Aristotle was right; but he took the effect for the cause. Nothing can be more certain than that every man born in slavery is born for slavery. Slaves lose everything in their chains, even the desire of escaping from them: they love their servitude, as the comrades of **Ulysses** loved their brutish condition.<sup>2</sup> If then there are slaves by nature, it is because there have been slaves against nature. Force made the first slaves, and their cowardice perpetuated the condition.

I have said nothing of **King Adam**, or Emperor **Noah**, father of the three great monarchs who shared out the universe, like the children of **Saturn**, whom some scholars have recognized in them. I trust to getting due thanks for my moderation; for, being a direct descendant of one of these princes, perhaps of the eldest branch, how do I know that a verification of titles might not leave me the legitimate king of the human race? In any case, there can be no doubt that Adam was sovereign of the world, as **Robinson Crusoe** was of his island, as long as he was its only inhabitant; and this empire had the advantage that the monarch, safe on his throne, had no rebellions, wars, or conspirators to fear.

### 3. THE RIGHT OF THE STRONGEST

The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty. Hence the right of the strongest, which, though to all seeming meant ironically, is really laid down as a fundamental principle. But are we never to have an explanation of this phrase? Force is a physical power, and

<sup>1</sup> "Learned inquiries into public right are often only the history of past abuses; and troubling to study them too deeply is a profitless infatuation" (*Essay on the Interests of France in Relation to its Neighbors*, by the Marquis d'Argenson). This is exactly what Grotius has done.

<sup>2</sup> See a short treatise of Plutarch's entitled *That Animals Reason*.

I fail to see what moral effect it can have. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will — at the most, an act of prudence. In what sense can it be a duty?

Suppose for a moment that this so-called “right” exists. I maintain that the sole result is a mass of inexplicable nonsense. For, if force creates right, the effect changes with the cause: every force that is greater than the first succeeds to its right. As soon as it is possible to disobey with **impunity**, disobedience is legitimate; and, the strongest being always in the right, the only thing that matters is to act so as to become the strongest. But what kind of right is that which perishes when force fails? If we must obey **perforce**, there is no need to obey because we ought; and if we are not forced to obey, we are under no obligation to do so. Clearly, the word “right” adds nothing to force: in this connection, it means absolutely nothing.

Obey the powers that be. If this means yield to force, it is a good precept, but **superfluous**: I can answer for its never being violated. All power comes from God, I admit; but so does all sickness: does that mean that we are forbidden to call in the doctor? A **brigand** surprises me at the edge of a wood: must I not merely surrender my purse on compulsion; but, even if I could withhold it, am I in conscience bound to give it up? For certainly the pistol he holds is also a power.

Let us then admit that force does not create right, and that we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers. In that case, my original question **recurs**.

#### 4. SLAVERY

Since no man has a natural authority over his fellow, and force creates no right, we must conclude that conventions form the basis of all legitimate authority among men.

If an individual, says Grotius, can alienate his liberty and make himself the slave of a master, why could not a whole people do the same and make itself subject to a king? There are in this passage plenty of ambiguous words which would need explaining; but let us confine ourselves to the word *alienate*. To alienate is to give or to sell. Now, a man who becomes the slave of another does not give himself; he sells himself, at the least for his subsistence: but for what do a people sell itself? A king is so far from furnishing his subjects with their subsistence that he gets his own only from them; and, according to **Rabelais**, kings do not live on nothing. Do subjects then give their persons on condition that the king takes their goods also? I fail to see what they have left to preserve.

It will be said that the despot assures his subjects civil tranquility. Granted; but what do they gain, if the wars his ambition brings down upon them, his insatiable avidity, and the vexatious conduct of his ministers press harder on them than their own **dissensions** would have done? What do they gain, if the very tranquility they enjoy is one of their miseries? Tranquility is found also in dungeons; but is that enough to make them desirable places to live in? The Greeks imprisoned in the cave of the Cyclops lived there very tranquilly, while they were awaiting their turn to be **devoured**.

To say that a man gives himself gratuitously, is to say what is absurd and inconceiv-

**impunity** -  
freedom from punishment

**perforce** -  
because it is necessary

**superfluous** -  
more than is needed or  
wanted

**brigand** -  
an armed thief

**recur** -  
to happen many times or to  
happen again

**François Rabelais** -  
(ca. 1494 - April 9, 1553) major  
French Renaissance writer

**dissension** -  
arguments and disagreement,  
especially in an organization,  
group, political party, etc.

**devour** -  
to eat something eagerly and in  
large amounts so that nothing  
is left

able; such an act is null and illegitimate, from the mere fact that he who does it is out of his mind. To say the same of a whole people is to suppose a people of madmen; and madness creates no right.

Even if each man could alienate himself, he could not alienate his children: they are born men and free; their liberty belongs to them, and no one but they has the right to dispose of it. Before they come to years of discretion, the father can, in their name, lay down conditions for their preservation and well-being, but he cannot give them irrevocably and without conditions: such a gift is contrary to the ends of nature, and exceeds the rights of paternity. It would therefore be necessary, in order to legitimize an arbitrary government, that in every generation the people should be in a position to accept or reject it; but, were this so, the government would be no longer arbitrary.

To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties. For him who renounces everything no indemnity is possible. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; to remove all liberty from his will is to remove all morality from his acts. Finally, it is an empty and contradictory convention that sets up, on the one side, absolute authority, and, on the other, unlimited obedience. Is it not clear that we can be under no obligation to a person from whom we have the right to exact everything? Does not this condition alone, in the absence of equivalence or exchange, in itself involve the nullity of the act? For what right can my slave have against me, when all that he has belongs to me, and, his right being mine, this right of mine against myself is a phrase devoid of meaning?

Grotius and the rest find in war another origin for the so-called right of slavery. The victor having, as they hold, the right of killing the vanquished, the latter can buy back his life at the price of his liberty; and this convention is the more legitimate because it is to the advantage of both parties.

But it is clear that this supposed right to kill the conquered is by no means **deducible** from the state of war. Men, from the mere fact that, while they are living in their primitive independence, they have no mutual relations stable enough to constitute either the state of peace or the state of war, cannot be naturally enemies. War is constituted by a relation between things, and not between persons; and, as the state of war cannot arise out of simple personal relations, but only out of real relations, private war, or war of man with man, can exist neither in the state of nature, where there is no constant property, nor in the social state, where everything is under the authority of the laws.

Individual combats, duels and encounters, are acts which cannot constitute a state; while the private wars, authorized by the Establishments of **Louis IX, King of France**, and suspended by the Peace of God, are abuses of feudalism, in itself an absurd system if ever there was one, and contrary to the principles of natural right and to all good polity.

War then is a relation, not between man and man, but between State and State, and individuals are enemies only accidentally, not as men, nor even as citizens,<sup>3</sup> but

#### deduce -

to reach an answer or a decision by thinking carefully about the known facts

#### **Louis IX (Saint Louis) -**

King of France from 1226 until his death in 1270

3 The Romans, who understood and respected the right of war more than any other nation on earth, carried their scruples on this head so far that a citizen was not allowed to serve as a volunteer without engaging himself expressly against the enemy, and against such and such an enemy by name. A legion in which the younger Cato was seeing his first service under Popilius having been reconstructed, the elder Cato wrote to Popilius that, if he wished his son to continue serving under him, he must administer to him a new military oath, because, the first having been annulled, he was no longer able to bear arms against the enemy. The same Cato wrote to his son telling him to take great care not to go into battle before taking this new oath. I know that the siege of Clusium and other isolated events can be quoted against me; but I am citing laws and customs. The Romans are the people that least often transgressed its laws; and no other people has had such good ones.

as soldiers; not as members of their country, but as its defenders. Finally, each State can have for enemies only other States, and not men; for between things disparate in nature there can be no real relation.

Furthermore, this principle is in conformity with the established rules of all times and the constant practice of all civilized peoples. Declarations of war are intimations less to powers than to their subjects. The foreigner, whether king, individual, or people, who robs, kills or detains the subjects, without declaring war on the prince, is not an enemy, but a brigand. Even in real war, a just prince, while laying hands in the enemy's country on all that belongs to the public respects the lives and goods of individuals: he respects rights on which his own are founded. The object of the war being the destruction of the hostile State, the other side has a right to kill its defenders, while they are bearing arms; but as soon as they lay them down and surrender, they cease to be enemies or instruments of the enemy, and become once more merely men, whose life no one has any right to take. Sometimes it is possible to kill the State without killing a single one of its members; and war gives no right which is not necessary to the gaining of its object. These principles are not those of Grotius: they are not based on the authority of poets, but derived from the nature of reality and based on reason.

The right of conquest has no foundation other than the right of the strongest. If war does not give the conqueror the right to massacre the conquered peoples, the right to enslave them cannot be based upon a right which does not exist. No one has a right to kill an enemy except when he cannot make him a slave, and the right to enslave him cannot therefore be derived from the right to kill him. It is accordingly an unfair exchange to make him buy at the price of his liberty his life, over which the victor holds no right. Is it not clear that there is a vicious circle in founding the right of life and death on the right of slavery, and the right of slavery on the right of life and death?

Even if we assume this terrible right to kill everybody, I maintain that a slave made in war, or a conquered people, is under no obligation to a master, except to obey him as far as he is compelled to do so. By taking an equivalent for his life, the victor has not done him a favor; instead of killing him without profit, he has killed him usefully. So far then is he from acquiring over him any authority in addition to that of force that the state of war continues to subsist between them: their mutual relation is the effect of it, and the usage of the right of war does not imply a treaty of peace. A convention has indeed been made; but this convention, so far from destroying the state of war, presupposes its continuance.

So, from whatever aspect we regard the question, the right of slavery is null and void, not only as being illegitimate, but also because it is absurd and meaningless. The words *slave* and *right* contradict each other, and are mutually exclusive. It will always be equally foolish for a man to say to a man or to a people: "I make with you a convention wholly at your expense and wholly to my advantage; I shall keep it as long as I like, and you will keep it as long as I like."

## 5. THAT WE MUST ALWAYS GO BACK TO A FIRST CONVENTION

Even if I granted all that I have been refuting, the friends of despotism would be no better off. There will always be a great difference between subduing a multitude and ruling a society. Even if scattered individuals were successively enslaved by one man, however numerous they might be, I still see no more than a master and his slaves, and certainly not a people and its ruler; I see what may be termed an aggregation, but not an association; there is as yet neither public good nor body politic. The man in question, even if he has enslaved half the world, is still only an individual; his interest, apart from that of others, is still a purely private interest. If this same man comes to die, his empire, after him, remains scattered and without unity, as an oak falls and dissolves into a heap of ashes when the fire has consumed it.

A people, says Grotius, can give itself to a king. Then, according to Grotius, a people are a people before it gives itself. The gift is itself a civil act, and implies public deliberation. It would be better, before examining the act by which a people gives itself to a king, to examine that by which it has become a people; for this act, being necessarily prior to the other, is the true foundation of society.

Indeed, if there were no prior convention, where, unless the election was unanimous, would be the obligation on the minority to submit to the choice of the majority? How have a hundred men who wish for a master the right to vote on behalf of ten who do not? The law of majority voting is itself something established by convention, and presupposes unanimity, on one occasion at least.

## 6. THE SOCIAL COMPACT

I suppose men to have reached the point at which the obstacles in the way of their preservation in the state of nature show their power of resistance to be greater than the resources at the disposal of each individual for his maintenance in that state. That primitive condition can then subsist no longer; and the human race would perish unless it changed its manner of existence.

But, as men cannot engender new forces, but only unite and direct existing ones, they have no other means of preserving themselves than the formation, by aggregation, of a sum of forces great enough to overcome the resistance. These they have to bring into play by means of a single motive power, and cause to act in concert.

This sum of forces can arise only where several persons come together: but, as the force and liberty of each man are the chief instruments of his self-preservation, how can he pledge them without harming his own interests, and neglecting the care he owes to himself? This difficulty, in its bearing on my present subject, may be stated in the following terms:

*“The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.”* This is the fundamental problem of which the *Social Contract* provides the solution.

The clauses of this contract are so determined by the nature of the act that the slightest modification would make them vain and ineffective; so that, although they have perhaps never been formally set forth, they are everywhere the same and everywhere **tacitly** admitted and recognized, until, on the violation of the social compact, each regains his original rights and resumes his natural liberty, while losing the conventional liberty in favor of which he renounced it.

These clauses, properly understood, may be reduced to one — the total alienation

of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community; for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and, this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others.

Moreover, the alienation being without reserve, the union is as perfect as it can be, and no associate has anything more to demand: for, if the individuals retained certain rights, as there would be no common superior to decide between them and the public, each, being on one point his own judge, would ask to be so on all; the state of nature would thus continue, and the association would necessarily become inoperative or tyrannical.

Finally, each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is no associate over whom he does not acquire the same right as he yields others over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses, and an increase of force for the preservation of what he has.

If then we discard from the social compact what is not of its essence, we shall find that it reduces itself to the following terms:

*“Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.”*

At once, in place of the individual personality of each contracting party, this act of association creates a moral and collective body, composed of as many members as the assembly contains votes, and receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life and its will. This public person, so formed by the union of all other persons formerly took the name of *city*,<sup>4</sup> and now takes that of *Republic* or *body politic*; it is called by its members *State* when passive, *Sovereign* when active, and *Power* when compared with others like itself. Those who are associated in it take collectively the name of *people*, and severally are called *citizens*, as sharing in the sovereign power, and *subjects*, as being under the laws of the State. But these terms are often confused and taken one for another: it is enough to know how to distinguish them when they are being used with precision.

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4 The real meaning of this word has been almost wholly lost in modern times; most people mistake a town for a city, and a townsman for a citizen. They do not know that houses make a town, but citizens a city. The same mistake long ago cost the Carthaginians dear. I have never read of the title of citizens being given to the subjects of any prince, not even the ancient Macedonians or the English of today, though they are nearer liberty than any one else. The French alone everywhere familiarly adopt the name of citizens, because, as can be seen from their dictionaries, they have no idea of its meaning; otherwise they would be guilty in usurping it, of the crime of *lèse-majesté*: among them, the name expresses a virtue, and not a right. When Bodin spoke of our citizens and townsmen, he fell into a bad blunder in taking the one class for the other. M. d'Alembert has avoided the error; and, in his article on Geneva, has clearly distinguished the four orders of men (or even five, counting mere foreigners) who dwell in our town, of which two only compose the Republic. No other French writer, to my knowledge, has understood the real meaning of the word citizen.



## 7. THE SOVEREIGN

This formula shows us that the act of association comprises a mutual undertaking between the public and the individuals, and that each individual, in making a contract, as we may say, with himself, is bound in a double capacity; as a member of the Sovereign he is bound to the individuals, and as a member of the State to the Sovereign. But the maxim of civil right, that no one is bound by undertakings made to himself, does not apply in this case; for there is a great difference between incurring an obligation to yourself and incurring one to a whole of which you form a part.

Attention must further be called to the fact that public deliberation, while competent to bind all the subjects to the Sovereign, because of the two different capacities in which each of them may be regarded, cannot, for the opposite reason, bind the Sovereign to itself; and that it is consequently against the nature of the body politic for the Sovereign to impose on itself a law which it cannot **infringe**. Being able to regard itself in only one capacity, it is in the position of an individual who makes a contract with himself; and this makes it clear that there neither is nor can be any kind of fundamental law binding on the body of the people – not even the social contract itself. This does not mean that the body politic cannot enter into undertakings with others, provided the contract is not infringed by them; for in relation to what is external to it, it becomes a simple being, an individual.

But the body politic or the Sovereign, drawing its being wholly from the sanctity of the contract, can never bind itself, even to an outsider, to do anything derogatory to the original act, for instance, to alienate any part of itself, or to submit to another Sovereign. Violation of the act by which it exists would be self-**annihilation**; and that which is itself nothing can create nothing.

As soon as this multitude is so united in one body, it is impossible to offend against one of the members without attacking the body, and still more to offend against the body without the members resenting it. Duty and interest therefore equally oblige the two contracting parties to give each other help; and the same men should seek to combine, in their double capacity, all the advantages dependent upon that capacity.

Again, the Sovereign, being formed wholly of the individuals who compose it, neither has nor can have any interest contrary to theirs; and consequently the sovereign power need give no guarantee to its subjects, because it is impossible for the body to wish to hurt all its members. We shall also see later on that it cannot hurt any in particular. The Sovereign, merely by virtue of what it is, is always what it should be.

This, however, is not the case with the relation of the subjects to the Sovereign, which, despite the common interest, would have no security that they would fulfill their undertakings, unless it found means to assure itself of their fidelity.

In fact, each individual, as a man, may have a particular will contrary or dissimilar to the general will which he has as a citizen. His particular interest may speak to him quite differently from the common interest: his absolute and naturally independent existence may make him look upon what he owes to the common cause as a gratuitous contribution, the loss of which will do less harm to others than the payment of it is burdensome to himself; and, regarding the moral person which constitutes the State as a *persona ficta*, because not a man, he may wish to enjoy the rights of citizenship without being ready to fulfill the duties of a subject. The continuance of such an injustice could not but prove the undoing of the body politic.

In order then that the social compact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing

**infringe -**

to break a rule, law, etc.

**annihilate -**

to destroy completely so that nothing is left

less than that he will be forced to be free; for this is the condition which, by giving each citizen to his country, secures him against all personal dependence. In this lies the key to the working of the political machine; this alone legitimizes civil undertakings, which, without it, would be absurd, tyrannical, and liable to the most frightful abuses.

## 8. THE CIVIL STATE

The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a very remarkable change in man, by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and giving his actions the morality they had formerly lacked. Then only, when the voice of duty takes the place of physical impulses and right of appetite, does man, who so far had considered only himself, find that he is forced to act on different principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations. Although, in this state, he deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his faculties are so stimulated and developed, his ideas so extended, his feelings so ennobled, and his whole soul so uplifted, that, did not the abuses of this new condition often degrade him below that which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it for ever, and, instead of a stupid and unimaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man.

Let us draw up the whole account in terms easily commensurable. What man loses by the social contract is his natural liberty and an unlimited right to everything he tries to get and succeeds in getting; what he gains is civil liberty and the proprietorship of all he possesses. If we are to avoid mistake in weighing one against the other, we must clearly distinguish natural liberty, which is bounded only by the strength of the individual, from civil liberty, which is limited by the general will; and possession, which is merely the effect of force or the right of the first occupier, from property, which can be founded only on a positive title.

We might, over and above all this, add, to what man acquires in the civil state, moral liberty, which alone makes him truly master of himself; for the mere impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty. But I have already said too much on this head, and the philosophical meaning of the word liberty does not now concern us.

## 9. REAL PROPERTY

Each member of the community gives himself to it, at the moment of its foundation, just as he is, with all the resources at his command, including the goods he possesses. This act does not make possession, in changing hands, change its nature, and become property in the hands of the Sovereign; but, as the forces of the city are incomparably greater than those of an individual, public possession is also, in fact, stronger and more irrevocable, without being any more legitimate, at any rate from the point of view of foreigners. For the State, in relation to its members, is master of all their goods by the social contract, which, within the State, is the basis of all rights; but, in relation to other powers, it is so only by the right of the first occupier, which it holds from its members.

The right of the first occupier, though more real than the right of the strongest, becomes a real right only when the right of property has already been established. Every man has naturally a right to everything he needs; but the positive act which makes him **proprietor** of one thing excludes him from everything else. Having his share, he ought to keep to it, and can have no further right against the community. This is why the right of the first occupier, which in the state of nature is so weak, claims the respect of every man in civil society. In this right we are respecting not so much what belongs to another as what does not belong to ourselves.

In general, to establish the right of the first occupier over a plot of ground, the following conditions are necessary: first, the land must not yet be inhabited; secondly, a man must occupy only the amount he needs for his subsistence; and, in the third place, possession must be taken, not by an empty ceremony, but by labor and cultivation, the only sign of proprietorship that should be respected by others, in default of a legal title.

In granting the right of first **occupancy** to necessity and labor, are we not really stretching it as far as it can go? Is it possible to leave such a right unlimited? Is it to be enough to set foot on a plot of common ground, in order to be able to call yourself at once the master of it? Is it to be enough that a man has the strength to expel others for a moment, in order to establish his right to prevent them from ever returning? How can a man or a people seize an immense territory and keep it from the rest of the world except by a punishable usurpation, since all others are being robbed, by such an act, of the place of habitation and the means of subsistence which nature gave them in common? When **Nunez Balboa**, standing on the sea-shore, took possession of the South Seas and the whole of South America in the name of the crown of Castile, was that enough to dispossess all their actual inhabitants, and to shut out from them all the princes of the world? On such a showing, these ceremonies are idly multiplied, and the Catholic King need only take possession all at once, from his apartment, of the whole universe, merely making a subsequent reservation about what was already in the possession of other princes.

We can imagine how the lands of individuals, where they were contiguous and came to be united, became public territory, and how the right of Sovereignty, extending from the subjects over the lands they held, became at once real and personal. The possessors were thus made more dependent, and the forces at their command used to guarantee their fidelity. The advantage of this does not seem to have been felt by ancient monarchs, who called themselves Kings of the Persians, Scythians, or Macedonians, and seemed to regard themselves more as rulers of men than as masters of a country. Those of the present day more cleverly call themselves Kings of France, Spain, England, etc.: thus holding the land, they are quite confident of holding the inhabitants.

The peculiar fact about this alienation is that, in taking over the goods of individuals, the community, so far from despoiling them, only assures them legitimate possession, and changes usurpation into a true right and enjoyment into proprietorship. Thus the possessors, being regarded as depositaries of the public good, and having their rights respected by all the members of the State and maintained against foreign aggression by all its forces, have, by a cession which benefits both the public and still more themselves, acquired, so to speak, all that they gave up. This paradox may easily be explained by the distinction between the rights which the Sovereign and the proprietor have over the same estate, as we shall see later on.

It may also happen that men begin to unite one with another before they possess anything, and that subsequently occupying a tract of country which is enough for all they enjoy it in common, or share it out among themselves, either equally or according to a scale fixed by the

**proprietor** -  
one who has legal title to  
something; an owner

**occupancy** -  
presence leading to ownership

**Vasco Núñez de Balboa** -  
Spanish explorer, governor, and  
conquistador who discovered  
the Pacific Ocean

Sovereign. However the acquisition be made, the right which each individual has to his own estate is always subordinate to the right which the community has over all: without this, there would be neither stability in the social tie, nor real force in the exercise of Sovereignty.

I shall end this chapter and this book by remarking on a fact on which the whole social system should rest: i.e., that, instead of destroying natural inequality, the fundamental compact substitutes, for such physical inequality as nature may have set up between men, an equality that is moral and legitimate, and that men, who may be unequal in strength or intelligence, become every one equal by convention and legal right.

**SOURCES:** Jean Jacques Rousseau. *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Rights*.  
<http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm>

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Comment on Rousseau's statement: *"a man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains"*.
2. Why does Rousseau consider freedom to be the consequence of human nature? How does he prove it? How far, in your opinion, is his evidence justified and reasoned?
3. How does Rousseau counter the opinions of those (Hobbes, etc.) who justify slavery as a consequence of human nature and tyranny of the authority as the means of perfection of human nature? How does he respond to the notion that there are slaves by nature? Why is Rousseau confident that slaves exist contrary to nature?
4. Do you agree with what was said prior to Rousseau that: *"force creates law"*? Why cannot force create law? What do you think of Rousseau's statement that: *"madness does not create law"*?
5. How are human rights and the will connected to human nature? Comment on Rousseau's words: *"To refuse freedom means to abrogate personal dignity, the rights of human nature, even its duties. No compensation is possible for the one who refuses all. Similar refusal is incompatible with human nature; to deprive man of will – means to deprive his actions of any morals."*
6. What do Rousseau's and Hobbes' interpretation of the agreement passed instead of the natural right differ from? How does natural law differ from political rights? What does man obtain when he transfers his rights to a sovereign? Comment on Rousseau's position: *"... A political organism or the sovereign... is obliged by the existence only to sanctity of the contract."* Why does it frequently happen that political rights are alienated?
7. What is the essential difference between natural and civil condition? Rousseau says that according "to the social contract a man loses natural freedom and unlimited right to what attracts him and what he can possess; he gets civil freedom and the right to property"? Do you agree with it? How do you understand civil freedom?

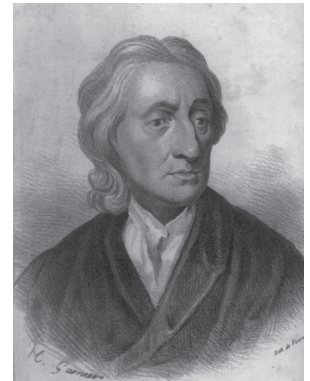
8. How, according to Rousseau, are the instincts of justice on moral actions transformed? What is your opinion?
9. Does the transfer of a man (his rights and properties) to the sovereign's hand take place as a result of a change of human nature? What is the right of the first occupier? Why is it respected by civil society? Comment on Rousseau's words: *"Each person has by nature the right to everything that he needs."*
10. What does the initial agreement add to the natural equality of people as a whole?
11. Specify and classify the strong and weak points of Rousseau's doctrine about man? Is human nature really good if you assume your own vital practice?
12. Does human individualism have natural origins? What would you say to Rousseau about social instinct? What are the weaknesses of modern liberal theory and practice?
13. Write an essay about the contribution of Rousseau's doctrine (about human freedom) to the development of democratic institutes in Europe and America.

#### ADDITIONAL READING:

- Modern History Sourcebook: Jean Jacques Rousseau: The Social Contract, 1763. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Rousseau-soccon.htm>
- Richard Hooker. The European Enlighten. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/ENLIGHT/ROUSSEAU.HTM>>
- Terri Collier. Philosopher of the Month. <[http://www.philosophers.co.uk/cafe/phil\\_jun2003.htm](http://www.philosophers.co.uk/cafe/phil_jun2003.htm)>
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## JOHN LOCKE OF CIVIL-GOVERNMENT

John Locke, (1632-1704) was an English philosopher, empiricist, and social contract theorist. He had enormous influence on the development of epistemology, political philosophy, liberal theory and was an influential Enlightenment thinker. His major works are: *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1690), *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration* (1692), *A Third Letter for Toleration* (1689), *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), and others.



### CHAPTER I.

Sect. 1. It having been shown in the foregoing **discourse**,

1. That Adam had not, either by natural right of fatherhood, or by positive donation from God, any such authority over his children, or dominion over the world, as is pretended:

2. That if he had, his **heirs**, yet, had no right to it:

3. That if his heirs had, there being no law of nature nor positive law of God that determines which is the right heir in all cases that may arise, the right of succession, and consequently of bearing rule, could not have been certainly determined:

4. That if even that had been determined, yet the knowledge of which is the eldest line of Adam's **posterity**, being so long since **utterly** lost, that in the races of mankind and families of the world, there remains not to one above another, the least **pretence** to be the eldest house, and to have the right of inheritance:

5. All these premises having, as I think, been clearly made out, it is impossible that the rulers now on earth should make any benefit, or derive any the least shadow of authority from that, which is held to be the fountain of all power, Adam's private dominion and paternal jurisdiction: so that he that will not give just occasion to think that all government in the world is the product only of force and violence, and that men live together by no other rules but that of beasts, where the strongest carries it, and so lay a foundation for perpetual disorder and **mischief, tumult, sedition** and **rebellion**, (things that the followers of that hypothesis so loudly cry out against) must of necessity find out another rise of government, another original of political power, and another way of designing and knowing the persons that have it, than what Sir Robert Filmer hath taught us.

Sect. 2. To this purpose, I think it may not be amiss, to set down what I take to be political power; that the power of a magistrate over a subject may be distinguished from that of a father over his children, a master over his servant, a husband over his wife, and a lord over his slave. All which distinct powers happening sometimes together in the same man, if he be considered under these different relations, it may help us to distinguish these powers one another and shew the difference betwixt a ruler of a commonwealth, a father of a family, and a captain of a galley.

Sect. 3. Political power, then, I take to be a right of making laws with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties, for the regulating and preserving of property, and of em-

#### **discourse -**

verbal exchange,  
conversation

#### **heir -**

someone who inherits the  
property of another

#### **posterity -**

all the future generations,  
especially the descendants  
of a specific person

#### **utterly -**

completely, entirely, to the  
fullest extent

#### **pretence -**

an act of pretending or  
pretension; a false claim or  
pretext

#### **mischief -**

harm or evil caused by an  
agent or brought about by  
a particular cause

#### **tumult -**

the noise as made by a  
crowd; a riot or uprising

#### **sedition -**

the organized incitement of  
rebellion or civil disorder  
against authority or the  
state

#### **rebellion -**

armed resistance to an  
established government  
or ruler



playing the force of the community, in the execution of such laws, and in the defense of the common-wealth from foreign injury; and all this only for the public good.

## CHAPTER I I.

Of the State of Nature.

Sect. 4. To understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider, what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.

A state also of equality wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that the creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection, unless the lord and master of them all should, by any manifest declaration of his will, set one above another, and confer on him, by an evident and clear appointment, an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty.

Sect. 5. This equality of men by nature, the judicious Hooker looks upon as so evident in itself, and beyond all question, that he makes it the foundation of that obligation to mutual love amongst men, on which he builds the duties they owe one another, and from whence he derives the great maxims of justice and charity. His words are:

*The like natural inducement hath brought men to know that it is no less their duty, to love others than themselves; for seeing those things which are equal, must needs all have one measure; if I cannot but wish to receive good, even as much at every man's hands, as any man can wish unto his own soul, how should I look to have any part of my desire herein satisfied, unless myself be careful to satisfy the like desire, which is undoubtedly in other men, being of one and the same nature? To have any thing offered them repugnant to this desire, must needs in all respects grieve them as much as me; so that if I do harm, I must look to suffer, there being no reason that others should shew greater measure of love to me, than they have by me showed unto them: my desire therefore to be loved of my equals in nature as much as possible may be, imposed upon me a natural duty of bearing to them-ward fully the like affection; from which relation of equality between ourselves and them that are as ourselves, what several rules and canons natural reason hath drawn, for direction of life, no man is ignorant. Eccl. Pol. Lib. I.*

Sect. 6. But though this be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of license: though man in that state have an uncontrollable liberty to dispose of his person or possessions, yet he has not liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any creature in his possession, but where some nobler use than its bare preservation calls for it. The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions: for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker; all the servants of one sovereign master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's pleasure: and being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for our's. Every one, as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station willfully, so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not,

### dispose -

to eliminate or to get rid of something; to distribute and put in place

### inducement -

introductory statement of facts or background information

### repugnant -

offensive or repulsive and arousing disgust or aversion

### infinitely -

in an infinite manner; as of anything growing without bounds

### omnipotent -

having unlimited power, force or authority



unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away, or **impair** the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another.

Sect. 7. And that all men may be **restrained** from invading others rights, and from doing hurt to one another, and the law of nature be observed, which willeth the peace and preservation of all mankind, the execution of the law of nature is, in that state, put into every man's hands, whereby every one has a right to punish the transgressors of that law to such a degree, as may hinder its violation: for the law of nature would, as all other laws that concern men in this world be in vain, if there were no body that in the state of nature had a power to execute that law, and thereby preserve the innocent and restrain offenders. And if any one in the state of nature may punish another for any evil he has done, every one may do so: for in that state of perfect equality, where naturally there is no superiority or jurisdiction of one over another, what any may do in **prosecution** of that law, every one must need have a right to do.

Sect. 8. And thus, in the state of nature, one man comes by a power over another; but yet no absolute or arbitrary power, to use a criminal, when he has got him in his hands, according to the passionate heats, or boundless **extravagancy** of his own will; but only to retribute to him, so far as calm reason and conscience dictate, what is proportionate to his transgression, which is so much as may serve for reparation and restraint: for these two are the only reasons, why one man may lawfully do harm to another, which is that we call punishment. In transgressing the law of nature, the offender declares himself to live by another rule than that of reason and common equity, which is that measure God has set to the actions of men, for their mutual security; and so he becomes dangerous to mankind, the **tye**, which is to secure them from injury and violence, being slighted and broken by him. Which being a trespass against the whole species, and the peace and safety of it, provided for by the law of nature, every man upon this score, by the right he hath to preserve mankind in general, may restrain, or where it is necessary, destroy things **noxious** to them, and so may bring such evil on any one, who hath transgressed that law, as may make him repent the doing of it, and thereby deter him, and by his example others, from doing the like mischief. And in the case, and upon this ground, every man hath a right to punish the offender, and be executioner of the law of nature.

Sect. 9. I doubt not but this will seem a very strange doctrine to some men: but before they condemn it, I desire them to resolve me, by what right any prince or state can put to death, or punish an **alien**, for any crime he commits in their country. It is certain their laws, by **virtue** of any sanction they receive from the **promulgated** will of the legislative, reach not a stranger: they speak not to him, nor, if they did, is he bound to hearken to them. The legislative authority, by which they are in force over the subjects of that commonwealth, hath no power over him. Those who have the supreme power of making laws in England, France or Holland, are to an Indian, but like the rest of the world, men without authority: and therefore, if by the law of nature every man hath not a power to punish offences against it, as he **soberly** judges the case to require, I see not how the magistrates of any community can punish an alien of another country; since, in reference to him, they can have no more power than what every man naturally may have over another.

Sect. 10. Besides the crime which consists in violating the law, and varying from the right

**impair -**

to weaken; to affect negatively; to have a diminishing effect on

**restrain -**

to control or keep in check; to restrict or limit

**prosecution -**

the continuance of something begun with a view to its completion

**extravagant -**

exceeding the bounds of something; extreme; exorbitant

**tye -**

knot

**noxious -**

unpleasant and possibly also harmful, typically in reference to odorous fumes

**alien -**

foreigner who is not a subject of the country in which he lives

**virtue -**

moral excellence and righteousness; goodness

**promulgate -**

to make known or public; to put into effect, as a regulation

**soberly -**

marked by seriousness, gravity, or solemnity of conduct or character

rule of reason, whereby a man so far becomes degenerate, and declares himself to quit the principles of human nature, and to be a noxious creature, there is commonly injury done to some person or other; and some other man receives damage by his transgression: in which case he who hath received any damage, has, besides the right of punishment common to him with other men, a particular right to seek reparation from him that has done it: and any other person, who finds it just, may also join with him that is injured, and assist him in recovering from the offender so much as may make satisfaction for the harm he has suffered.

Sect. 11. From these two distinct rights, the one of punishing the crime for restraint, and preventing the like offence, which right of punishing is in every body; the other of taking reparation, which belongs only to the injured party, comes it to pass that the magistrate, who by being magistrate hath the common right of punishing put into his hands, can often, where the public good demands not the execution of the law, remit the punishment of criminal offences by his own authority, but yet cannot remit the satisfaction due to any private man for the damage he has received. That, he who has suffered the damage has a right to demand in his own name, and he alone can remit: the damnified person has this power of appropriating to himself the goods or service of the offender, by right of self-preservation, as every man has a power to punish the crime, to prevent its being committed again, by the right he has of preserving all mankind, and doing all reasonable things he can in order to that end: and thus it is, that every man, in the state of nature, has a power to kill a murderer, both to deter others from doing the like injury, which no reparation can compensate, by the example of the punishment that attends it from every body, and also to secure men from the attempts of a criminal, who having renounced reason, the common rule and measure God hath given to mankind, hath, by the unjust violence and slaughter he hath committed upon one, declared war against all mankind, and therefore may be destroyed as a lion or a tiger, one of those wild savage beasts, with whom men can have no society nor security: and upon this is grounded that great law of nature: 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed'. And Cain was so fully convinced, that every one had a right to destroy such a criminal, that after the murder of his brother, he cries out, every one that findeth me, shall slay me; so plain was it writ in the hearts of all mankind.

Sect. 12. By the same reason may a man in the state of nature punish the lesser breaches of that law. It will perhaps be demanded, with death? I answer, each transgression may be punished to that degree, and with so much severity, as will suffice to make it an ill bargain to the offender, give him cause to repent, and terrify others from doing the like. Every offence, that can be committed in the state of nature, may in the state of nature be also punished equally, and as far forth as it may, in a commonwealth: for though it would be besides my present purpose, to enter here into the particulars of the law of nature, or its measures of punishment; yet, it is certain there is such a law, and that too, as intelligible and plain to a rational creature, and a studier of that law, as the positive laws of commonwealths; nay, possibly plainer; as much as reason is easier to be understood, than the fancies and intricate contrivances of men, following contrary and hidden interests put into words; for so truly are a great part of the municipal laws of countries, which are only so far right, as they are founded on the law of nature, by which they are to be regulated and interpreted.

Sect. 13. To this strange doctrine, viz. that in the state of nature every one has the executive power of the law of nature, I doubt not but it will be objected, that it is unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases, that self-love will make men partial to themselves and their friends: and on the other side, that ill nature, passion and **revenge** will carry them too far in punishing others; and hence nothing but confusion and disorder will follow, and that therefore God hath certainly appointed government to restrain the partiality and violence of men. I easily grant, that civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniencies of the

**revenge -**

any form of personal  
retaliatory action  
against an individual,  
institution, or group for  
some perceived harm or  
injustice

state of nature, which must certainly be great, where men may be judges in their own case, since it is easy to be imagined, that he who was so unjust as to do his brother an injury, will scarce be so just as to condemn himself for it: but I shall desire those who make this objection, to remember, that absolute monarchs are but men; and if government is to be the remedy of those evils, which necessarily follow from men's being judges in their own cases, and the state of nature is therefore not to how much better it is than the state of nature, where one man, commanding a multitude, has the liberty to be judge in his own case, and may do to all his subjects whatever he pleases, without the least liberty to any one to question or control those who execute his pleasure? And in whatsoever he doth, whether led by reason, mistake or passion, must be submitted to? Much better it is in the state of nature, wherein men are not bound to submit to the unjust will of another: and if he that judges, judges **amiss** in his own, or any other case, he is answerable for it to the rest of mankind.

Sect. 14. It is often asked as a mighty objection, where are, or ever were there any men in such a state of nature? To which it may suffice as an answer at present, that since all princes and rulers of independent governments all through the world, are in a state of nature, it is plain the world never was, nor ever will be, without numbers of men in that state. I have named all governors of independent communities, whether they are, or are not, in league with others: for it is not every compact that puts an end to the state of nature between men, but only this one of agreeing together mutually to enter into one community, and make one body politic; other promises, and compacts, men may make one with another, and yet still be in the state of nature. The promises and bargains for truck, etc.; between the two men in the desert island, mentioned by Garcilasso de la Vega, in his history of Peru; or between a Swiss and an Indian, in the woods of America, are binding to them, though they are perfectly in a state of nature, in reference to one another: for truth and keeping of faith belongs to men, as men, and not as members of society.

Sect. 15. To those that say, there were never any men in the state of nature, I will not only oppose the authority of the judicious Hooker, Eccl. Pol. lib. i. sect. 10, where he says, The laws which have been **hitherto** mentioned, i.e. the laws of nature, do bind men absolutely, even as they are men, although they have never any settled fellowship, never any **solemn** agreement amongst themselves what to do, or not to do: but **forasmuch as** we are not by ourselves sufficient to furnish ourselves with competent store of things, needful for such a life as our nature doth desire, a life fit for the dignity of man; therefore to supply those defects and imperfections which are in us, as living single and solely by ourselves, we are naturally induced to seek communion and fellowship with others: this was the cause of men's uniting themselves at first in politic societies. But I moreover affirm, that all men are naturally in that state, and remain so, till by their own consents they make themselves members of some politic society; and I doubt not in the **sequel** of this discourse, to make it very clear.

**amiss** -

wrong; faulty; out of order; improper

**hitherto** -

(archaic or legal) up to this or that time

**solemn** -

deeply serious

**forasmuch as** -

because; since

**sequel** -

a part added to a book or play that continues and extends it

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are the sources of natural right and political authority according to the text? Why does John Locke not agree with traditional and stereotyped religious interpretations of sources of human right and political authority? Why does he think that “Adam had not natural right of fatherhood, authority over his children, or dominion over the world, as he pretended to”?
2. Do you know any other sources of authority and power, except government? Is human nature mean or good? Do you agree with John Locke who believed in the freedom of human nature? How can you prove the idea?
3. Do you think that it is the ‘law of nature’ that makes people equal and that this does not allow administering punishment that helps people to live in peace and harmony? If it is so, how can it be that in the natural state each person may punish those who commit crimes and obstruct the realization of the natural law? Do you believe in the idea that humans can control the “law of nature” by means of reason? Do you think that the law of reason is equal with the law of nature?
4. How different are the law of nature and the civil law according to John Locke? What are the differences between the state of nature and civil state? What disadvantages are there in the state of nature and how can civil government help to eradicate them? What is monarchy and how does it differ from civil government?
5. What is the role of contract for civil government? What induced people to uniting first in politic societies? Comment on the statement: “it is not every compact that puts an end to the state of nature between men, but only this one of agreeing together mutually to enter into one community, and make one body politic”. Does society construct human nature or does human nature build society?

### COMPARISON QUESTIONS:

1. Compare Locke’s concept of human nature with the theories presented by Thomas Hobbes and Jean Jacques Rousseau. Could John Locke agree with Hobbes’s concept in Leviathan? Does natural equality and freedom lead people to war or does it give different opportunities? Is there any difference between freedom in the state of nature and freedom in civil government? Are human beings aggressive by nature?
2. Are there any similarities between Locke’s theory of human nature and the theories of Plato and Bhagavad-Gita?
3. Write an argumentative essay on the correlation between human nature, state (government) and society.

### ADDITIONAL READING:

- John Locke, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Locke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Locke)
- John Locke, Biographical information and an explanation of his major ideas, [www.iep.utm.edu/l/locke.htm](http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/locke.htm)
- John Locke, Philosophy Study Guides: Locke’s Second Treatise on Civil Government, [www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/locke](http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/locke)

## MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN THE RIGHTS AND INVOLVED DUTIES OF MANKIND CONSIDERED

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), was an English writer and one of the first “feminist” writers. Deprived of a formal education herself, Wollstonecraft became one of the leading advocates of the educational and social rights of women. Her first career as a school teacher and headmistress had a great influence on her and helped to form her view that girls of the time were educated to be little more than servants and slaves to men, and the subjects of their fleeting adoration. This led to the writing of her first work, a pamphlet entitled *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787). Her most famous work, from which the text below was drawn, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, states that reason, knowledge, and understanding can and should be cultivated in women. Throughout the text, the reader will become acquainted with Wollstonecraft’s view of human nature. As you read, consider what you believe the true nature of a woman to be, and whether it fundamentally differs from that of a man? Are women more creatures of feeling than reason?



In the present state of society it appears necessary to go back to first principles in search of the simplest truths, and to dispute with some prevailing prejudice every inch of ground. To clear my way, I must be allowed to ask some plain questions, and the answers will probably appear as unequivocal as the axioms on which reasoning is built; though, when entangled with various motives of action, they are formally contradicted, either by the words or conduct of men. In what does man’s pre-eminence over brute creation consist? The answer is as clear as that a half is less than the whole; in Reason.

What acquirement exalts one being above another? Virtue; we spontaneously reply.

For what purpose were the passions implanted? That man by struggling with them might attain a degree of Knowledge denied to the brutes; whispers experience.

Consequently, the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively.

The rights and duties of man thus simplified, it seems almost impertinent to attempt to illustrate truths that appear so incontrovertible; yet such deeply rooted prejudices have clouded reason, and such spurious qualities have assumed the name of virtues, that it is necessary to pursue the course of reason as it has been perplexed and involved in error, by various adventitious circumstances, comparing the simple axiom with casual deviations.

Men, in general, seem to employ their reason to justify prejudices, which they have imbibed, they cannot trace how, rather than to root them out. The mind must be strong that resolutely forms its own principles; for a kind of intellectual cowardice prevails which makes many men shrink from the task, or only do it by halves. Yet the imperfect conclusions thus drawn, are frequently very plausible, because they are built on partial experience, on just, though narrow, views.



**THE TWENTY-EIGHTH OF JULY:  
LIBERTY LEADING THE PEOPLE**  
Eugene Delacroix, c.1830

Going back to first principles, vice skulks, with all its native deformity, from close investigation; but a set of shallow thinkers are always exclaiming that these arguments prove too much, and that a measure rotten at the core may be expedient. Thus expediency is continually contrasted with simple principles, till truth is lost in a mist of words, virtue, in forms, and knowledge rendered a resounding nothing, by the specious prejudices that assume its name.

That the society is formed in the wisest manner, whose constitution is founded on the nature of man, strikes, in the abstract, every thinking being so forcibly, that it looks like presumption to endeavor to bring forward proofs; though proof must be brought, or the strong hold of prescription will never be forced by reason; yet to urge prescription as an argument to justify the depriving men (or women) of their natural rights, is one of the absurd **sophisms** which daily insult common sense.

The civilization of the bulk of the people of Europe is very partial; nay, it may be made a question, whether they have acquired any virtues in exchange for innocence, equivalent to the misery produced by the vices that have been plastered over unsightly ignorance, and the freedom which has been bartered for splendid slavery. The desire of dazzling by riches, the most certain pre-eminence that man can obtain, the pleasure of commanding flattering **sycophants**, and many other complicated low calculations of doting self-love, have all contributed to overwhelm the mass of mankind, and make liberty a convenient handle for mock patriotism. For whilst rank and titles are held of the utmost importance, before which genius “must hide its diminished head,” it is, with a few exceptions, very unfortunate for a nation when a man of abilities, without rank or property, pushes himself forward to notice. Alas! what unheard of misery have thousands suffered to purchase a cardinal’s hat for an intriguing obscure adventurer, who longed to be ranked with princes, or lord it over them by seizing the triple crown!

Such, indeed, has been the wretchedness that has flowed from hereditary honors, riches, and monarchy, that men of lively sensibility have almost uttered blasphemy in order to justify the dispensations of providence. Man has been held out as independent of his power who made him, or as a lawless planet darting from its orbit to steal the celestial fire of reason; and the vengeance of heaven, lurking in the subtle flame, sufficiently punished his temerity, by introducing evil into the world.

Impressed by this view of the misery and disorder which pervaded society, and fatigued with jostling against artificial fools, Rousseau became enamored of solitude, and, being at the same time an optimist, he labors with uncommon eloquence to prove that man was naturally a solitary animal. Misled by his respect for the goodness of God, who certainly—for what man of sense and feeling can doubt it! —gave life only to communicate happiness, he considers evil as positive, and the work of man; not aware that he was exalting one attribute at the expense of another, equally necessary to divine perfection.

Reared on a false **hypothesis**, his arguments in favor of a state of nature are plausible, but unsound. I say unsound; for to assert that a state of nature is preferable to civilization, in all its possible perfection, is, in other words, to arraign supreme wisdom; and the paradoxical exclamation, that God has made all things right, and that evil has been introduced by the creature, whom he formed, knowing what he formed, is as unphilosophical as impious.

When that wise Being who created us and placed us here saw the fair idea, he willed, by allowing it to be so, that the passions should unfold our reason, because he could see that present evil would produce future good. Could the helpless creature who he called from nothing break loose from his providence, and boldly learn to know good by practicing evil, without his permission? No. How could that energetic advocate for immortality argue so inconsistently? Had mankind remained for ever in the brutal state

**sophism** -  
a plausible but fallacious  
argument

**sycophant** -  
servile self-seeker who  
attempts to win favor by  
flattering influential people

**hypothesis** -  
a tentative explanation for an  
observation, phenomenon, or  
scientific problem that can be  
tested by further investigation



of nature, which even his magic pen cannot paint as a state in which a single **virtue** took root, it would have been clear, though not to the sensitive unreflecting wanderer, that man was born to run the circle of life and death, and adorn God's garden for some purpose which could not easily be reconciled with his attributes.

But if, to crown the whole, there were to be rational creatures produced, allowed to rise in excellence by the exercise of powers implanted for that purpose; if **benignity** itself thought fit to call into existence a creature above the brutes<sup>1</sup>, who could think and improve himself, why should that inestimable gift, for a gift it was, if man was so creative to have a capacity to rise above the state in which sensation produced brutal ease, be called, in direct terms, a curse? A curse it might be reckoned, if all our existence was bounded by our continuance in this world; for why should the gracious fountain of life give us passions, and the power of reflecting, only to embitter our days and inspire us with mistaken notions of dignity? Why should he lead us from love of ourselves to the sublime emotions which the discovery of his wisdom and goodness excites, if these feelings were not set in motion to improve our nature, of which they make a part<sup>2</sup>, and render us capable of enjoying a more godlike portion of happiness? Firmly persuaded that no evil exists in the world that God did not design to take place, I build my belief on the perfection of God.

Rousseau exerts himself to prove that all was right originally: a crowd of authors that all is now right: and I, that all will be right.

But, true to his first position, next to a state of nature, Rousseau celebrates barbarism, and, apostrophizing the shade of Fabricius, he forgets that, in conquering the world, the Romans never dreamed of establishing their own liberty on a firm basis, or of extending the reign of virtue. Eager to support his system, he stigmatizes, as vicious, every effort of genius; and, uttering the **apotheosis** of savage virtues, he **exalts** those to demigods, who were scarcely human—the brutal Spartans, who, in defiance of justice and gratitude, sacrificed, in cold blood, the slaves who had shewn (Editor's note: shown) themselves men to rescue their oppressors.

Disgusted with artificial manners and virtues, the citizen of Geneva, instead of properly sifting the subject, threw away the wheat with the **chaff**, without waiting to inquire whether the evils which his ardent soul turned from indignantly were the consequence of civilization or the vestiges of barbarism. He saw **vice** trampling on virtue, and the semblance of goodness taking place of the reality; he saw talents bent

**virtue** -  
admirable quality or attribute

**benignity** -  
the quality or condition of  
being kind and gentle

**apotheosis** -  
exaltation to divine rank or  
stature; deification

**exalt** -  
to raise in rank, character, or  
status; elevate

**chaff** -  
seed coverings and small pieces  
of stem or leaves that have  
been separated from the seeds

**vice** -  
moral weakness

1 Contrary to the opinion of the anatomists, who argue by analogy from the formation of the teeth, stomach, and intestines, Rousseau will not allow a man to be a carnivorous animal. And, carried away from nature by a love of system, he disputes whether man be a gregarious animal, though the long and helpless state of infancy seems to point him out as particularly impelled to pair.

2 What would you say to a mechanic whom you had desired to make a watch to point out the hour of the day, if, to show his ingenuity, he added wheels to make it a repeater, &c. that perplexed the simple mechanism; should he urge, to excuse himself—had you not touched a certain spring, you would have known nothing of the matter, and that he should have amused himself by making an experiment without doing you any harm: would you not retort fairly upon him, but insisting that if he had not added those needless wheels and springs, the accident could not have happened?



- mischief** -  
bad behaviour that causes trouble or damage, but no serious harm
- contemptible** -  
deserving of dislike; despicable
- eminence** -  
position of great distinction or superiority
- supinely** -  
indifferently; offering no resistance
- posterity** -  
future generations
- rapacious** -  
taking by force; plundering
- prowler** -  
someone who hangs around or sneaks about; usually with unlawful intentions
- ensanguined** -  
to cover or stain with or as if with blood
- pestilential** -  
of, relating to, or tending to produce a deadly disease. (epidemic)
- tare** -  
weeds grown for forage
- thistle** -  
any of numerous weedy plants having prickly leaves and variously colored flower heads
- stifled** -  
to interrupt or cut off (the voice, for example)
- flatter** -  
to compliment excessively and often insincerely, especially in order to win favour
- caprice** -  
impulsive change of mind
- subaltern** -  
lower in position or rank; secondary
- superficial** -  
someone who doesn't think about things that are serious or important
- gallantry** -  
nobility of spirit or action; courage; polite attention given by men to women
- drapery** -  
cloth or clothing gracefully arranged in loose folds

by power to sinister purposes, and never thought of tracing the gigantic **mischief** up to arbitrary power, up to the hereditary distinctions that clash with the mental superiority that naturally raises a man above his fellows. He did not perceive that regal power, in a few generations, introduces idiotism into the noble stem, and holds out baits to render thousands idle and vicious.

Nothing can set the regal character in a more **contemptible** point of view, than the various crimes that have elevated men to the supreme dignity. Vile intrigues, unnatural crimes, and every vice that degrades our nature, have been the steps to this distinguished **eminence**; yet millions of men have **supinely** allowed the nerveless limbs of the **posterity** of such **rapacious prowlers** to rest quietly on their **ensanguined** thrones<sup>3</sup>.

What but a **pestilential** vapor can hover over society when its chief director is only instructed in the invention of crimes, or the stupid routine of childish ceremonies? Will men never be wise? Will they never cease to expect corn from **tares**, and figs from **thistles**?

It is impossible for any man, when the most favorable circumstances concur, to acquire sufficient knowledge and strength of mind to discharge the duties of a king, entrusted with uncontrolled power; how then must they be violated when his very elevation is an insuperable bar to the attainment of either wisdom or virtue; when all the feelings of a man are **stifled by flattery**, and reflection shut out by pleasure! Surely it is madness to make the fate of thousands depend on the **caprice** of a weak fellow creature, whose very station sinks him necessarily below the meanest of his subjects! But one power should not be thrown down to exalt another—for all power intoxicates weak man; and its abuse proves, that the more equality there is established among men, the more virtue and happiness will reign in society. But this, and any similar maxims deduced from simple reason, raises an outcry—the church or the state is in danger if faith in the wisdom of antiquity is not implicit; and they who, roused by the sight of human calamity, dare to attack human authority, are reviled as despisers of God, and enemies of man. These are bitter calumnies, yet they reached one of the best of men<sup>4</sup>, whose ashes still preach peace, and whose memory demands a respectful pause, when subjects are discussed that lay so near his heart.

After attacking the sacred majesty of Kings, I shall scarcely excite surprise by adding my firm persuasion that every profession, in which great subordination of rank constitutes its power, is highly injurious to morality.

A standing army, for instance, is incompatible with freedom; because subordination and rigor are the very sinews of military discipline; and despotism is necessary to give vigor to enterprises that one will directs. A spirit inspired by romantic notions of honor, a kind of morality founded on the fashion of the age, can only be felt by a few officers, whilst the main body must be moved by command, like the waves of the sea; for the strong wind of authority pushes the crowd of **subalterns** forward, they scarcely know or care why, with headlong fury.

Besides, nothing can be so prejudicial to the morals of the inhabitants of country towns as the occasional residence of a set of idle, **superficial** young men, whose only occupation is **gallantry**, and whose polished manners render vice more dangerous, by concealing its deformity under gay ornamental **drapery**. An air of fashion, which is but a badge of slavery, and proves that the soul has not a strong individual character,

<sup>3</sup> Could there be a greater insult offered to the rights of man than the beds of justice in France, when an infant was made the organ of the detestable Dubois?

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Price.

awes simple country people into an imitation of the vices, when they cannot catch the slippery graces of politeness. Every corps is a chain of despots, who, submitting and tyrannizing without exercising their reason, become dead weights of vice and folly on the community. A man of rank or fortune, sure of rising by interest, has nothing to do but to pursue some extravagant **freak**; whilst the needy gentleman, who is to rise, as the phrase turns, by his merit, becomes a **servile parasite** or vile **pander**.

Sailors, the naval gentlemen, come under the same description, only their vices assume a different and a grosser cast. They are more positively indolent, when not discharging the ceremonials of their station; whilst the insignificant fluttering of soldiers may be termed active idleness. More confined to the society of men, the former acquire a fondness for humor and mischievous tricks; whilst the latter, mixing frequently with well-bred women, catch a sentimental cant. But mind is equally out of the question, whether they indulge the horse-laugh, or polite simper.

May I be allowed to extend the comparison to a profession where more mind is certainly to be found; for the clergy have superior opportunities of improvement, tho' **subordination** almost equally cramps their faculties? The blind **submission** imposed at college to forms of belief serves as a **novitiate** to the **curate**, who must **obsequiously** respect the opinion of his rector or patron, if he means to rise in his profession. Perhaps there cannot be a more forcible contrast than between the servile dependent **gait** of a poor curate and the courtly **mien** of a bishop. And the respect and contempt they inspire render the discharge of their separate functions equally useless.

It is of great importance to observe that the character of every man is, in some degree, formed by his profession. A man of sense may only have a cast of countenance that wears off as you trace his individuality, whilst the weak, common man has scarcely ever any character, but what belongs to the body; at least, all his opinions have been so steeped in the vat **consecrated** by authority, that the faint spirit which the grape of his own vine yields cannot be distinguished.

Society, therefore, as it becomes more enlightened, should be very careful not to establish bodies of men who must necessarily be made foolish or vicious by the very constitution of their profession.

In the infancy of society, when men were just emerging out of barbarism, chiefs and priests, touching the most powerful springs of savage conduct, hope and fear, must have had unbounded sway. An aristocracy, of course, is naturally the first form of government. But, clashing interests soon losing their equipoise, a monarchy and hierarchy break out of the confusion of ambitious struggles, and the foundation of both is secured by feudal tenures. This appears to be the origin of monarchical and priestly power, and the dawn of civilization. But such combustible materials cannot long be pent up; and, getting vent in foreign wars and intestine insurrections, the people acquire some power in the tumult, which obliges their rulers to gloss over their oppression with a shew (Editor's note: show) of right. Thus, as wars, agriculture, commerce, and literature, expand the mind, despots are compelled to make covert

**freak -**

thing or occurrence that is markedly unusual or irregular

**servile -**

abjectly submissive; slavish

**parasite -**

organism that grows, feeds, and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host

**pander -**

pimp; one who procures customers for prostitutes

**subordination -**

obedient submission

**submission -**

the act of surrendering to the power of another

**novitiate -**

time of initiation or instruction in rudiments

**curate -**

cleric, especially one who has charge of a parish

**obsequiously -**

in an flattering manner; compliantly; fawningly

**gait -**

particular way or manner of moving on foot

**mien -**

bearing or manner, especially as it reveals an inner state of mind

**consecrated -**

to declare or set apart as sacred

corruption hold fast the power which was formerly snatched by open force<sup>5</sup>. And this baneful, lurking **gangrene** is most quickly spread by luxury and superstition, the sure dregs of ambition. The indolent puppet of a court first becomes a luxurious monster, or **fastidious** sensualist, and then makes the **contagion** which his unnatural state spreads, the instrument of tyranny.

It is the pestiferous purple which renders the progress of civilization a curse, and warps the understanding, till men of sensibility doubt whether the expansion of intellect produces a greater portion of happiness or misery. But the nature of the poison points out the antidote; and had Rousseau mounted one step higher in his investigation, or could his eye have pierced through the foggy atmosphere, which he almost disdained to breathe, his active mind would have darted forward to contemplate the perfection of man in the establishment of true civilization, instead of taking his ferocious flight back to the night of sensual ignorance.

### OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF DEGRADATION TO WHICH WOMAN IS REDUCED BY VARIOUS CAUSES

That woman is naturally weak, or degraded by a concurrence of circumstances, is, I think, clear. But this position I shall simply contrast with a conclusion, which I have frequently heard fall from sensible men in favor of an aristocracy: that the mass of mankind cannot be any thing, or the obsequious slaves, who patiently allow themselves to be penned up, would feel their own consequence, and spurn their chains. Men, they further observe, submit every where to oppression, when they have only to lift up their heads to throw off the **yoke**; yet, instead of asserting their birthright, they quietly lick the dust, and say, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Women, I argue from analogy, are degraded by the same **propensity** to enjoy the present moment; and, at last, despise the freedom which they have not sufficient virtue to struggle to attain. But I must be more explicit.

With respect to the culture of the heart, it is unanimously allowed that sex is out of the question; but the line of subordination in the mental powers is never to be passed over<sup>6</sup>. Only 'absolute in loveliness,' the portion of rationality granted to woman, is indeed very **scanty**; for, denying her genius and judgment, it is scarcely possible to divine what remains to characterize intellect.

The stamina of immortality, if I may be allowed the phrase, is the perfectibility of human reason: for, was man created perfect, or did a flood of knowledge break in upon him, when he arrived at maturity, that precluded error, I should doubt whether his existence would be continued after the dissolution of the body. But, in the present state of things, every difficulty in morals that escapes from human discussion, and equally baffles the investigation of profound thinking, and the lightning glance of genius, is an argument on which I build my belief of the immortality of the soul. Reason is, consequentially, the simple power of

**gangrene** -  
death and decay of body tissue,  
often occurring in a limb,  
caused by insufficient blood  
supply and usually following  
injury or disease

**fastidious** -  
possessing or displaying  
careful, meticulous attention  
to detail

**contagion** -  
feeling or attitude that spreads  
quickly

**yoke** -  
oppressive force or burden

**propensity** -  
innate inclination; a tendency

**scanty** -  
barely sufficient or adequate

5 Men of abilities scatter seeds that grow up and have a great influence on the forming of opinions; and when once the public opinion preponderates, through the exertion of reason, the overthrow of arbitrary power is not very distant.

6 Into what inconsistencies do men fall when they argue without the compass of principles. Women, weak women, are compared with angels; yet, a superior order of beings should be supposed to possess more intellect than man; or, in what does their superiority consist? In the same style, to drop the sneer, they are allowed to possess more goodness of heart, piety, and benevolence. I doubt the fact, though it be courteously brought forward, unless ignorance be allowed to be the mother of devotion; for I am firmly persuaded that, on an average, the proportion between virtue and knowledge, is more upon a par than is commonly granted.

improvement; or, more properly speaking, of discerning truth. Every individual is in this respect a world in itself. More or less may be **conspicuous** in one being than another; but the nature of reason must be the same in all, if it be an **emanation** of divinity, the tie that connects the creature with the Creator; for, can that soul be stamped with the heavenly image, that is not perfected by the exercise of its own reason?<sup>7</sup> Yet outwardly ornamented with elaborate care, and so adorned to delight man, 'that with honor he may love,'<sup>8</sup> the soul of woman is not allowed to have this distinction, and man, ever placed between her and reason, she is always represented as only created to see through a gross medium, and to take things on trust. But, dismissing these fanciful theories, and considering woman as a whole, let it be what it will, instead of a part of man, the inquiry is whether she has reason or not. If she has, which, for a moment, I will take for granted, she was not created merely to be the solace of man, and the sexual should not destroy the human character.

Into this error men have, probably, been led by viewing education in a false light; not considering it as the first step to form a being advancing gradually towards perfection;<sup>9</sup> but only as a preparation for life. On this sensual error, for I must call it so, has the false system of female manners been reared, which robs the whole sex of its dignity, and classes the brown and fair with the smiling flowers that only adorn the land. This has ever been the language of men, and the fear of departing from a supposed sexual character, has made even women of superior sense adopt the same sentiments.<sup>10</sup>

Thus understanding, strictly speaking, has been denied to woman; and instinct, **sublimated** into **wit** and **cunning**, for the purposes of life, has been substituted in its stead.

7 'The brutes,' says Lord Monboddo, 'remain in the state in which nature has placed them, except in so far as their natural instinct is improved by the culture we bestow upon them.'

8 Vide Milton.

9 This word is not strictly just, but I cannot find a better.

10 'Pleasure's the portion of th' inferior kind;  
But glory, virtue, Heaven for man design'd.'  
After writing these lines, how could Mrs. Barbauld write the following ignoble comparison?  
'To a Lady, with some painted flowers.'  
'Flowers to the fair: to you these flowers I bring,  
And strive to greet you with an earlier spring.  
Flowers, SWEET, and gay, and DELICATE LIKE YOU;  
Emblems of innocence, and beauty too.  
With flowers the Graces bind their yellow hair,  
And flowery wreaths consenting lovers wear.  
Flowers, the sole luxury which nature knew,  
In Eden's pure and guiltless garden grew.  
To loftier forms are rougher tasks assign'd;  
The sheltering oak resists the stormy wind,  
The tougher yew repels invading foes,  
And the tall pine for future navies grows;  
But this soft family, to cares unknown,  
Were born for pleasure and delight ALONE.  
Gay without toil, and lovely without art,  
They spring to CHEER the sense, and GLAD the heart,  
Nor blush, my fair, to own you copy these;  
Your BEST, your SWEETEST empire is—to PLEASE.'  
So the men tell us; but virtue must be acquired by rough toils, and useful struggles with worldly cares.

**conspicuous** -  
easy to notice; obvious

**emanation** -  
something that is emitted or radiated

**sublimated -**

to modify the natural expression of (a primitive, instinctual impulse) in a socially-acceptable manner

**wit -**

the natural ability to perceive and understand; intelligence

**cunning -**

marked by or given to artful subtlety and deceptiveness

**assertion -**

something declared or stated positively, often with no support or attempt at proof

**annals -**

chronological records of the events of successive years

**despot -**

a ruler with absolute power

**folly -**

lack of good sense, understanding, or foresight

**aphorism -**

tersely phrased statement of a truth or opinion; an adage

**acquirement -**

attainment, such as a skill or social accomplishment

**adversity -**

state of hardship or affliction; misfortune

**idleness -**

the condition or quality of being inactive

**defect -**

the lack of something necessary or desirable for completion or perfection; a deficiency

**sovereignty -**

supremacy of authority

**exalted -**

to raise in rank, character, or status; elevate

**homage -**

ceremonial acknowledgment by a vassal of allegiance to his lord under feudal law

**scrupulous -**

conscientious and exact; painstaking

**frolic -**

gaiety; merriment

The power of generalizing ideas, of drawing comprehensive conclusions from individual observations, is the only acquirement, for an immortal being, that really deserves the name of knowledge. Merely to observe, without endeavoring to account for any thing, may (in a very incomplete manner) serve as the common sense of life; but where is the store laid up that is to clothe the soul when it leaves the body?

This power has not only been denied to women; but writers have insisted that it is inconsistent, with a few exceptions, with their sexual character. Let men prove this, and I shall grant that woman only exists for man. I must, however, previously remark, that the power of generalizing ideas, to any great extent, is not very common amongst men or women. But this exercise is the true cultivation of the understanding; and everything conspires to render the cultivation of the understanding more difficult in the female than the male world.

I am naturally led by this **assertion** to the main subject of the present chapter, and shall now attempt to point out some of the causes that degrade the sex, and prevent women from generalizing their observations.

I shall not go back to the remote **annals** of antiquity to trace the history of woman; it is sufficient to allow that she has always been either a slave, or a **despot**, and to remark, that each of these situations equally retards the progress of reason. The grand source of female **folly** and vice has ever appeared to me to arise from narrowness of mind; and the very constitution of civil governments has put almost insuperable obstacles in the way to prevent the cultivation of the female understanding:—yet virtue can be built on no other foundation! The same obstacles are thrown in the way of the rich, and the same consequences ensue.

Necessity has been proverbially termed the mother of invention—the **aphorism** may be extended to virtue. It is an **acquirement**, and an acquirement to which pleasure must be sacrificed—and who sacrifices pleasure when it is within the grasp, whose mind has not been opened and strengthened by **adversity**, or the pursuit of knowledge goaded on by necessity? Happy is it when people have the cares of life to struggle with; for these struggles prevent their becoming a prey to enervating vices, merely from **idleness**! But, if from their birth men and women are placed in a torrid zone, with the meridian sun of pleasure darting directly upon them, how can they sufficiently brace their minds to discharge the duties of life, or even to relish the affections that carry them out of themselves?

Pleasure is the business of woman's life, according to the present modification of society, and while it continues to be so, little can be expected from such weak beings. Inheriting, in a lineal descent from the first fair **defect** in nature, the **sovereignty** of beauty, they have, to maintain their power, resigned the natural rights, which the exercise of reason might have procured them, and chosen rather to be short-lived queens than labor to obtain the sober pleasures that arise from equality. **Exalted** by their inferiority (this sounds like a contradiction) they constantly demand **homage** as women, though experience should teach them that the men who pride themselves upon paying this arbitrary insolent respect to the sex, with the most **scrupulous** exactness, are most inclined to tyrannize over, and despise, the very weakness they cherish. Often do they repeat Mr. Hume's sentiments; when, comparing the French and Athenian character, he alludes to women: 'But what is more singular in this whimsical nation, say I to the Athenians, is, that a **frolic** of yours during the Saturnalia, when the slaves are served by their masters, is, seriously, continued by them through the whole year, and through the whole course of their lives; accompanied too with some circumstances, which still further augment the absurdity and ridicule. Your sport only elevates for a

few days those whom fortune has thrown down, and whom she too, in sport, may really elevate for ever above you. But this nation gravely exalts those, whom nature has subjected to them, and whose inferiority and infirmities are absolutely incurable. The women, though without virtue, are their masters and sovereigns.'

Ah! Why do women, I write with affectionate **solicitude**, condescend to receive a degree of attention and respect from strangers, different from that reciprocation of civility which the dictates of humanity and the politeness of civilization authorize between man and man? And, why do they not discover, when 'in the noon of beauty's power,' that they are treated like queens only to be **deluded** by hollow respect, till they are led to resign, or not assume, their natural **prerogatives**? Confined then in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither **toil** nor spin; but health, liberty, and virtue, are given in exchange. But, where, amongst mankind has been found sufficient strength of mind to enable a being to resign these adventitious prerogatives; one who, rising with the calm dignity of reason above opinion, dared to be proud of the privileges inherent in man? And it is vain to expect it whilst hereditary power chokes the affections and nips reason in the bud.

The passions of men have thus placed women on thrones, and, till mankind become more reasonable, it is to be feared that women will avail themselves of the power which they attain with the least exertion, and which is the most indisputable. They will smile—yes, they will smile, though told that—

*'In beauty's empire is no mean,  
And woman, either slave or queen,  
Is quickly scorn'd when not ador'd.'  
But the adoration comes first, and the scorn is not anticipated.*

Louis the XIV, in particular, spread factitious manners, and caught, in a specious way, the whole nation in his toils; for, establishing an artful chain of despotism, he made it the interest of the people at large, individually to respect his station and support his power. And women, whom he flattered by a **puerile** attention to the whole sex, obtained in his reign that prince-like distinction so fatal to reason and virtue.

A king is always a king—and a woman always a woman:<sup>11</sup> his authority and her sex, ever stand between them and rational converse. With a lover, I grant, she should be so, and her sensibility will naturally lead her to endeavor to excite emotion, not to gratify her vanity, but her heart. This I do not allow to be **coquetry**, it is the artless impulse of nature. I only exclaim against the sexual desire of conquest when the heart is out of the question.

**solicitude -**

the state of being considerate;  
care or concern, as for the  
well-being of another

**delude -**

to deceive the mind or  
judgment of

**prerogative -**

an exclusive right or privilege  
held by a person or group

**toil -**

to labour continuously; work  
strenuously

**puerile -**

childish; immature

11 And a wit, always a wit, might be added; for the vain fooleries of wits and beauties to obtain attention, and make conquests, are much upon a par.



This desire is not confined to women; 'I have endeavored,' says Lord Chesterfield, 'to gain the hearts of twenty women, whose persons I would not have given a fig for.' The **libertine**, who, in a gust of passion, takes advantage of unsuspecting tenderness, is a saint when compared with this cold-hearted rascal; for I like to use significant words. Yet only taught to please, women are always on the watch to please, and with true heroic ardor endeavor to gain hearts merely to resign, or **spurn** them, when the victory is decided, and conspicuous.

I must descend to the minutia of the subject.

I lament that women are systematically degraded by receiving the trivial attentions, which men think it manly to pay to the sex, when, in fact, they are insultingly supporting their own superiority. It is not condescension to bow to an inferior. So ludicrous, in fact, do these ceremonies appear to me, that I scarcely am able to govern my muscles, when I see a man start with eager, and serious solicitude to lift a handkerchief, or shut a door, when the lady could have done it herself, had she only moved a pace or two.

A wild wish has just flown from my heart to my head. I will not stifle it though it may excite a horse-laugh. I do earnestly wish to see the distinction of sex **confounded** in society, unless where love animates the behavior. For this distinction is, I am firmly persuaded, the foundation of the weakness of character ascribed to woman; is the cause why the understanding is neglected, whilst accomplishments are acquired with **sedulous** care: and the same cause accounts for their preferring the graceful before the heroic virtues.

Mankind, including every description, wish to be loved and respected for something; and the common herd will always take the nearest road to the completion of their wishes. The respect paid to wealth and beauty is the most certain, and unequivocal; and, of course, will always attract the vulgar eye of common minds. Abilities and virtues are absolutely necessary to raise men from the middle rank of life into notice; and the natural consequence is notorious; the middle rank contains most virtue and abilities. Men have thus, in one station, at least, an opportunity of **exerting** themselves with dignity, and of rising by the exertions which really improve a rational creature; but the whole female sex are, till their character is formed, in the same condition as the rich: for they are born, I now speak of a state of civilization, with certain sexual privileges, and whilst they are gratuitously granted them, few will ever think of works of **supererogation**, to obtain the esteem of a small number of superior people.

When do we hear of women who, starting out of obscurity, boldly claim respect on account of their great abilities or daring virtues? Where are they to be found? 'To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, **complacency**, and **approbation**, are all the advantages which they seek.' True! My male readers will probably exclaim; but let them, before they draw any conclusion, recollect that this was not written originally as descriptive of women, but of the rich. In Dr. Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, I have found a general character of people of rank and fortune that, in my opinion, might with the greatest **propriety** be applied to the female sex. I refer the sagacious reader to the whole comparison; but must be allowed to quote a passage to enforce an argument that I mean to insist on, as the one most conclusive against a sexual character. For if, excepting warriors, no great men, of any denomination, have ever appeared amongst the nobility, may it not be fairly inferred that their local situation swallowed up the man, and produced a character similar to that of women, who are localized, if I may be allowed the word, by the rank they are placed in, by courtesy? Women, commonly called Ladies, are not to be **contradicted** in company, are not allowed to exert any manual strength; and from them the negative

**coquetry -**

attempts to attract admiration, notice, or love, for the mere gratification of vanity; trifling in love

**libertine -**

one who acts without moral restraint; a dissolute person

**spurn -**

to reject disdainfully or contemptuously; scorn

**confound -**

confused; befuddled

**sedulous -**

persevering and constant in effort or application; assiduous

**exert -**

to put to use or effect; put forth

**supererogation -**

to do more than is required, ordered, or expected

**complacency -**

a feeling of contentment or self-satisfaction, especially when coupled with an unawareness of danger, trouble, or controversy

**approbation -**

expression of warm approval; praise

**propriety -**

the quality of being proper; appropriateness



virtues only are expected, when any virtues are expected, patience, **docility**, good-humor, and flexibility; virtues incompatible with any vigorous exertion of intellect. Besides, by living more with each other, and being seldom absolutely alone, they are more under the influence of sentiments than passions. Solitude and reflection are necessary to give to wishes the force of passions, and to enable the imagination to enlarge the object, and make it the most desirable. The same may be said of the rich; they do not sufficiently deal in general ideas, collected by impassioned thinking, or calm investigation, to acquire that strength of character on which great resolves are built. But hear what an acute observer says of the great.

‘Do the great seem insensible of the easy price at which they may acquire the public (Editor’s note: public) admiration; or do they seem to imagine that to them, as to other men, it must be the purchase either of sweat or of blood? By what important accomplishments is the young nobleman instructed to support the dignity of his rank, and to render himself worthy of that superiority over his fellow-citizens, to which the virtue of his ancestors had raised them? Is it by knowledge, by industry, by patience, by self-denial, or by virtue of any kind? As all his words, as all his motions are attended to, he learns an habitual regard to every circumstance of ordinary behavior, and studies to perform all those small duties with the most exact propriety. As he is conscious how much he is observed, and how much mankind are disposed to favor all his **inclinations**, he acts, upon the most indifferent occasions with that freedom and elevation which the thought of this naturally inspires. His air, his manner, his **deportment**, all mark that elegant and graceful sense of his own superiority, which those who are born to inferior station can hardly ever arrive at. These are the arts by which he proposes to make mankind more easily submit to his authority, and to govern their inclinations according to his own pleasure – and in this he is seldom disappointed. These arts, supported by rank and pre-eminence, are, upon ordinary occasions, sufficient to govern the world. Louis XIV during the greater part of his reign was regarded, not only in France, but over all Europe, as the most perfect model of a great prince. But what were the talents and virtues by which he acquired this great reputation? Was it by the scrupulous and inflexible justice of all his undertakings, by the immense dangers and difficulties with which they were attended, or by the unwearied and unrelenting application with which he pursued them? Was it by his extensive knowledge, by his exquisite judgment, or by his heroic valor? It was by none of these qualities. But he was, first of all, the most powerful prince in Europe, and consequently held the highest rank among kings; and then, says his historian, “he surpassed all his courtiers in the gracefulness of his shape, and the majestic beauty of his features. The sound of his voice, noble and affecting, gained those hearts which his presence intimidated. He had a step and a deportment which could suit only him and his rank, and which would have been ridiculous in any other person. The embarrassment which he occasioned to those who spoke to him, flattered that secret satisfaction with which he felt his own superiority.” These **frivolous** accomplishments, supported by his rank, and, no doubt

**contradict** -

to assert or express the opposite of (a statement)

**docility** -

ready and willing to be taught; teachable

**inclination** -

liking, tendency, or preference

**deportment** -

manner of personal conduct; behaviour

too, by a degree of other talents and virtues, which seems, however, not to have been much above mediocrity, established this prince in the esteem of his own age, and have drawn, even from posterity, a good deal of respect for his memory. Compared with these, in his own times, and in his own presence, no other virtue, it seems, appeared to have any merit. Knowledge, industry, valor, and beneficence, trembled, were abashed, and lost all dignity before them.'

Woman also thus 'in herself complete,' by possessing all these frivolous accomplishments, so changes the nature of things,

*That what she wills to do or say  
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;  
All higher knowledge in her presence falls  
Degraded. Wisdom in discourse with her  
Loses discountenanc'd, and, like Folly, shows;  
Authority and Reason on her wait.' –  
And all this is built on her loveliness!*

In the middle rank of life, to continue the comparison, men, in their youth, are prepared for professions, and marriage is not considered as the grand feature in their lives; whilst women, on the contrary, have no other scheme to sharpen their faculties. It is not business, extensive plans, or any of the excursive flights of ambition, that engross their attention; no, their thoughts are not employed in rearing such noble structures. To rise in the world, and have the liberty of running from pleasure to pleasure, they must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their persons often legally prostituted. A man, when he enters any profession, has his eye steadily fixed on some future advantage (and the mind gains great strength by having all its efforts directed to one point) and, full of his business, pleasure is considered as mere relaxation; whilst women seek for pleasure as the main purpose of existence. In fact, from the education, which they receive from society, the love of pleasure may be said to govern them all; but does this prove that there is a sex in souls? It would be just as rational to declare that the courtiers in France, when a destructive system of despotism had formed their character, were not men, because liberty, virtue, and humanity, were sacrificed to pleasure and **vanity** – fatal passions, which have ever domineered over the whole race!

The same love of pleasure, fostered by the whole tendency of their education, gives a trifling turn to the conduct of women in most circumstances: for instance, they are ever anxious about secondary things; and on the watch for adventures, instead of being occupied by duties.

A man, when he undertakes a journey, has, in general, the end in view; a woman thinks more of the incidental occurrences, the strange things that may possibly occur on the road; the impression that she may make on her fellow-travelers; and, above all, she is anxiously intent on the care of the finery that she carries with her, which is more than ever a part of herself, when going to figure on a new scene; when, to use an apt French turn of expression, she is going to produce a sensation. Can dignity of mind exist with such **trivial** cares?

In short, women, in general, as well as the rich of both sexes, have acquired all the follies and vices of civilization, and missed the useful fruit. It is not necessary for me always to premise that I speak of the condition of the whole sex, leaving exceptions out of the question. Their senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility, and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling. They are, therefore, in a much

**frivolous** -  
unworthy of serious attention;  
trivial

**vanity** -  
the quality or condition of  
being ineffective

**trivial** -  
of little significance or value

worse condition than they would be in were they in a state nearer to nature. Ever restless and anxious, their over-exercised sensibility not only renders them uncomfortable themselves, but troublesome, to use a soft phrase, to others. All their thoughts turn on things calculated to excite emotion; and feeling, when they should reason, their conduct is unstable, and their opinions are **wavering**—not the wavering produced by **deliberation** or progressive views, but by **contradictory** emotions. By fits and starts they are warm in many pursuits; yet this warmth, never concentrated into perseverance, soon exhausts itself; exhaled by its own heat, or meeting with some other fleeting passion, to which reason has never given any specific gravity, neutrality ensues. Miserable, indeed, must be that being whose cultivation of mind has only tended to **inflame** its passions! A distinction should be made between inflaming and strengthening them. The passions thus **pampered**, whilst the judgment is left unformed, what can be expected to ensue? Undoubtedly, a mixture of madness and folly!

This observation should not be confined to the fair sex; however, at present, I only mean to apply it to them.

Novels, music, poetry, and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed during the time they are acquiring accomplishments, the only improvement they are excited by their station in society to acquire. This overstretched sensibility naturally relaxes the other powers of the mind, and prevents intellect from attaining that sovereignty which it ought to attain to render a rational creature useful to others, and content with its own station: for the exercise of the understanding, as life advances, is the only method pointed out by nature to calm the passions.

**Satiety** has a very different effect, and I have often been forcibly struck by an **emphatic** description of damnation: when the spirit is represented as continually **hovering** with **abortive** eagerness round the **defiled** body, unable to enjoy any thing without the organs of sense. Yet, to their senses are women made slaves, because it is by their sensibility that they obtain present power.

And will moralists pretend to assert that this is the condition in which one half of the human race should be encouraged to remain with listless inactivity and stupid acquiescence? Kind instructors! What were we created for? To remain, it may be said, innocent; they mean in a state of childhood. We might as well never have been born, unless it were necessary that we should be created to enable man to acquire the noble privilege of reason, the power of discerning good from evil, whilst we lie down in the dust from whence we were taken, never to rise again. It would be an endless task to trace the variety of meanness, cares, and sorrows into which women are plunged by the prevailing opinion, that they were created rather to feel than reason, and that all the power they obtain must be obtained by their charms and weakness:

'Fine by defect, and amiably weak!'

And, made by this amiable weakness entirely dependent, excepting what they

**wavering** -  
to be unsettled in opinion

**deliberation** -  
discussion of all sides of a question

**contradictory** -  
unable to be both true at the same time

**inflame** -  
to arouse to passionate feeling or action

**pamper** -  
to treat with excessive indulgence

**satiety** -  
the condition of being full or gratified beyond the point of satisfaction

**emphatic** -  
forceful and positive

**hovering** -  
to remain floating, suspended, or fluttering in the air

**abortive** -  
failing to accomplish an intended objective; fruitless

**defile** -  
to make filthy or dirty; pollute

gain by **illicit sway** on man, not only for protection, but advice, is it surprising that, neglecting the duties that reason alone points out, and shrinking from trials calculated to strengthen their minds, they only exert themselves to give their defects a graceful covering, which may serve to heighten their charms in the eye of the voluptuary, though it sink them below the scale of moral excellence?

Fragile in every sense of the word, they are obliged to look up to man for every comfort. In the most trifling danger they cling to their support, with parasitical **tenacity**, piteously demanding **succour**; and their natural protector extends his arm, or lifts up his voice, to guard the lovely trembler—from what? Perhaps the frown of an old cow, or the jump of a mouse; a rat, would be a serious danger. In the name of reason, and even common sense, what can save such beings from contempt; even though they be soft and fair?

These fears, when not affected, may be very pretty; but they shew (Editors note: show) a degree of **imbecility** that degrades a rational creature in a way women are not aware of—for love and esteem are very distinct things.

I am fully persuaded that we should hear of none of these infantile airs, if girls were allowed to take sufficient exercise, and not confined in close rooms till their muscles are relaxed, and their powers of digestion destroyed. To carry the remark still further, if fear in girls, instead of being cherished, perhaps, created, was treated in the same manner as cowardice in boys, we should quickly see women with more dignified aspects. It is true, they could not then with equal propriety be termed the sweet flowers that smile in the walk of man; but they would be more respectable members of society, and discharge the important duties of life by the light of their own reason. ‘Educate women like men,’ says Rousseau, ‘and the more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us.’ This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves.

In the same strain have I heard men argue against instructing the poor; for many are the forms that aristocracy assumes. ‘Teach them to read and write,’ say they, ‘and you take them out of the station assigned them by nature.’ An eloquent Frenchman has answered them. I will borrow his sentiments. But they know not, when they make man a brute, that they may expect every instant to see him transformed into a ferocious beast. Without knowledge there can be no morality!

Ignorance is a frail base for virtue! Yet, that it is the condition for which woman was organized, has been insisted upon by the writers who have most **vehemently** argued in favor of the superiority of man; a superiority not in degree, but offence; though, to soften the argument, they have labored to prove, with **chivalrous** generosity, that the sexes ought not to be compared; man was made to reason, woman to feel; and that together, flesh and spirit, they make the most perfect whole, by blending happily reason and sensibility into one character.

And what is sensibility? ‘Quickness of sensation; quickness of perception; delicacy.’ Thus is it defined by Dr. Johnson; and the definition gives me no other idea than of the most exquisitely polished instinct. I discern not a trace of the image of God in either sensation or matter. Refined seventy times seven, they are still material; intellect dwells not there; nor will fire ever make lead gold!

I come round to my old argument; if woman be allowed to have an immortal soul, she must have, as the employment of life, an understanding to improve. And when, to render the present state more complete, though everything proves it to be but a fraction of a mighty sum, she is incited by present **gratification** to forget her grand destination, Nature is counteracted, or she was born only to **procreate** and die.

**illicit -**

not sanctioned by custom or law; unlawful

**sway -**

to swing back and forth or to and fro

**tenacity -**

the state or quality of being stubborn

**succour -**

to aid; assist; relieve; deliver; help; comfort

**imbecility -**

great stupidity or foolishness

**vehemently -**

characterised by forcefulness of expression or intensity of emotion or conviction; fervid

**chivalrous -**

having the qualities of gallantry and honour attributed to an ideal knight

Or, granting brutes, of every description, a soul, though not a reasonable one, the exercise of instinct and sensibility may be the step, which they are to take, in this life, towards the attainment of reason in the next; so that through all eternity they will lag behind man, who, why we cannot tell, had the power given him of attaining reason in his first mode of existence.

When I treat of the peculiar duties of women, as I should treat of the peculiar duties of a citizen or father, it will be found that I do not mean to **insinuate** that they should be taken out of their families, speaking of the majority. 'He that hath wife and children,' says Lord Bacon, 'hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from unmarried or childless men.' I say the same of women. But, the welfare of society is not built on extraordinary exertions; and were it more reasonably organized, there would be still less need of great abilities, or heroic virtues.

In the regulation of a family, in the education of children, understanding, in an unsophisticated sense, is particularly required: strength both of body and mind; yet the men who, by their writings, have most earnestly labored to domesticate women, have endeavored, by arguments dictated by a gross appetite, that satiety had rendered fastidious, to weaken their bodies and cramp their minds. But, if even by these sinister methods they really persuaded women, by working on their feelings, to stay at home, and fulfill the duties of a mother and mistress of a family, I should cautiously oppose opinions that led women to right conduct, by prevailing on them to make the discharge of a duty the business of life, though reason were insulted. Yet, and I appeal to experience, if by neglecting the understanding they are as much, nay, more detached from these domestic duties, than they could be by the most serious intellectual pursuit, though it may be observed that the mass of mankind will never vigorously pursue an intellectual object<sup>12</sup>, I may be allowed to **infer** that reason is absolutely necessary to enable a woman to perform any duty properly, and I must again repeat that sensibility is not reason.

The comparison with the rich still occurs to me, for, when men neglect the duties of humanity, women will do the same; a common stream hurries them both along with thoughtless **celerity**. Riches and honors prevent a man from enlarging his understanding, and **enervate** all his powers by reversing the order of nature, which has ever made true pleasure the reward of labor. Pleasure—enervating pleasure is, likewise, within women's reach without earning it. But, till hereditary possessions are spread abroad, how can we expect men to be proud of virtue? And, till they are, women will govern them by the most direct means, neglecting their dull domestic duties to catch the pleasure that is on the wing of time.

**gratification** -

state of being satisfied

**procreate** -

to produce (offspring)

**insinuate** -

to introduce or otherwise convey (a thought, for example) gradually and insidiously

**infer** -

deduce; conclude by reasoning

**celerity** -

swiftness of action or motion; speed

**enervate** -

to weaken or destroy the strength or vitality of

<sup>12</sup> The mass of mankind are rather the slaves of their appetites than of their passions.

‘The power of the woman,’ says some author, ‘is her sensibility;’ and men, not aware of the consequence, do all they can to make this power swallow up every other. Those who constantly employ their sensibility will have most; for example; poets, painters, and composers.<sup>13</sup> Yet, when the sensibility is thus increased at the expense of reason, and even the imagination, why do philosophical men complain of their fickleness? The sexual attention of man particularly acts on female sensibility, and this sympathy has been exercised from their youth up. A husband cannot long pay those attentions with the passion necessary to excite lively emotions, and the heart, accustomed to lively emotions, turns to a new lover, or pines in secret, the prey of virtue or prudence. I mean when the heart has really been rendered susceptible, and the taste formed; for I am apt to conclude, from what I have seen in fashionable life, that vanity is oftener fostered than sensibility by the mode of education, and the intercourse between the sexes, which I have **reprobated**; and that coquetry more frequently proceeds from vanity than from that inconstancy which overstrained sensibility naturally produces.

Another argument that has had a great weight with me, must, I think, have some force with every considerate, benevolent heart. Girls who have been thus weakly educated are often cruelly left by their parents without any provision; and, of course, are dependent on, not only the reason, but the bounty of their brothers. These brothers are, to view the fairest side of the question, a good sort of men, and give as a favor, what children of the same parents had an equal right to. In this **equivocal** humiliating situation, a docile female may remain some time with a tolerable degree of comfort. But, when the brother marries—a probable circumstance, from being considered as the mistress of the family, she is viewed with **averted** looks as an intruder, an unnecessary burden on the **benevolence** of the master of the house, and his new partner.

Who can recount the misery which many unfortunate beings whose minds and bodies are equally weak suffer in such situations—unable to work, and ashamed to beg? The wife, a cold-hearted, narrow-minded, woman, and this is not an unfair supposition; for the present mode of education does not tend to enlarge the heart any more than the understanding, is jealous of the little kindness which her husband shews (ed: shows) to his relations; and her sensibility not rising to humanity, she is displeased at seeing the property of her children lavished on an helpless sister.

These are matters of fact which have come under my eye again and again. The consequence is obvious. The wife has recourse to cunning to undermine the habitual affection which she is afraid openly to oppose; and neither tears nor caresses are spared till the spy is worked out of her home, and thrown on the world, unprepared for its difficulties; or sent, as a great effort of generosity, or from some regard to propriety, with a small **stipend**, and an uncultivated mind, into joyless solitude.

These two women may be much upon a **par** with respect to reason and humanity; and changing situations might have acted just the same selfish part; but had they been differently educated, the case would also have been very different. The wife would not have had that sensibility, of which self is the centre, and reason might have taught her not to expect, and not even to be flattered, by the affection of her husband, if it led

**reprobated** -  
to disapprove of; condemn

**equivocal** -  
open to two or more  
interpretations and often  
intended to mislead; ambiguous

**avert** -  
to turn away

**benevolence** -  
an inclination to perform kind,  
charitable acts

**stipend** -  
fixed and regular payment,  
such as a salary for services  
rendered or an allowance

**par** -  
either or both of the upright  
curved lines

<sup>13</sup> Men of these descriptions pour it into their compositions, to amalgamate the gross materials; and, molding them with passion, give to the inert body a soul; but, in woman's imagination, love alone concentrates these ethereal beams.



him to violate prior duties. She would wish not to love him merely because he loved her, but on account of his virtues; and the sister might have been able to struggle for herself instead of eating the bitter bread of dependence.

I am, indeed, persuaded that the heart, as well as the understanding, is opened by cultivation; and by, which may not appear so clear, strengthening the organs; I am not now talking of momentary flashes of sensibility, but of affections. And, perhaps, in the education of both sexes, the most difficult task is so to adjust instruction as not to narrow the understanding, whilst the heart is warmed by the generous juices of spring, just raised by the electric fermentation of the season; nor to dry up the feelings by employing the mind in investigations remote from life.

With respect to women, when they receive a careful education, they are either made fine ladies, **brimful** of sensibility, and teeming with capricious fancies; or mere notable women. The latter are often friendly, honest creatures, and have a shrewd kind of good sense joined with worldly **prudence**, that often render them more useful members of society than the fine sentimental lady, though they possess neither greatness of mind nor taste. The intellectual world is shut against them; take them out of their family or neighborhood, and they stand still; the mind finding no employment, for literature affords a fund of amusement which they have never sought to **relish**, but frequently to **despise**. The sentiments and taste of more cultivated minds appear ridiculous, even in those whom chance and family connections have led them to love; but in mere acquaintance they think it all affectation.

A man of sense can only love such a woman on account of her sex, and respect her, because she is a trusty servant. He lets her, to preserve his own peace, scold the servants, and go to church in clothes made of the very best materials. A man of her own size of understanding would, probably, not agree so well with her; for he might wish to encroach on her prerogative, and manage some domestic concerns himself. Yet women, whose minds are not enlarged by cultivation, or the natural selfishness of sensibility expanded by reflection, are very unfit to manage a family; for, by an undue stretch of power, they are always tyrannizing to support a superiority that only rests on the arbitrary distinction of fortune. The evil is sometimes more serious, and domestics are deprived of innocent indulgences, and made to work beyond their strength, in order to enable the notable woman to keep a better table, and outshine her neighbors in finery and parade. If she attends to her children, it is, in general, to dress them in a costly manner—and, whether this attention arises from vanity or fondness, it is equally **pernicious**.

Besides, how many women of this description pass their days; or, at least their evenings, discontentedly? Their husbands acknowledge that they are good managers and **chaste** wives; but leave home to seek for more agreeable, may I be allowed to use a significant French word, **piquant** society; and the patient **drudge**, who fulfils her task, like a blind horse in a mill, is **defrauded** of her just reward; for the wages due to her are the caresses of her husband; and women who have so few resources in themselves, do not very patiently bear this privation of a natural right.

- brimful** -  
full to overflowing
- prudence** -  
discretion in practical affairs;  
careful management
- relish** -  
strong appreciation or liking
- despise** -  
to regard with contempt or  
scorn
- pernicious** -  
tending to cause death or  
serious injury; deadly
- chaste** -  
morally pure in thought or  
conduct; decent and modest
- piquant** -  
pleasantly pungent or tart in  
taste; spicy
- drudge** -  
person who does tedious,  
menial, or unpleasant work
- defrauded** -  
to take something from by  
fraud; swindle



A fine lady, on the contrary, has been taught to look down with contempt on the vulgar employments of life; though she has only been incited to acquire accomplishments that rise a degree above sense; for even corporeal accomplishments cannot be acquired with any degree of precision unless the understanding has been strengthened by exercise. Without a foundation of principles, taste is superficial; and grace must arise from something deeper than imitation. The imagination, however, is heated, and the feelings rendered fastidious, if not sophisticated; or, a counterpoise of judgment is not acquired, when the heart still remains artless, though it becomes too tender.

These women are often amiable; and their hearts are really more sensible to general benevolence, more alive to the sentiments that civilize life, than the square-elbowed family drudge; but, wanting a due proportion of reflection and self-government, they only inspire love; and are the mistresses of their husbands, whilst they have any hold on their affections; and the **platonic** friends of his male acquaintance. These are the fair defects in nature; the women who appear to be created not to enjoy the fellowship of man, but to save him from sinking into absolute brutality, by rubbing off the rough angles of his character; and by playful **dalliance** to give some dignity to the appetite that draws him to them. Gracious Creator of the whole human race! Hast Thou created such a being as woman, who can trace Thy wisdom in thy works, and feel that Thou alone art by thy nature, exalted above her, for no better purpose? Can she believe that she was only made to submit to man, her equal; a being, who, like her, was sent into the world to acquire virtue? Can she consent to be occupied merely to please him; merely to adorn the earth, when her soul is capable of rising to Thee? And can she rest supinely dependent on man for reason, when she ought to **mount** with him the **arduous steeps** of knowledge? Yet, if love be the supreme good, let woman be only educated to inspire it, and let every charm be polished to intoxicate the senses; but, if they are moral beings, let them have a chance to become intelligent; and let love to man be only a part of that glowing flame of universal love, which, after encircling humanity, mounts in grateful incense to God.

To fulfill domestic duties much resolution is necessary, and a serious kind of perseverance that requires a more firm support than emotions, however lively and true to nature. To give an example of order, the soul of virtue, some **austerity** of behavior must be adopted, scarcely to be expected from a being who, from its infancy, has been made the **weathercock** of its own sensations. Whoever rationally means to be useful must have a plan of conduct; and, in the discharge of the simplest duty, we are often obliged to act contrary to the present impulse of tenderness or compassion. Severity is frequently the most certain, as well as the most sublime proof of affection; and the want of this power over the feelings, and of that lofty, dignified affection, which makes a person prefer the future good of the beloved object to a present gratification, is the reason why so many fond mothers spoil their children, and has made it questionable whether negligence or **indulgence** be most hurtful: but I am inclined to think, that the latter has done most harm.

Mankind seems to agree that children should be left under the management of women during their childhood. Now, from all the observation that I have been able to make, women of sensibility are the most unfit for this task, because they will **infallibly**, carried away by their feelings, spoil a child's temper. The management of the temper, the first, and most important branch of education, requires the sober steady eye of reason; a plan of conduct equally distant from tyranny and indulgence: yet these are the extremes that people of sensibility alternately fall into; always

- platonic** - friendly or affectionate but without physical desire
- dalliance** - frivolous spending of time; dawdling
- mount** - to climb or ascend
- arduous** - demanding great effort or labor; difficult
- steep** - having a sharp inclination; precipitous
- austerity** - the quality of being severe
- weathercock** - indicator
- indulgence** - disposition to yield to the wishes of someone
- infallibly** - incapable of erring
- choleric** - easily angered; bad-tempered
- morose** - sullenly melancholy; gloomy

shooting beyond the mark. I have followed this train of reasoning much further, till I have concluded that a person of genius is the most improper person to be employed in education, public or private. Minds of this rare species see things too much in masses, and seldom, if ever, have a good temper. That habitual cheerfulness, termed good-humor, is, perhaps, as seldom united with great mental powers, as with strong feelings. And those people who follow, with interest and admiration, the flights of genius; or, with cooler approbation suck in the instruction which has been elaborately prepared for them by the profound thinker, ought not to be disgusted, if they find the former **choleric**, and the latter **morose**; because liveliness of fancy, and a **tenacious** comprehension of mind, are scarcely compatible with that **pliant urbanity** which leads a man, at least, to bend to the opinions and prejudices of others, instead of roughly confronting them.

But, treating of education or manners, minds of a superior class are not to be considered, they may be left to chance; it is the multitude, with moderate abilities, who call for instruction, and catch the color of the atmosphere they breathe. This respectable concourse, I contend, men and women, should not have their sensations heightened in the hot-bed of luxurious indolence, at the expense of their understanding; for, unless there be a **ballast** of understanding, they will never become either virtuous or free: an aristocracy, founded on property, or sterling talents, will ever sweep before it, the alternately timid, and ferocious, slaves of feeling.

Numberless are the arguments, to take another view of the subject, brought forward with a shew (ed: show) of reason; because it is supposed to be deduced from nature that men have used morally and physically to degrade the sex. I must notice a few.

The female understanding has often been spoken of with contempt, as arriving sooner at maturity than the male. I shall not answer this argument by **alluding** to the early proofs of reason, as well as genius, in Cowley, Milton, and Pope,<sup>14</sup> but only appeal to experience to decide whether young men, who are early introduced into company (and examples now abound) do not acquire the same **precocity**. So **notorious** is this fact, that the bare mentioning of it must bring before people, who at all mix in the world, the idea of a number of **swaggering** apes of men, whose understandings are narrowed by being brought into the society of men when they ought to have been spinning a top or twirling a hoop.

It has also been asserted, by some naturalists, that men do not attain their full growth and strength till thirty; but that women arrive at maturity by twenty. I apprehend that they reason on false ground, led astray by the male prejudice, which deems beauty the perfection of woman—mere beauty of features and complexion, the vulgar acceptance of the word, whilst male beauty is allowed to have some connection with the mind. Strength of body and that character of countenance, which the French term a physiognomy, women do not acquire before thirty, any more than men. The little artless tricks of children, it

**tenacious -**

holding or tending to hold persistently to something, such as a point of view

**pliant -**

flexible

**urbanity -**

refinement and elegance of manner; polished courtesy

**ballast -**

something that gives stability

**alluding -**

to make an indirect reference

**precocity -**

unusually early development or maturity, especially in mental aptitude

**notorious -**

known widely and usually unfavourably; infamous

**swaggering -**

to walk or conduct oneself with an insolent or arrogant air; strut

<sup>14</sup> Many other names might be added.

is true, are particularly pleasing and attractive; yet, when the pretty freshness of youth is worn off, these artless graces become studied airs, and disgust every person of taste. In the countenance of girls we only look for **vivacity** and bashful modesty; but, the springtide of life over, we look for soberer sense in the face, and for traces of passion, instead of the dimples of animal spirits; expecting to see individuality of character, the only fastener of the affections.<sup>15</sup> We then wish to converse, not to **fondle**; to give scope to our imaginations as well as to the sensations of our hearts.

At twenty the beauty of both sexes is equal; but the libertinism of man leads him to make the distinction, and **superannuated coquettes** are commonly of the same opinion; for, when they can no longer inspire love, they pay for the vigor and vivacity of youth. The French, who admit more of mind into their notions of beauty, give the preference to women of thirty. I mean to say that they allow women to be in their most perfect state, when vivacity gives place to reason, and to that majestic seriousness of character, which marks maturity; or, the resting point. In youth, till twenty, the body shoots out, till thirty the solids are attaining a degree of density; and the flexible muscles, growing daily more rigid, give character to the countenance; that is, they trace the operations of the mind with the iron pen of fate, and tell us not only what powers are within, but how they have been employed.

It is proper to observe, that animals who arrive slowly at maturity, are the longest lived, and of the noblest species. Men cannot, however, claim any natural superiority from the grandeur of **longevity**; for in this respect nature has not distinguished the male.

**Polygamy** is another physical degradation; and a plausible argument for a custom that blasts every domestic virtue is drawn from the well-attested fact that in the countries where it is established, more females are born than males. This appears to be an indication of nature, and to nature, apparently reasonable speculations must yield. A further conclusion obviously presented itself; if polygamy be necessary, woman must be inferior to man, and made for him.

With respect to the formation of the fetus in the womb, we are very ignorant; but it appears to me probable that an accidental physical cause may account for this phenomenon, and prove it not to be a law of nature. I have met with some pertinent observations on the subject in Forster's Account of the Isles of the South-Sea that will explain my meaning. After observing that of the two sexes amongst animals the most vigorous and fiery constitution always prevails, and produces its kind; he adds, 'If this be applied to the inhabitants of Africa, it is evident that the men there, accustomed to polygamy, are enervated by the use of so many women, and therefore less vigorous; the women, on the contrary, are of a warmer constitution, not only on account of their more irritable nerves, more sensible organization, and more lively fancy; but likewise because they are deprived in their **matrimony** of that share of physical love which, in a **monogamous** condition, would all be theirs; and thus, for the above reasons, the generality of children are born females.'

'In the greater part of Europe it has been proved by the most accurate lists of mortality, that the proportion of men to women is nearly equal, or, if any difference takes place, the males born are more numerous, in the proportion of 105 to 100.'

The necessity of polygamy, therefore, does not appear; yet when a man seduces a woman, it should, I think, be termed a left-handed marriage, and the man should be legally

- vivacity** -  
exuberant liveliness
- fondle** -  
to handle, stroke, or caress lovingly
- superannuated** -  
too old to be useful; obsolete
- coquette** -  
woman who makes teasing sexual or romantic overtures; a flirt
- longevity** -  
long life; great duration of life
- polygamy** -  
the condition or practice of having more than one sexual partner at one time
- matrimony** -  
the act or state of being married; marriage
- monogamous** -  
the practice or condition of having a single sexual partner during a period of time

<sup>15</sup> The strength of an affection is, generally, in the same proportion as the character of the species in the object beloved, is lost in that of the individual.

obliged to maintain the woman and her children, unless adultery, a natural divorcement, **abrogated** the law. And this law should remain in force as long as the weakness of women caused the word seduction to be used as an excuse for their frailty and want of principle; nay, while they depend on man for subsistence, instead of earning it by the exertion of their own hands or heads. But these women should not, in the full meaning of the relationship, be termed wives, or the very purpose of marriage would be subverted, and all those endearing charities that flow from personal **fidelity**, and give a sanctity to the tie, when neither love nor friendship unites the hearts, would melt into selfishness. The woman who is faithful to the father of her children demands respect, and should not be treated like a prostitute; though I readily grant that if it be necessary for a man and woman to live together in order to bring up their offspring, nature never intended that a man should have more than one wife.

Still, highly as I respect marriage, as the foundation of almost every social virtue, I cannot avoid feeling the liveliest compassion for those unfortunate females who are broken off from society and by one error torn from all those affections and relationships that improve the heart and mind. It does not frequently even deserve the name of error; for many innocent girls become the **dupes** of a sincere affectionate heart, and still more are, as it may emphatically be termed, ruined before they know the difference between virtue and vice — and thus prepared by their education for infamy, they become infamous. Asylums and Magdalens are not the proper remedies for these abuses. It is justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world!

A woman who has lost her honor imagines that she cannot fall lower, and as for recovering her former station, it is impossible; no exertion can wash this stain away. Losing thus every spur, and having no other means of support, prostitution becomes her only refuge, and the character is quickly depraved by circumstances over which the poor **wretch** has little power, unless she possesses an uncommon portion of sense and loftiness of spirit. Necessity never makes prostitution the business of men's lives; though numberless are the women who are thus rendered systematically vicious. This, however, arises, in a great degree, from the state of idleness in which women are educated, who are always taught to look up to man for a maintenance, and to consider their persons as the proper return for his exertions to support them. **Meretricious** airs, and the whole science of **wantonness**, has then a more powerful stimulus than either appetite or vanity; and this remark gives force to the prevailing opinion, that with **chastity** all is lost that is respectable in woman. Her character depends on the observance of one virtue, though the only passion fostered in her heart—is love. Nay, the honor of a woman is not made even to depend on her will.

When Richardson<sup>16</sup> makes Clarissa tell Lovelace that he had robbed her of her honor, he must have had strange notions of honor and virtue. For, miserable beyond

- abrogate** -  
to abolish, do away with, or annul, especially by authority
- fidelity** -  
faithfulness to obligations, duties, or observances
- dupe** -  
easily-deceived person
- wretch** -  
miserable, unfortunate, or unhappy person
- meretricious** -  
attracting attention in a vulgar manner
- wantonness** -  
immoral or unchaste
- chastity** -  
the condition or quality of being pure or chaste

16 Dr. Young supports the same opinion, in his plays, when he talks of the misfortune that shunned the light of day.

all names of misery is the condition of a being, who could be degraded without its own consent! This excess of strictness I have heard **vindicated** as a salutary error. I shall answer in the words of Leibnitz—‘Errors are often useful; but it is commonly to remedy other errors.’

Most of the evils of life arise from a desire of present enjoyment that outruns itself. The obedience required of women in the marriage state comes under this description; the mind naturally weakened by depending on authority, never exerts its own powers, and the obedient wife is thus rendered a weak indolent mother. Or, supposing that this is not always the consequence, a future state of existence is scarcely taken into the reckoning when only negative virtues are cultivated. For, in treating of morals, particularly when women are alluded to, writers have too often considered virtue in a very limited sense, and made the foundation of it solely worldly utility; nay, a still more fragile base has been given to this **stupendous** fabric, and the wayward fluctuating feelings of men have been made the standard of virtue. Yes, virtue as well as religion, has been subjected to the decisions of taste.

It would almost provoke a smile of contempt, if the vain absurdities of man did not strike us on all sides, to observe, how eager men are to degrade the sex from whom they pretend to receive the chief pleasure of life; and I have frequently with full conviction retorted Pope’s **sarcasm** on them; or, to speak explicitly, it has appeared to me applicable to the whole human race. A love of pleasure or sway seems to divide mankind, and the husband who lords it in his little harem thinks only of his pleasure or his convenience. To such lengths, indeed, does an intemperate love of pleasure carry some prudent men, or worn out libertines, who marry to have a safe bed-fellow, that they seduce their own wives. Hymen banishes modesty, and chaste love takes its flight.

Love, considered as an animal appetite, cannot long feed on itself without expiring. And this extinction, in its own flame, may be termed the violent death of love. But the wife who has thus been rendered **licentious**, will probably endeavor to fill the void left by the loss of her husband’s attentions; for she cannot contentedly become merely an upper servant after having been treated like a goddess. She is still handsome, and, instead of transferring her fondness to her children, she only dreams of enjoying the sunshine of life. Besides, there are many husbands so devoid of sense and parental affection that during the first **effervescence** of **voluptuous** fondness they refuse to let their wives **suckle** their children. They are only to dress and live to please them, and love—even innocent love, soon sinks into **lasciviousness**, when the exercise of a duty is sacrificed to its indulgence.

Personal attachment is a very happy foundation for friendship; yet, when even two virtuous young people marry, it would, perhaps, be happy if some circumstances checked their passion; if the recollection of some prior attachment, or disappointed affection, made it on one side, at least, rather a match founded on **esteem**. In that case they would look beyond the present moment, and try to render the whole of life respectable, by forming a plan to regulate a friendship which only death ought to dissolve.

Friendship is a serious affection; the most **sublime** of all affections, because it is founded on principle, and cemented by time. The very reverse may be said of love. In a great degree, love and friendship cannot subsist in the same bosom; even when inspired by different objects they weaken or destroy each other, and for the same object can only be felt in succession. The vain fears and fond jealousies, the winds which fan the flame of love, when judiciously or artfully tempered, are both incompatible with the tender confidence and sincere respect of friendship.

**vindicated -**

to clear of accusation, blame, suspicion, or doubt with supporting arguments

**stupendous -**

of astounding force, volume, degree, or excellence; marvelous

**sarcasm -**

cutting, often ironic remark intended to wound

**licentious -**

lacking moral discipline or ignoring legal restraint

**effervescence -**

showing high spirits or animation

**voluptuous -**

giving, characterised by, or suggesting ample, unrestrained pleasure to the senses

**suckle -**

to cause or allow to take milk at the breast or udder; nurse

**lasciviousness -**

given to or expressing lust

**esteem -**

to regard with respect; prize

**sublime -**

characterised by nobility; majestic

Love, such as the glowing pen of genius has traced, exists not on earth, or only resides in those exalted, fervid imaginations that have sketched such dangerous pictures. Dangerous, because they not only afford a plausible excuse to the voluptuary who disguises sheer sensuality under a sentimental veil; but as they spread affectation, and take from the dignity of virtue. Virtue, as the very word imports, should have an appearance of seriousness, if not **austerity**; and to endeavor to trick her out in the **garb** of pleasure, because the **epithet** has been used as another name for beauty, is to exalt her on a quicksand; a most **insidious** attempt to hasten her fall by apparent respect. Virtue and pleasure are not, in fact, so nearly allied in this life as some eloquent writers have labored to prove. Pleasure prepares the fading **wreath**, and mixes the intoxicating cup; but the fruit which virtue gives, is the recompense of toil: and, gradually seen as it ripens, only affords calm satisfaction; nay, appearing to be the result of the natural tendency of things, it is scarcely observed. Bread, the common food of life, seldom thought of as a blessing, supports the constitution and preserves health; still feasts delight the heart of man, though disease and even death lurk in the cup or dainty that elevates the spirits or tickles the **palate**. The lively heated imagination, in the same style, draws the picture of love, as it draws every other picture, with those glowing colors, which the daring hand will steal from the rainbow that is directed by a mind, condemned in a world like this, to prove its noble origin by **panting** after unattainable perfection; ever pursuing what it acknowledges to be a fleeting dream. An imagination of this vigorous cast can give existence to insubstantial forms, and stability to the shadowy **reveries** which the mind naturally falls into when realities are found **vapid**. It can then depict love with **celestial** charms, and dote on the grand ideal object—it can imagine a degree of mutual affection that shall refine the soul, and not expire when it has served as a ‘scale to heavenly;’ and, like devotion, make it absorb every meaner affection and desire. In each others’ arms, as in a temple, with its summit lost in the clouds, the world is to be shut out, and every thought and wish, that do not nurture pure affection and permanent virtue. Permanent virtue! Alas! Rousseau, respectable visionary! Thy paradise would soon be violated by the entrance of some unexpected guest. Like Milton’s it would only contain angels, or men sunk below the dignity of rational creatures. Happiness is not material. It cannot be seen or felt! Yet the eager pursuit of the good which everyone shapes to his own fancy, proclaims man the lord of this lower world, and to be an intelligent creature, who is not to receive, but to acquire happiness. They, their minds to correct themselves, and pay dearly for their experience, it is necessary to observe, that it is not against strong, persevering passions; but romantic wavering feelings that I wish to guard the female heart by exercising the understanding: for these paradisiacal reveries are oftener the effect of idleness than of a lively fancy.

Women have seldom sufficient serious employment to silence their feelings; a round of little cares, or vain pursuits **frittering** away all strength of mind and organs, they become naturally only objects of sense. In short, the whole tenor of female education

**austerity -**

the trait of practicing self discipline

**garb -**

distinctive style or form of clothing; dress

**epithet -**

term used to characterise a person or thing

**insidious -**

working or spreading harmfully in a subtle or stealthy manner

**wreath -**

ring or circlet of flowers, boughs, or leaves worn on the head, placed on a memorial, or hung as a decoration

**palate -**

the sense of taste

**pant -**

to breathe rapidly in short gasps, as after exertion

**reveries -**

state of abstracted musing; daydreaming

**vapid -**

lacking liveliness, animation, or interest

**celestial -**

of or relating to the sky or the heavens

**frittering -**

to reduce or squander little by little



(the education of society) tends to render the best disposed romantic inconstant; and the remainder vain and mean. In the present state of society this evil can scarcely be remedied, I am afraid, in the slightest degree; should a more laudable ambition ever gain ground they may be brought nearer to nature and reason; and become more virtuous and useful as they grow more respectable.

But, I will **venture** to **assert** that their reason will never acquire sufficient strength to enable it to regulate their conduct, whilst the making an appearance in the world is the first wish of the majority of mankind. To this weak wish the natural affections and the most useful virtues are sacrificed. Girls marry merely to better themselves, to borrow a significant vulgar phrase, and have such perfect power over their hearts as not to permit themselves to fall in love till a man with a superior fortune offers. On this subject I mean to enlarge in a future chapter; it is only necessary to drop a hint at present, because women are so often degraded by suffering the selfish prudence of age to chill the ardor of youth.

From the same source flows an opinion that young girls ought to dedicate a great part of their time to needle-work; yet, this employment contracts their faculties more than any other that could have been chosen for them, by confining their thoughts to their persons. Men order their clothes to be made, and have done with the subject; women make their own clothes, necessary or ornamental, and are continually talking about them; and their thoughts follow their hands. It is not indeed the making of necessities that weakens the mind; but the **frippery** of dress. For when a woman in the lower rank of life makes her husband's and children's clothes, she does her duty, this is a part of her business; but when women work only to dress better than they could otherwise afford, it is worse than sheer loss of time. To render the poor virtuous they must be employed, and women in the middle rank of life, did they not ape the fashions of the nobility, without catching their ease, might employ them, whilst they themselves managed their families, instructed their children, and exercised their own minds. Gardening, experimental philosophy, and literature, would afford them subjects to think of and matter for conversation that in some degree would exercise their understandings. The conversation of French women, who are not so rigidly nailed to their chairs to twist lappets, and knot ribbons, is frequently superficial; but, I contend, that it is not half so **insipid** as that of those English women whose time is spent in making caps, bonnets, and the whole mischief of trimmings, not to mention shopping, bargain-hunting, etc. And it is the decent, prudent women, who are most degraded by these practices; for their motive is simply vanity. The **wanton** who exercise their taste to render their person alluring, have something more in view.

These observations all branch out of a general one, which I have before made, and which cannot be too often insisted upon, for, speaking of men, women, or professions, it will be found that the employment of the thoughts shapes the character both generally and individually. The thoughts of women ever hover round their persons. Is it surprising that their persons are reckoned most valuable? Yet some degree of liberty of mind is necessary even to form the person; and this may be one reason why some gentle wives have so few attractions beside that of sex. Add to this, **sedentary** employments render the majority of women sickly—and false notions of female excellence make them proud of this delicacy, though it be another fetter, that by calling the attention continually to the body, cramps the activity of the mind.

Women of quality seldom do any of the manual part of their dress, consequently only their taste is exercised, and they acquire, by thinking less of the finery, when the business of their toilet is over, that ease, which seldom appears in the deportment of

**venture -**

to express (an opinion) at the risk of denial, criticism, or censure

**assert -**

to state or express positively; affirm

**frippery -**

pretentious, showy finery

**insipid -**

lacking flavour or zest; not tasty

**wanton -**

immoral or unchaste; lewd

**sedentary -**

done sitting down and involving very little exercise



women, who dress merely for the sake of dressing. In fact, the observation with respect to the middle rank, the one in which talents thrive best, extends not to women; for those of the superior class, by catching at least a smattering of literature and conversing more with men on general topics acquire more knowledge than the women who ape their fashions and faults without sharing their advantages. With respect to virtue, to use the word in a comprehensive sense, I have seen most in low life. Many poor women maintain their children by the sweat of their brow and keep together families that the vices of the fathers would have scattered abroad; but gentle-women are too indolent to be actively virtuous, and are softened rather than refined by civilization. Indeed, the good sense which I have met with among the poor women who have had few advantages of education, and yet have acted heroically, strongly confirmed me in the opinion that trifling employments have rendered woman a **trifler**. Men, taking her<sup>17</sup> body, the mind is left to rust; so that while physical love enervates man, as being his favorite recreation, he will endeavor to enslave woman — and, who can tell, how many generations may be necessary to give vigor to the virtue and talents of the freed **posterity of abject** slaves?<sup>18</sup>

In tracing the causes that, in my opinion, have degraded woman, I have confined my observations to such as universally act upon the morals and manners of the whole sex, and to me it appears clear that they all spring from want of understanding. Whether this arise from a physical or accidental weakness of faculties, time alone can determine; for I shall not lay any great stress on the example of a few women<sup>19</sup> who, from having received a masculine education, have acquired courage and resolution; I only contend that the men who have been placed in similar situations have acquired a similar character—I speak of bodies of men, and that men of genius and talents have started out of a class in which women have never yet been placed.

**SOURCE:** Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Toronto: Penguin, 1994.

17 'I take her body,' says Ranger.

18 'Supposing that women are voluntary slaves—slavery of any kind is unfavorable to human happiness and improvement.'—Knox's Essays.

19 Sappho, Eloisa, Mrs. Macauley, the Empress of Russia, Madame d'Eon, etc. These, and many more, may be reckoned exceptions; and, are not all heroes, as well as heroines, exceptions to general rules? I wish to see women neither heroines nor brutes; but reasonable creatures.

**trifle -**

something of little importance or value

**posterity -**

future generations

**abject -**

brought low in condition or status

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do Wollstonecraft and Rousseau's understandings of human nature and civilization differ? What does Wollstonecraft mean when she says, "Rousseau exerts himself to prove that all was right originally: a crowd of authors that all is now right: and I, that all will be right."
2. According to Wollstonecraft, humans are born brute but can improve themselves through cultivating their reason, knowledge, and understanding. What implications did this have for women in the 18<sup>th</sup> century who had limited access to education?
3. Wollstonecraft believes character is formed to a degree by a person's profession. What implication did this have for women in the 18<sup>th</sup> century who had limited job and career opportunities?
4. Wollstonecraft extols virtue over all other human qualities and characteristics. Do you agree with her values?
5. According to Wollstonecraft, 18<sup>th</sup> century English society considered women's purpose to procreate, to be subjects of adoration and adorn the earth, and to please and serve men. Can the same be said of women today?
6. What are some of the causes of the state of degradation in women that Wollstonecraft observes? Are women, according to Wollstonecraft, at all responsible for their degraded state?
7. Why does Wollstonecraft believe that beauty and youth should not be the central and sole sources of a woman's value in society? How must a woman view life when age is an enemy? Why have women not protested their fleeting glorification?
8. According to Wollstonecraft, how do men and women differ on their views of marriage?
9. How do women and society suffer from their underdevelopment?

## REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* is one of the best known early writings arguing that women should be included along with men in all discussions of rights and responsibilities. Do you think the authors of the earlier chapters meant "men and women" when they wrote "men"? Why or why not?
2. Wollstonecraft has great confidence in education as a means to development. How does her notion of development compare with that of Nasafi?
3. What would St. Catherine think of Wollstonecraft's concern with women's life in this world? What might Aziz Nasafi think? Support your answer with references to their writings?

**ADDITIONAL READING:**

101

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INSIDE THE URT "SHIRINAK"

## ABAY IBRAHIM QUNANBAYULI: EDIFICATION

103

Abay (Ibrahim) Qunanbayuli (1845-1904) is a Kazakh poet and thinker, the founder of written Kazakh literature, and a famous democrat and enlightener. Abay was born into the family of a feudal lord (a sultan) in the Semipolatsk region. According to research, Abay received his primary education from a madrasah and a Russian parochial school. The latter he was visiting on his own initiative while studying at the madrasah. Abay stood for bringing European education to the steppes of Kazakhstan. "The work of Abay was formed under the salutary influence of the leading Russian culture. Abay completely devoted himself to the deep learning of Russian language and literature. He studied the books of Pushkin, Lermantov, Saltykov-Schedrin, Leo Tolstoy, Belinsky, Chernishevsky, Dobrolubov and other representatives of leading Russian culture. By knowing Russian, he was able to learn of the literary heritage of other nations, including the ancient Greeks and Europeans. Ethical issues play a significant role in Abay's work. Abay considered the base for cognition and moral behavior to be the unity of will, mind and feelings ("heart")".<sup>1</sup> According to Abay, human nature is not something permanent. It is the same as the world around us, always on the run and changing.

### WORD 4

A human is born crying and dies in anger. Not seeing the happiness of life and prosecuting each other, boasting to each other, we lose our poor life. We do not see it, humiliated with disgraced behavior, neglect it, as sand, as a rotten robe, but when it comes to the end, we cry and cannot buy even a day for all our property. Is such a life that you have lived worth regret? To live through cunningness, live with tearful begging – does not mean to live, it means to exist, as a dog exists. If you want to live with dignity, live sober, support yourself by your own strength and work, and the soil will bring its fruits and will not let you live in disgrace.

### WORD 7

When a child is born there are two beginnings in him. One is the desire to eat, drink, sleep and satisfy the needs of the body. If there is no such desire, the body will stop to be the house of the soul, it will not grow and develop.

The second beginning is the urge to learn. The child is urged to everything: he reaches shining items, tastes them, and touches them. If music starts playing – a child strains after it, he hears a dog barking or the tramp of cattle or a laugh or

<sup>1</sup> Quote from the information from introductory article of Mamedov Sh.F. to the text of Abay in: *Anthology of World Philosophy*, 4 volumes, T. I-4, M., "Misl", 1969-1972. (Academy of Sciences USSR. Institute of Philosophy. Philosophical heritage). V.4. Philosophical and sociological thoughts of USSR nations in 19th C., 1972, pg. 625

cry — he shudders. Later he starts asking, “What is it?” “Why does he do it?” “What is this for?” A child is prey to anxiety. This is the need of the soul, the urge to see everything, know everything, and learn everything. If this urge is lost, if you don’t want to know everything completely or learn in some part, you are not a human any more. If we are not urged to receive knowledge, our soul is not the soul of a human, it is a soul of an animal.

## WORD 15

If you want yourself to be among the clever, once in a day or once in a week, or at least once in a month give an account to yourself of how you behaved in your life. Did you perform deeds that are good and reasonable? Did you do anything that you should feel sorry about? Think about how you spent your life and did you notice, did you remember how you spent your life? (pg. 349).

## WORD 17

Will, Heart and Mind were arguing about who is more important. They came to Knowledge to settle their dispute. **Will** said, “Listen, Knowledge, you know that without me nobody can achieve their goal. Only thanks to me people push aside their laziness and persevering, and persistently press towards knowing themselves. Even rich men cannot achieve perfection without will and labor. Am I not the leading choice of the people? Is it not I who warns people about easy money and evil behavior. Is it not me who brings people back to the right way when they leave it? And those two are arguing with me”.

**Mind** said, “But it is only me who knows what is harmful and what is useful both for this and the other world. Only I can understand words. Without me no profit can be received, no losses can be avoided. Only I understand the sciences. Those two,” said mind, “challenge my superiority. What good can they do without me?”

**Heart** started to talk, “I am the king of human beings. I make blood circulate in veins. There is no life without me. Only I make full, careless people, who are lying in a soft bed, to worry and think about the life of the poor and miserable. I spoil the dreams of careless people. I make them toss in their beds. I have respect for the elderly and mercy for the younger. So often I could not be kept clean, how often I was humiliated. But if the heart is honest and stainless, there is no offence between people. I am delighted by righteousness and make people jump away from evil as from the snake. Everything good — modesty, justice, mercy, tenderness come from me. How could those two argue with me?”

Then Knowledge, after listening to all of them, said, “Listen, Will, everything of what you just said is true. Moreover, you have other merits that you did not mention. But though two of the others cannot live without you, along with power you possess cruelty. There are a lot of good uses from you but there can be harm, too. Sometimes you are strongly attached to kindness, but sometimes to evil. This is what is bad about you.” That is what knowledge said. Afterwards, Knowledge continued, “Mind, whatever you said here is also right. Nothing can be found without you. You alone introduce us to secret creations, the life of the



soul. But evil can be in you too. You give birth to cunning and trickery, you can lead both good and bad people. You can equally lead people through the ways of kindness and evil. That is what is bad about you.” Knowledge continued, “I order all three of you to unite in one whole and let heart be your leader. Mind, you are many-sided. Let heart follow you in good and let it agree and be happy with you. Let it not follow you on an evil road. Moreover, let it order you to return. Will, you are strong, but let heart lead you. Let it not spare you in good and useful work, but let it prohibit evil.”

Talk about it, and afterwards, all three of you will be united, but remember, heart is the master. If all three of you will be in one man, the way I am telling you, this man will be led by you and become just, and even the dust from his feet will cure the blind. If there will be discords between you, let man listen to his heart.”

## WORD 25

The man who studies the culture and language of other people will be equal in rights with them and will not be living in disgrace.

To hope that one can only live by cunning means is to be a victim of ignorance. An ignorant person can betray their mother, father, all their relatives and friends to the first Russian official who slaps his shoulder.

Study the culture and art of Russians. This is the key to life. If you have received it, your life will be easier.

However, nowadays people teach their children in Russian and try, with the help of Russian language, to profit at the expenses of other Kazakhs. Do not have such intentions.

Learn about good things from Russians, learn how to work and live by your own labor. If you achieve that, you will teach your nation and protect it from oppression.

If we learn as much as others know we will become strong and equal in rights.

It is true, that out of the Kazakh children who learned Russian, no remarkable person has grown up yet. But this is because relatives, parents and close friends spoil such children. But even now they are better than the uneducated.

Children are sent to Russian schools unwillingly, but with a sense of great shame or of being enslaved. Only poor men with grief sent their children. How would children turn out to be good people under such treatment of science?

I am telling you the truth: do not hurry to wed your son, teach him Russian science, even if you have to pawn all your belongings. If you want your son to be a man, teach him and you will do good for him and for your nation (pg. 363-364)



Who will listen to such wise advice? Who will follow the admonition? Neither the hoary headman no bai (rich man) will hear me.

They think that the bird of happiness will sit on their heads and they will become the owners of half the world, multiply their herds and buy everything for their cattle. That is how they live with their noses raised up. Honor, dishonor, mind and science for them are below cattle. They believe that by presenting cattle, they can even get a good opinion of God. For them religion is cattle, people are cattle, knowledge is cattle and shame is cattle. (pg. 334)

## **WORD 26**

The world does not stay in the same place. The life and power of humans also don't remain unchanged. All existing are inconstant, even the heart changes (pg. 355).

## **WORD 27 (ACCORDING TO SOCRATES)**

These are the words of Socrates presented to us by Xenophon and written by him in Book I, "Memories of Socrates".

Aristodemus was laughing about obedience to God's will.

Socrates said:

"Hey, Aristodemus, are there people who delight you?"

Aristodemus answered:

"As much as you want, dear teacher."

"Tell me their names," said Socrates.

"I am delighted by the song-creation of Homer, the tragedies of Sophocles, the art of reincarnation, among others. I am delighted by the painting of Zevxisus."

Moreover, Aristodemus mentioned a few people whose art was very popular.

"If so, who, do you think, deserves more delight," asked Socrates, "the painter who makes images that have only appearance, or the Creator, who created humans with a lively soul and an all-understanding mind?"

"Right," said the student, "the latter deserves more praise, but only if it is done knowingly and not by chance."

"What subjects do you recognize as works of chance and what are the works of the mind? Those, whose goals and meaning for existence are unknown, or those that exist for some use?" asked Socrates.

"It may be assumed that the creations of the mind – what is created with the obvious goal to receive the best and useful."

"Good, if so, it is obvious that the Creator of man gave him five senses and understood their usefulness".

"First of all, man has eyes, in order to see. If there were no eyes, how would we enjoy the pleasure of the beauty of the world? Because eyes are weak, in order to open and close them eyelids exist. In order to protect eyes from dust, eyelashes exist. In order to remove sweat from the forehead, eyebrows exist. If there were no ears, we could not hear sounds or voices, and could not enjoy songs nor receive news. If the nose did not distinguish smell we could not enjoy fragrance and avoid bad smells; if palate and tongue couldn't distinguish taste, we would not be able to enjoy nice food. Isn't it all in our favor? The eyes and nose

are not far away from the mouth, so we can eat and drink and see the food we are eating and notice its smell. And equally important, waste excreted from men is located away from the noble organs of knowledge that are located in the head. Is it not proof that everything is not created by chance?

Aristodemus thought and believed and no doubts were left that the Creator of the world made it with love and art.

“Think that all animals are afraid to die, and anxious to live and reproduce. Isn’t it proof of the highest love of creation, isn’t it a result of love, founded in each living body – a love of life?

Socrates continued:

“Hey, Aristodemus, do you also think that only man has a brain. Isn’t the human body the same as ash from the soil you are walking on? Isn’t the liquid in your body similar to drops of water? How did you become a lord of the mind? How did it – this so-called soul – come to you? Only thanks to it did you become a master. You see this world but cannot embrace it all with your mind. But you are convinced that everything was created for certain purposes and everything follows never broken rules. Indeed, will you be surprised by all of it, thinking that this is only by chance?”

Socrates continued:

“Or the master of all of it is some immeasurable great mind? If it all does not come from the mind, then where does it come from? What are the laws according to which this wonderful world was created?”

The student answered:

“All that you said is true. Thus, it is known that creator is a huge mind. I am not daring to contest the greatness of the Creator, but why would somebody that great need my prayers?”

“Hey, Aristodemus,” said Socrates, “you are wrong. Do you need more proof that you are in debt to the Creator, who takes care of you?”

Aristodemus answered:

“How do I know that he cares of me?”

Socrates answered:

“Look at all animals, look at yourself. Animals have a soul but is their soul the same as yours? Man is thinking about the present and the future and also today’s day and everything he checks with his feelings and mind. Animals blurrily understand the present, and they don’t understand either the past or the future. The present is also not given to them. Compare the body of an animal with the body of a human. Man is standing on his feet and growing up, he embrace all life with his look, challenges it, and all animals are serving him. Only animals rely on their legs, others on wings, but they cannot use the services of other animals similar to them. If a man were not human but an animal with a human body he would be worthless. If the animal would have the mind of a human, his body would not

correspond to his mind. Animals cannot build cities, produce instruments, make weapons and reach the borders of art and knowledge. Doesn't it prove that man was created as a king of all living creatures? Doesn't it prove that the Creator loves man and cares about him and all humanity should express their obedience to God?" That is how the teacher finished. (pg. 367-372)

## WORD 28

Hey, Muslims! You can see that some are rich, others are poor, some are sick and others are healthy, some are thoughtless, others are inclined to kindness and conscientiousness. People are different. If somebody asked you, "Why does this happen?" You will answer, "This is the work of the Creator, His will". Considering that God is sinless and stainless, we believe.

But then provided that God rewards perjurers and spongers with wealth, and from people who are honestly working and praising, he takes away the last opportunity to feed wife and children by turning their work to nothing. We often can see that the modest person is sick and disgraced. On the contrary, thieves and swindlers are healthy. Out of two children from the same parents, one is rational, another stupid.

It is told to all people: be just; the way was shown to all people. It was said that just people will tower above, but the dishonest will suffer. But it is as if the Creator Himself led one people to good and others to evil. Does this correspond to the "stainlessness, sinless and justice of the Lord"?

Both people and property are in God's hand. What can be said about His work? You may say that He does what He wants. If you say so, you will abolish Him by that. "This is your world" would mean that the Lord is not unstained, He has many disadvantages but we are not brave enough to talk about it. Provided that God makes everything be the way it is done, why would one creature be angry at another creature? Does anybody do any good or bad for them? Isn't all done by God's will?

But God says that each reasonable man should impose godliness as a duty and each who has godliness should impose obedience as a duty. The just should not be afraid of examination by the mind. If we will not have a free mind, how would we understand God's word that relational man should impose as a duty on true godliness? Where would the phrase by God, "One who knows Me will know Me only by mind", go?

No, obviously, it is better to understand thus, that God is a creator of good and evil, but He does not make us do it. The Creator of sicknesses – the Lord, He does not make us to be sick. God creates wealth and poverty, but He did not make you rich or poor. If you understand faith this way, it will mean something, otherwise – it is worthless. (pg. 371-372)

## WORD 32

For those who want to learn science, it is important to remember that there are several conditions that need to be followed. Those who forget about them will not achieve their goal. There is no need to study thinking that science will be of benefit right away.

If you passionately come to love science while considering knowledge itself

as a gift, you will be in perfect bliss. If you are eager for knowledge, be anxious about it. Then, whatever you see or hear will be learned well and you will fasten in your mind clear words and images. If all your feelings are addressed to other things then you will learn science only because of those things. Such relations will be similar to those that a stepmother and stepson have. Science must be loved as a mother loves her son.

Secondly, if man is eager to receive knowledge, he gains it easily. But sincerity is necessary in this case. The cognition should have a noble aim. Do not gain knowledge for boasting or disputes. Disputes give birth to envy and humiliate dignity.

The purpose of disputes often is not the truth but victory over another man. The man who has defeated hundreds of others in arguments and led them astray is infinitely behind that man who sets one person on the right track. Disputes are necessary for science, but you should not be keen on them.

Avoid the arrogance, pride, and envy that can be found among scientists.

Third, if you reach the truth, do not deviate from it, even under the threat of death.

If your truth does not possess you completely, even though you are sure in it, how would it be of any value for somebody else? How can you wish respect from others for something you yourself are not devoted to?

Fourth, there are ways to improve knowledge. Man should develop thinking and imaginative abilities. Without thoughts and imagination, science cannot develop.

Fifth, avoid carelessness. Carelessness is an enemy of God and people. Light-minded carelessness cannot go together with learning sciences.

Sixth, develop your character. Character is a vessel that contains science and mind. If you will be lightheaded, gullible, or if you will be keen on mere fun, your character will be spoiled and become weak. After that it will be needless to study because it will be for nothing. Why collect something if you have no storage.

Strengthen will – this is the armor that protects the mind. Don't be anxious about amusements and boasting. Let all in you serve mind and honor. (pg. 377-378).

### WORD 37

Judge a human according to his thought, not what comes out of them. No matter how beautiful the thought, when it comes out of the mouth it loses color.

If you said a word of wisdom to a self-loving ignorant person, after you can either calm down or be annoyed.

Helping a dignified man – you give help to him, helping a narrow-minded person – you will bring harm to yourself. The son of your father is an enemy to the people. The son of the people is your friend.

A dignified man asks for little and is satisfied by little.

A narrow-minded man asks for little but if you give him more he still will be unsatisfied.

A person who works only for himself is like cattle that fill up their stomachs. Dignity is working for humanity (people).

Who gave poison to Socrates, who burned Jeanne D'Arc, who crucified Jesus and made Muhammad to hide from prosecutions in the body of a camel? A crowd. It means the crowd is stupid. Know how to direct it.

A human is a child of his time. But if you are stupid, do not blame your contemporaries.

If the power were in my hands, I would cut the tongue of each person who says man cannot be changed.

A lonely person is a dead person. Sorrow surrounds him.

Everything that is bad in our world is because of the crowd, but all joy and amusements are also from it.

Who can carry over it? Who can live without second? Who has not experienced evil? Only a person with no will loses hope. It is true that nothing is permanent in this world, it means that evil is also not permanent. After a severe, cold winter the spring comes – blooming, abounding in water and wonder.

A man who screams in anger is funny. A man who keeps silence in anger is dangerous.

Success and happiness make a person drunk. Only one out of a thousand in happiness will keep enough presence of mind not to show up in front of people naked.

If you want the work to get done, you should start it.

Fame is a high rock. The snake needs to crawl to reach it, but the hawk can reach it by a single beating of wings.

The world is an ocean. Time is like the wind that blows the waves of each generation, one is changed by another. They disappear but the ocean looks the same.

A plebeian famed for knowledge is higher than the king crowned by happiness.

A young man who is selling his work is more worthy than the old man selling his beard.

Be afraid not by the devil but by the greedy beggar. The lazy man is always a prude and hypocrite.

Bad friends are like a shadow: on a sunny day you can not run away from it, but on cloudy days you can not find it.

Share your secrets with those who have no friends, do not make friendship with those who have many friends. Avoid the careless person. Comfort the grieving.

Anger without will is a widower. Mind without sorrow is a widower. A scientist without followers is a widower. Love without faith is a widow. (pg. 387-388)

## WORD 42

Some human qualities are born within all of us and others are formed as a result of work. Drinking and eating are involuntary needs. Sleeping too. The wish to receive known knowledge in its germ is also involuntary, but mind and knowledge – are the results of labor. Seeing with the eyes, listening with the ears, touching with the hands, tasting with the tongue, smelling with the nose, man becomes acquainted with the world. These feelings are strengthened in the perception of humans as positive and negative conceptions.

This is the power of spirit, involuntary and independent from our wishes, similar to good or bad impressions from things seen by us. But man develops some qualities and moves aside others, and whatever was moved aside becomes unnoticeable or disappears at once. Labor develops the sense of knowledge. Labor consolidates in consciousness what you heard. Man brings order in knowledge, chooses the necessary from the unnecessary and becomes clever. (pg. 398).

## WORD 42

Always know when to stop. Knowing limits is a big thing. Do not be confused in your thoughts. Do not lose your mind. There are limits in everything – in food, in drink, in laughter, in clothes, in entertainment, in love, in hugs, in kisses, in desire for wealth, and even in careerism and cunning. What is beyond limits is evil.

Ancient wise men said: “In what we find joy, in the same in due time we find grief”. Let it not be a mystery for you that vividness and the ability to compare can be united and come out of two powers – kindness and evil.

Boastfulness, malignancy, mendacity, passion and other vices related to them are also born out these two powers: from vividness and attraction of similarities, in other words, what is in comparison. We must try to select good and reject vices. Check everything by the heart.

The mind is able to distinguish the useful from the harmful, but the mind must also be brave. Only one who can unite the mind with courage will bridle the passions and start to rule them as tame horses. Otherwise they become the source of vices and like furious horses will carry a man from the road, throw him on stones or in water or a deep gully.

It is common that even a smart man cannot control his passions and they will throw him on the ground where he will sit stretching the skirt of his robe and looking around and suffering indignity till the end of his life (pg. 400).

**SOURCE:** Abay Kunanbaev. *Edification//Anthology of World Philosophy, volume 4, T 1-4, M., “Misl”, 1969-1972.* (Academy of Sciences USSR. Institute of Philosophy. Philosophical heritage). V.4. Philosophical and Sociological Thoughts of USSR Nations in XIX, 1972, pg. 626-636

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do the variety of cultures and cultural contacts influence the development and improvement of an individual's and a nation's culture?
2. According to Abay, what is the role of human will and the mind in the life of the individual and society? What is the role of education and science? What human abilities are acquired and which ones are adopted?
3. Why, according to Abay, is human nature not permanent? Why is the world always on the run and changing?
4. Which human concept most influenced Abay's teaching: Islamic, ancient Greek, the European Age of Enlightenment, traditional beliefs of the Kazakh steppe, or all of them together? What is the role of syncretism in culture?
5. According to Abay, what is the role of labor in learning? Why does Abay pay so much attention to labor and practical knowledge?
6. What is "passion for knowledge" according to Abay?
7. What is "character", according to Abay, and how is it possible to develop the will?
8. Why did Abay, being a supporter of the common people, have a negative relation to the crowd? He also thought that the "lonely man is a dead man". Do you think that human nature is different when in a crowd and when alone? Why does man travel between the crowd and loneliness?
9. Comment on the following statement by Abay: "A human is a child of his time. But if you are stupid, do not blame your contemporaries."
10. Comment on the following text: "The world does not stay in the same place. The life and power of humans also don't remain unchanged. All existing are inconstant, even the heart changes." How does this relate to human nature? Do you believe unchangeable human nature exists?
11. What do you think about Abay's opinion of free will and "freedom of the mind?" Do you think humans have free will in reality?
12. Compare the text of Abay on human nature with similar texts from this course. Note the similarities and differences.
13. Do you think Abay's opinion of human nature is optimistic or pessimistic?
14. Write a paper on the role of pessimistic and optimistic concept of human nature in the cultures of various nations.

## ADDITIONAL READING:

1. Abay Kunanbaev. Collection of Essays In One Volume. M., 1954
2. Abay Ibrahim Qunanbayuli (Kazak: Абай (Ибрагим) Кунанбайұлы Russian: Абай Ибрагим Кунанбаев. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abai\\_Kunanbaev](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abai_Kunanbaev)
3. Kazakhstan: Culture – [www.cac-biodiversity.org/kaz\\_culture.htm](http://www.cac-biodiversity.org/kaz_culture.htm)



## CHAPTER THREE: RELIGION AND HUMAN NATURE

113

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter reveals where the nexus between theories of human nature and religion occur: in the human mind. Theories of human nature and religion intersect in the human mind as cognition, conception, and perception leading to human perfectibility. Each of the texts explores this intersection at which humanity attains its full stature. However, one text, critical of the corollary of the project of humanity and religion, identifies the divisive element in it, which is the male-mind and female-body dichotomy that undergirds much of the intellectual traditions of humanity.

All identification, analysis and synthesis of texts, about human nature or anything requires cognition first. Aziz al-Din Nasafi lays the foundation of thought, philosophy and spirituality in the simple act of cognition. Indeed, Nasafi finds the very existence of human beings in the world to be a result of the Creator's desire to be cognized. And, therefore, the duty of every human being is the mastery of cognition, especially cognition of God. To achieve that cognition one must practice virtues, moderation and solitude. Fundamentally, for Nasafi, it is not reason but cognition which leads to spirituality, truth and wisdom, which is the Sufi path and practice.

Similarly, Catherine of Sienna, a Christian mystic, sought the perfection of humans. She, too, finds the path of virtue leading to the bridge to the heavens and to God. It is intellect that perceives the right path and the ignorant that cannot see are damned. Using one's intellect is of paramount importance to be restored to the grace of God. It is incumbent upon humans to seek their own restoration: the way is first through intellect and then by practice of virtues. Intelligent perception, therefore, is the first step towards saving humanity from damnation.

However, for Benedict Spinoza it is not perception but conception that is important. Perception for Spinoza is passive while conception implies activity on the part of the human mind, which is "its highest blessedness." This emphasis that Spinoza places on conception is because Spinoza believes that "thought is an attribute of God," and any human who exercises his/her brain is emulating God and therefore is blessed. The essence of human beings rests in their capacity to think, and that capacity to think is also an attribute of God. In sharing this attribute with God, humans are raised above the rest of creation.

Exploring human nature through the activities of the human mind, the writers of these texts demonstrate that understanding human nature is not as simple as perceiving something alien. Human nature and our understanding of it is intrinsically linked to the thought processes of the human mind.



### THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

115

The first part of the book of Genesis contains not only the history of the creation of the world but also the fall of humanity, the power of the Will, punishment for disobedience, and actions that show how human beings are by nature prone to sin. As you read these verses from the Bible, think about the role of religion in shaping human nature, human perception, and its ethics for reaching perfection.

#### GENESIS 3

##### THE FALL

- 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”
- 2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”
- 4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
- 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.
- 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”
- 10 He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

11 And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

12 The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

16 To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

17 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. 21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” 23 So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden **cherubim** and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

**Cherubs or cherubim –**  
a member of the second order of angels, whose distinctive gift is knowledge, often represented as a winged child or winged head of a child

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God forbid Adam and Eve to eat the fruit in Paradise?
2. How did the serpent make Adam and Eve understand good and evil?
3. Would it have been possible for Adam and Eve to understand good and evil without breaking God’s commands (and hence experiencing the feeling of doing evil)?
4. Why did God not want Adam and Eve to understand good and evil?
5. What were the consequences for Adam and Eve of eating the fruit in Paradise?
6. Why was it necessary for God to punish them? What kind of punishment did they deserve?

7. 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' Was God being cruel in punishing them as he had forewarned them of the consequences? Was the punishment for their long-term good? How did God show love to Adam and Eve alongside punishment (vs. 20-24)?
8. How do you understand the order of God, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life." Is it correct to say that this was the beginning of the human process for learning from and correcting mistakes?
9. To the woman he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Does human nature need to control or be controlled?
10. Is any hope for redemption or a way back to Paradise given in this text? Is there anything human beings can do to find Redemption or Perfection?
11. How do the verses from the Bible reflect the idea of the weakness of the Will in human nature?



## NASIR KHOSRAW

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**Nasir-i Khusraw (Abu Muin Nasir b. Khusraw b. Harith al-Kubadhiyani, 1004-1078) was an 11<sup>th</sup> century Persian-Tajik poet, writer, philosopher and religious thinker. Nasir-i Khusraw wrote an account of his seven years of travel to Palestine, Arabia, and Egypt (see: *Safarnama* – the book of travels). He made a great contribution to Persian literature of this period with his *Divan*. His writings also include such works as *Wadjh-i din* (on religious interpretation) and *Zad al-musafirin*, which is a survey of ancient philosophies.**

### THE PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA

Now the pilgrims, highly honored, have returned,  
grateful for the grace of God, the Gracious One.  
Toward Mecca did they come from 'Arafat  
after shouting: 'At Thy service, oh Great Lord!'  
Tired from the pain and suffering in Hijaz,  
saved from painful punishment and burning Hell,  
they completed all the **rites** of pilgrimage,  
whole and healthy they returned now to their homes.  
I went also to receive them for a while,  
stretching forth my foot from the carpet's rim,  
for I had in midst of **yonder** caravan  
a dear friend, an honest, truly noble man,  
and I said to him: 'Please tell me, oh my dear,  
how did you survive this journey, full of fear?  
As I shall remain behind you all the time,

I am all **remorse, repentant** – but you know  
I am grateful that you could perform the task:  
there is no one like to you in our world!  
Tell me please: how did you honor that high place,  
reverently coming to that **sacral** space?  
While intent on putting on the pilgrims' dress,  
which intention did you formulate in mind?  
Did you make unlawful for yourself, my friend,  
everything existing save the Mighty Lord?'  
'No!' he said.  
I said to him: 'and when you cried:  
"At Thy service!" glorifying loud the Lord,  
did you hear the call of God and did you give  
then to Him your answer just as Moses did?'



Носири Хусрав - Nosiri Khusrav

- rite** -  
religious custom
- yonder** -  
in a distant, indicated place;  
over there
- remorse** -  
feeling of regret or sadness for  
doing wrong or sinning
- repentant** -  
feeling or showing sorrow for  
wrongdoing
- sacral** -  
relating to sacred rites



**Deny -**

To not allow

**pebble -**

small stone

**accursed -**devote to destruction; to  
imprecate misery or evil upon;  
to curse; to execrate; to  
anathematize**slay -**kill, murder; to defeat,  
overcome**sacrifice -**offer as a gift to a deity; To give  
away more or less altruistically  
something valuable to get  
at least a possibility to gain  
something else of value (such  
as self-respect, trust, love,  
freedom, prosperity), or to  
avoid an even greater loss**erect -**put up by the fitting together  
of materials or parts; to cause  
to stand up or out**surrender -**give up into the power,  
control, or possession of  
another; specifically (Military)  
to yield (land, a town, etc.)  
to an enemy; to give oneself  
up into the power of another,  
especially as a prisoner; to  
submit or give in to**certitude -**

sureness, certainty

**circumambulate -**walk around something in a  
circle, especially for a ritual  
purpose**sheer -**very thin or transparent; pure;  
unmixed; being only what it  
seems to be

‘No!’ he said.

I said to him: ‘On ‘Arafat

when you stood and found Him near to you, did you  
then **deny** yourself, aware but of His Truth?’

‘No!’ he said.

I said to him: ‘And when you went

to the sacred place like those “saints of the Cave”  
were secured you from the evil of your self,  
grieving over punishment of Hell and Fire?’

‘No!’ he said.

I said to him: ‘And when you cast

yonder **pebbles** at Satan, the **accursed**,  
did you throw out from yourself in one big move  
all your shameful actions and your customs too?’  
‘No!’ he said.I said to him: ‘and when you **slayed**finally the lamb to give it to the poor,  
did you find yourself then close to God and slayed  
there your lower Ego, **sacrificing** it?’

‘No!’ he said.

I said to him: ‘And when you looked

to the place which Abraham **erected** there,  
did **surrender** you yourself to God alone  
honestly and out of faith and **certitude**?’

‘No!’ he said.

I said to him: ‘And at the time

when you **circumambulated** with the crowds,  
did you think how angels and the cherubim  
circumambulate the mighty Throne of God?’

‘No!’ he said.

I said to him: ‘And when you run

from Safa to Marwa then repeatedly,  
did you see in **sheer** lucidity the worlds?  
Was your heart free now from Paradise and Hell?’

‘No!’ he said.

I said to him: ‘When you came back,

broke your heart because the Kaaba stayed behind?  
Did you make a grave in that place for yourself  
so as if you were already dusty bones?’But he said: ‘Whatever you have mentioned now –  
I don’t know if it’s correct or if it’s wrong!’

‘You did not perform the pilgrimage!’ I said,

‘did not reach the place of self-effacing bliss:

You have gone, have looked at Mecca, and come back,  
bought with money only trouble, desert heat!If you want to do the real pilgrimage  
later on – do as I have instructed you!’

**SOURCE:** Nasir-i Khusraw, *Diwan. Make Shield From Wisdom. Selected Verses from Nasir-i Khusraw's Divan*. Translated and Introduced by Annemarie Schimmel. London-New York, 2001, The Institute of Ismaili Studies. Pp.94-96; Nasir-i Khusraw, *Divan*, trans. P.L.Wilson and G.R.Aavani, *Forty Poems from the Divan*. Tehran, 1977.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS :

- I. To what extent can religion and religious rituals promote human development? What is the meaning of Pilgrimage according to Nasir Khosraw and the person who came back from the Pilgrimage (Hajj)? What are the differences between their points of view? What do you think about Pilgrimage? Does this poem relate to modern Muslim societies? Can you bring any examples of Pilgrimage from your own experience?

### COMPARISON QUESTIONS:

- I. Can you find similarities in religious aspects mentioned by Nasir Khosraw and Aziz Nehsin? What are the roles of Jesus and Nasir Khosraw in the texts? What are the common points in this text and the text of Theravada Buddhism? How can we (human beings) combine external and internal aspects?

### ADDITIONAL READING:

- Naser-e Khosraw, *Naser-e Khosraw's Book of Travels (Safarnama)*, trans. and with an introduction by W.M. Thackston (New York: Persian Heritage Association, Bibliotheca Persica, 1986), I.
- Farhad, Daftary, *The Ismailis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 216.
- Gholam Reza Aavani, introduction to *Forty Poems from the "Divan" by Nasir-i Khusraw*, translated by Peter Lamborn Wilson and Gholam Reza Aavani (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), I
- Henry Corbin, "Nasir-i Khusrau and Iranian Ismailism," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. R.N. Frye, vol. 4, *The period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 532.



## AZIZ AL-DIN NASAFI MAQSAD AL-AQSA (THE DISTANT GOAL)

Aziz al-Din Nasafi was one of the foremost 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian mystics, with his simple manner of explaining the place of man in the chain of existence, his essence and his illumination in the knowledge of God. In the language of mystics, theologians and philosophers, he provides readers with an overview of the major interpretation of medieval Islamic thought.

Aziz al-Din Nasafi was born at the beginning of the thirteen century in the town of Nasaf, hence his name. He lived at a time when the peaceful and civilized environment of Central Asia and Iran were shattered by intervention of the Mongol hordes. Nasafi's life spans the whole horrible course of this era, for he was born in Nasaf around the very beginning of the thirteenth century and died toward its end.

He wrote numerous works on various questions of philosophy, Sufism and religion, including Maqsad al-Aqsa, al-Insan al-Kamil, Kashf al-haqaiq, Zubdat al-haqaiq among others.

Nasafi had his own personal understanding of the interrelation between man and God and the role of human nature within it. From his work it is clear that he desired to understand human nature in order to decipher the truth (haqiqa) within oneself.

A group of dervishes – may God Almighty increase their number! – has asked me to write a book on understanding the essence, **epithets** and actions of God Almighty, on understanding holiness and prophecy, on the internal and external understanding of the human being, and of the latter's origins and return. The first book must explain:

- who the traveller is, what the path is, how many stopping points there are, and what the ultimate goal is;
- what shari'ah, **tariqa** and **haqiqa** are;
- what a 'perfect human' and a 'free perfect human' are;
- what social intercourse is, and what renunciation and journeying are.

I have accepted their request with pleasure. I have asked God Almighty for help and support, so that He might shield me from mistakes and impediments, and I have called the book The Distant Goal. In it, I quote from Sufis, adherents of oneness and **sages**, since they are travelers on the path to the truth. But what is a traveler? What is the path? How many stopping points are there? What is the ultimate goal?

### PATHS TO COGNITION

At the start it is the senses that constitute the traveler. After a while, it is reason, about which the Messenger says: 'Reason is the light that distinguishes truth from falsehood'. After reason, the divine light becomes the traveler.

Only one of the various travelers to set off on the path to cognition can attain the divine light; the rest remain at the sensory and rational levels. The aim and objective of all the travelers is to cognize God Almighty. One cannot cognize God Almighty through

#### epithet -

term used to describe a person or thing

#### tariqa -

the Muslim spiritual path toward direct knowledge (ma'rifah) of God or Reality (haqq)

#### haqiqa -

the ultimate truth

#### sage -

one venerated for experience, judgment, and wisdom

the senses and reason alone; one can only do it with the help of the divine light. Worldly reason is the lord of the earth. The flourishing and destruction that take place on the earth depend on it. The external and internal senses work for it....The prophet **Daud**... asked God what the point of creating the human was. The Almighty answered: 'I was a hidden treasure and wished to be cognized, so I created people in order to become cognized.' Consequently, the traveler must constantly strive for cognition, and must spend time with the informed and learn from them, so as to achieve the divine light and cognize God.

**O dervish!** You have learnt what a traveler is and what his aims and objectives are. You are now going to learn what the stopping places on the path to God are. On the path to God [...] there are no stopping places and paths. Sufis and the supporters of oneness have different opinions on whether there is a distance, i.e., a space, separating people from God. I will cite a few brief statements from these groups. Know that the Sufis say: 'There is no road (distance) from yourself to God, as the divine essence has no limits or bounds. It has no beginning, no end, no top, no bottom, no right, no left, and no before or after. It is a boundless, limitless light, an infinite and unbounded sea. No part of the universe is not covered by God; God **encompasses** everything, thanks to His learning.

**O dervish!** Until the traveler attains this, encompasses and understands it, he will be deprived of divine grace. But those who have attained this proximity and have become informed about it **contemplate** God every day, converse with Him and hear Him day and night, both when they are alone and when they are with other people, and they lead a normal life....

Reason and the senses do not understand this secret and do not perceive this proximity. This is also what the Sufis say. But the adherents of oneness (wahdat) say: 'There is no distance between yourself and God Almighty, as being is one and it is God's being. **O dervish!** If you imagine that in addition to God's being your own being exists as well, you are very much mistaken, since this is wrong. Only God Almighty has real being; this idea acts as a curtain between God and people. Until then the traveler will not overcome the path. He will not be able to reach God.

The egoist does not see God. **O dervish!** Until you get rid of egoism you will not see God –so say the **adherents** of wahdat. But some say there are many stages and distinctions in the process of traveling towards God, whereas others say the path to God has no limits.

What are **shari'ah**, tariqa and haqiqa? Shari'ah is the Prophet's vision. As the Prophet said, 'The light of haqiqa **illuminates** the path for the traveler only if he knows everything in the shari'ah he needs to know. Some people attain all three levels. They are guides for their people. Those who know only two levels are at the halfway point. Those who know but one are at the start of their journey. Those who know nothing at all are considered incomplete and not of full worth. They are classed in the animal category.

**O dervish!** It is the essence, not the form, that is important for definition, but if the two correspond then both have value. Whoever possesses the human essence is a human, and whoever possesses the animal essence is an animal.

The knowing see everything and know everything. They will find a common language with everything and will not live on this earth in vain. They can find agreement with people of learning, but cannot agree with rulers. If you have not understood this, I will explain everything more clearly.

**O dervish!** Do you know what the basic aim of these three levels –shari'ah, tariqa and haqiqa– are? The aim is for people to love the truth, to be true in their affairs, and to be well behaved.

If you have not understood this, I will put it another way. The basic aim is for people not to be animals, and for the instructions and prohibitions about which the Prophet of Islam spoke to be expressed verbally and confirmed with the heart.

- Daud -**  
the name used in the Qur'an  
for the prophet David
- dervish -**  
member of any of various  
Muslim ascetic orders, some of  
which perform whirling dances  
and vigorous chanting as acts  
of ecstatic devotion
- encompass -**  
constitute or include
- contemplate -**  
consider carefully and at length
- adherent -**  
supporter; follower
- Shari'ah -**  
the code of law based on the  
Koran
- illuminate -**  
to make easily understood;  
explain

The next goal is for people to know the religious sciences and to endeavor to converse with the knowledgeable, to know the **genuineness** of God and, after cognizing Him, to know the whole substance of bodies of the philosophical content of things.

Only after completing these stages can people understand shari'ah, tariqa and haqiqa. O dervish! Empty words and forms without substance are useless, since it is necessary to strive to achieve the aim in practice. Only action leads the traveler to the aim.

### ACTION AND BEHAVIOUR

Correct action and behavior elevate people. The action of the adherents of tariqa covers ten conditions:

1. The traveler must endeavor to cognize God.
2. The traveler must seek a knowledgeable mentor, since without a guide and a guide to action it is impossible to achieve a goal.
3. The traveler must be devoted. He must be a submissive pupil attached to his knowledgeable mentor. The will is like a rider's horse. The stronger the horse, the stronger the rider.
4. The traveler must carry out instructions. He must fully obey the mentor's will. All his actions aimed at achieving this and the next life must be carried out according to the mentor's instructions.
5. The traveler must renounce **importunity** as he is instructed. Should the mentor so wish, the traveler must renounce food, clothes and accommodation.
6. The traveler must be just and pious, honest, well behaved, and earning an honest living. He must remember that he can achieve every success if he honestly follows the Prophet's teachings.
7. The traveler must practice moderation in conversation.
8. The traveler must practice moderation in sleep.
9. The traveler must practice moderation in eating.
10. The traveler must practice solitude.

If the traveler has a mentor and fulfils all ten of these conditions, he will achieve the aim and the truth will be revealed to him. However, should he fail to fulfill even one of them he will not be able to complete his journey successfully.

O dervish! The behavior of the followers of the truth can also be reduced to ten forms:

1. Cognizing God and then cognizing the philosophical essence of things as they are.
2. Reconciliation with everything. This is a basic sign that they have cognized God and have renounced all objections, deviations and negations, that they are not at enmity with anyone, but, on the contrary, love and respect everyone. O dervish! People in different places are born of mothers, and each is called differently, one

**genuineness** -  
undisputed credibility

**importunity** -  
insistent solicitation and  
entreaty

a Hanafite, another a **Shafi'ite**, a third a Christian and a fourth a Muslim; the followers of the truth need to consider each of these like themselves: weak and helpless.

3. Being merciful. Everything they do should be useful for people in this world and the next. **Edification** and education constitute the essence and foundation of mercy. In each they must educate the adherents of knowledge and educate strong rulers, so that people are at ease.
4. They must be restrained and modest with regard to everyone, so that they treat everyone in the same way.
5. Submissiveness, obedience, freedom, agreement, being at ease.
6. Hope and patience.
7. They must not be greedy or grasping, for the source of all evil actions is greed (the mother of all filth). O dervish! Being satisfied with a little, plus being calm, leads the traveler to the goal.
8. Being satisfied with a little.
9. Not harming people but, on the contrary, doing them good.
10. Being composed and calm in all areas. This is also the knowledge and action of the supporters of truth. Until the traveler attains perfection in learning and philosophy and completes his spiritual journey towards God (sair-illa allah) and in God (sair-fil allah), these signs, qualities and morals will not be displayed in him.

## THE PERFECT PERSON

The perfect person is someone who has achieved perfection in shari'ah, tariqa and haqika. If you do not understand this, I will explain it another way. Four **virtues** elevate people to the level of perfection: virtuous words, virtuous deeds, virtuous morals and virtuous knowledge. Whoever has perfected these four qualities has attained the level of his own perfection. The perfect human is referred to by various names, merits and expressions corresponding to all the qualities of good behavior, and all this is correct. He has been called a sheikh, a leader, a teacher, a guide, a man of knowledge, a man of **maturity**, and a perfect and complete mentor. He has also been called an all-embracing bowl of the world, a window of the world, a great **antidote** and a life-giving elixir. He has been called Jesus, the raiser of the dead, Khizr, who managed to find and drink from the source of life, and Solomon, who knew the language of the birds.

O dervish! Everything in existence is like a person, and the perfect person is that person's heart. Some say everything in existence is like a tree and that people are its fruits. But the perfect person is the sum and **quintessence** of humanity. His knowledge is deep and extensive and penetrates and covers this tree. For him there are no secrets, since he has achieved the level of cognizing God and has completely understood the philosophy and essence of things. After this, he has no form of work, enjoyment or aim other than doing good to people and engaging in improving the imperfect and putting them on the right track.

## THE NOBLE PERFECT PERSON

O dervish! Despite the perfect person's greatness and perfection, he is unable to fulfill his desire of being pleasant and polite. He is perfect in learning and ethics, but in questions of strength, power and will he is imperfect. The perfect person may sometimes be strong

### Shafi'ite -

member of one of the four sects of the Sunnites

### edification -

intellectual, moral, or spiritual improvement

### virtue -

any admirable quality or attribute

### maturity -

the state or quality of being fully grown or developed

### antidote -

a remedy or other agent used to neutralise or counteract the effects of a poison

### quintessence -

the pure, highly concentrated essence of a thing



and powerful, and may be a ruler or a shah. But it is clear how impotent human power is. People truly have more failures and bad luck than they do power. Prophets, saints, emirs and monarchs have wished much for themselves. But they have been unable to attain it. On the other hand, they have wished for a lot of things not to happen, but they have. Consequently, people –perfect and imperfect, knowledgeable and ignorant, rulers and subjects– are all weak and powerless. Some of those who are perfect have understood the secret that people cannot obtain the accomplishment of everything they wish, that it is impossible to do this through effort and force, and that, therefore, one should lead a modest life. They concluded that it was better to renounce everything. When they renounced, they become free. At first they renounced possessions and careers; then they renounced being tutors and guides. They renounced educating and teaching. They preferred freedom and peace to everything. The reason why many people have not undertaken such renunciation but have engaged in **tutelage** and leadership is their career. For the Prophet Muhammad... said: 'The last thing that leaves the righteous person is the love of a career.' As we have said, the perfect person has four characteristics: noble actions, noble morals, noble expressions and education. But eight characteristics make up the fully free. Apart from the four mentioned there are renunciations, solitude, satisfaction with a little and calm. Whoever possesses all eight of these features is a fully free person; whoever possesses only the first four is a perfect person. .... After the fully free travelers have renounced property, careers and leadership and have achieved freedom and peace, they divide into two types. Some, after solitude and peace, choose passivity (inertia), whereas others say freedom and peace consist in **submissiveness** and obedience. Each group engages in its affairs. The first is convinced that, just as honey contains warmth and **camphor** cold, so conversation with people contains division. Therefore, they avoid conversations with them and reject their presents and gifts. No matter whether or not the offerings are permitted, this group avoids them as people do snakes and scorpions. The other group, which chooses submissiveness, obedience and contemplation, says that people do not know their future and what their successes and failures will result in. For them it is not important whether or not someone comes to visit them. They neither avoid other people nor feel insulted if others do not visit them. They accept everything they are given, if it is permitted. This poor person, who has for some time been in a state of inactivity .... it is unknown which of these two types is better, for both contain many forms of benefit and harm.

Know that a human is a microcosm. Everything except the human is the **macrocosm**. The macrocosm is a form of manifestation of the microcosm. If you understand the microcosm as it is in reality, you will understand the macrocosm as it is. And this is very important.

Self-cognition is very hard. It took me eighty years to achieve this, during which I visited many scholars. Wherever they were, they found time for me. My goal was to know myself. Caliph Ali, in solitude, asked the prophet Muhammad: 'What do I need to do, so as not to have lived in vain?' The Prophet answered: 'So as not to have lived in vain, know yourself, for to know oneself is to know God and to complete the **ascent**.'

Know that the macrocosm is the primary substance. Everything that appears in the

**tutelage -**

the capacity or activity of a guardian; guardianship

**submissiveness -**

the trait of being willing to yield to the will of another person or a superior force

**camphor -**

aromatic crystalline compound obtained naturally from the wood or leaves of the camphor tree or synthesised

**macrocosm -**

the entire world; the universe

**ascent -**

advancement, especially in social status

macrocosm derives from the primary substance. The 'ruh-e izafi' (relative soul) is the primary substance of the macrocosm, and the primary substance of the microcosm is sperm (nutfa). The macrocosm has four seas (darya). So does the microcosm. I will first explain the essence of the four seas of the microcosm. Whilst the sperm is in a man's **spinal cord** it is considered the first sea. After it has been transferred into a mother's womb it is considered the second sea of the microcosm. Whilst the sperm is in the man's spinal cord it is considered a hidden treasure. It is also considered thus when in the mother's womb, but with the difference that here it begins to display itself. After ending up in the mother's womb it is considered the primary substance of the macroworld. At this moment human features appear, the quality of which distinguish the first sea of this splendor. Next, the second sea appears then the third, then the fourth and it becomes a person.

I know that you will not have understood all this, so I will express it more clearly. The fetus has an exterior and an interior. The child's external form comes about from this exterior, and the child's internal form comes about from the interior. The exterior form is called 'adam-e mulk', the interior 'malakut'. The same is the case with the microcosm and the macrocosm.

This hidden secret was the substance of God. It is the first sea. As a result of the **gleam** of the first sea, the second sea, called 'ruh-e izafi', appears. It is the substance of the macrocosm. Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad said: 'What God created first is this substance; it is reason... attributes follow'. After the gleam of the second sea the third and fourth appear. The macrocosm is its mulk, the exterior, which is the primary substance. The macrocosm has an exterior and an interior. The exterior relative soul is the heavenly spheres, the stars, the natural bodies and the particles, taken within the aggregate of the universal adam-e malakut. The universe, the stars and the natural particles, the four elements, are the creator, the father and the mother –both in the umahat they too are manifested in a state of constant splendor. Out of the splendor of these 'parents' have appeared and appear three worlds: minerals, vegetables and animals...., and, ultimately, humans. It is then that people achieve perfection and become knowledgeable. The first sea, being a hidden treasure wanted to be known and began to be known by people. One needs a keen feeling to understand these words. Talks with scholars can be beneficial.

**spinal cord -**

the thick, whitish cord of nerve tissue that extends from the medulla oblongata down through the spinal column and from which the spinal nerves branch off to various parts of the body

**gleam -**

brief beam or flash of light

**hikmat -**

wisdom

**cartilage -**

a tough, elastic, fibrous connective tissue found in various parts of the body, such as the joints, outer ear, and larynx

**tendon -**

a band of tough, inelastic fibrous tissue that connects a muscle with its bony attachment

## THE ASCENSION OF THE HUMAN

The adherents of **Hikmat** say that after someone has attained the stage of reason and has become rational and perfect he ends his ascension (uruj), thus completing the circle, since the start was reason, and when he attains the stage of reason the circle is complete.

The adherents of Wahdat say that when a person (adam) has attained the stage of reason and has become rational and perfect, he acts in accordance with his intellect and attains the essence of God. Since the start was the divine substance, the circle is complete once this initial substance is attained. Because he knows the essence of God, he completes his elevation.

Let us now move on to explaining the internal and external aspects of the person.

Know that when the sperm is in the womb it preserves its form for a certain time. After a while, it becomes... blood..., and then takes on a form... Later, the **cartilage**, veins, **tendons** and nerves appear.

Each planet influences and affects earthly phenomena, including fetuses. At the start of the fourth month, when the Sun's guardianship begins, life begins. The senses and **volitional** movements appear. After the fourth month, the soul and the body appear. The mother's blood becomes food for the child, whom it enters via the navel. This continues until the eighth month. In the ninth month, when the guardianship shifts to Jupiter, the child emerges into this world, i.e., is born. When the sperm falls into the mother's womb, it acquires a rounded shape, just as water (or any liquid) naturally has a rounded shape. Thanks to the temperature of the mother's body, the sperm matures and begins to separate its thinner parts from its thicker ones. When the sperm has finished maturing, its thicker parts start coming out; they start to reveal themselves. In accordance with this, the fetus has four layers, which are found year after year. In other words, the parts of the fetus that appear on the outside occupy its surface layer. The layers below the surface layer are connected to it, but are less elegant than either it or that which is to be found above the centre of the fetus. Therefore, the fetus has four layers. The central part of the fetus, which takes up the middle of the fetus, is called black **bile** (sauda). It is cold (tar) and dry (khushk). Its nature is earthly, so it fulfils the function of earth. The second is lymph (balgham). It is cold and moist. Its nature is **aqueous**, so it fulfils the function of water. The third is blood (khun). It has the nature of air. The surroundings (mukhit) are called yellow bile (safra). This is warm and dry. It has the nature of fire, so it fulfils the function of fire. Hence, the substance called the fetus is divided into four elements and four types of nature; all these forms emerge in the first month. From these four natures and elements three types of essence (soul) (mawalidi segona) appear: mineral, vegetable and animal. All the four elements and natures shared this organiser (kussam). As a result, the internal and external organs appear. All the organs in this case are minerals, and each organ receives a specific dose of the four natures (black bile, lymph, blood and yellow bile), some of them equally, and others more or less in accordance with the call for wisdom. Then the distributor mixes everything and, in the end, the internal and external organs appear, as do the senses and everything linked to them, as well as **volitional** (willed) movement. All this happens within one month. At the end of the process of the development of the minerals and the appearance of organs, various forces appear in each of these internal and external organs: the force of attraction (kuwwa-e chaziba), a detaining force (kuwwa-e masika), a digestive force (kuwwa-e khazima), and a **repulsive** force (kuwwa-e dafna). As the organs, parts of the body and different forces appear, the child develops a need for food, which it takes in from the mother's blood, through its navel. After the blood enters the child's stomach, a juice (or essence) secreted after digestion, the 'khilus' ('kilus'), which is found in the liver, turns into the vegetable soul, whilst its other **remnants** turn into the yellow bile, the blood, the lymph and the black bile. The gall bladder absorbs the remnants of the yellow bile, the black bile is distributed from the spleen throughout the entire body, and the vegetable soul distributes the blood throughout the body, via the **intestines**. Thus, this vegetable soul

**volitional -**

with deliberate intention

**bile -**

bitter, alkaline, brownish-yellow or greenish-yellow fluid that is secreted by the liver, stored in the gallbladder, and discharged into the duodenum and aids in the emulsification, digestion, and absorption of fats

**aqueous -**

relating to, similar to, containing, or dissolved in water; watery

**volitional -**

with deliberate intention

**repulsive -**

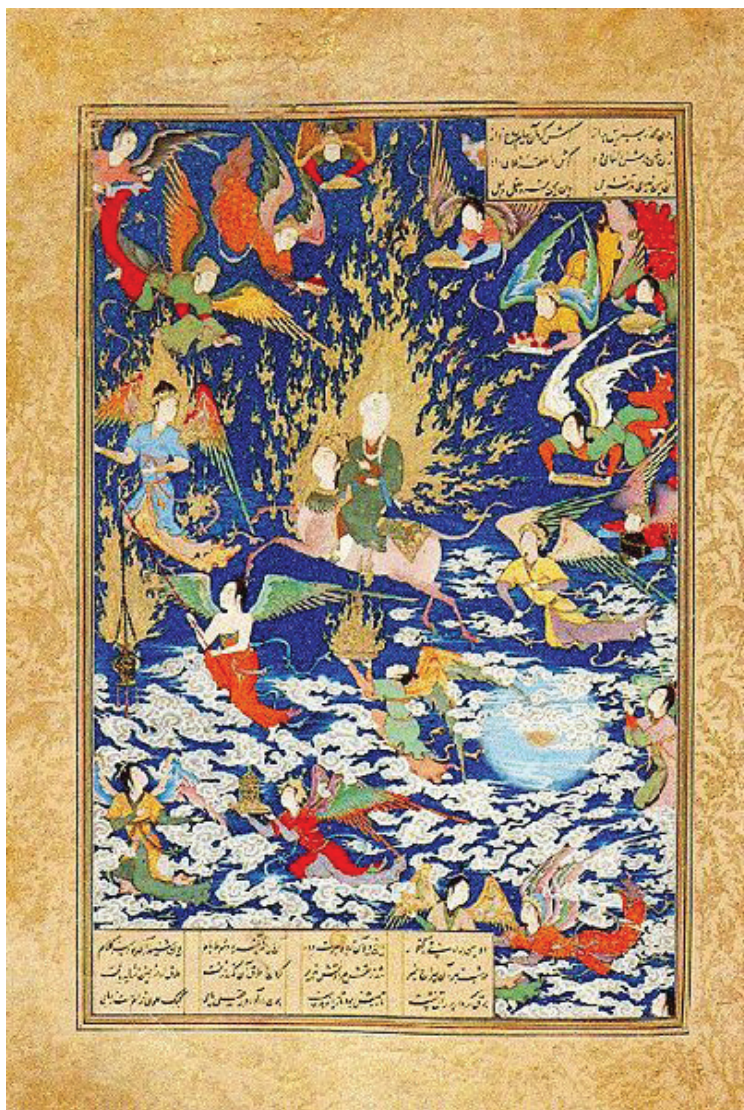
tending to repel or drive away

**remnant -**

something left over; a remainder

**intestine -**

the portion of the alimentary canal extending from the stomach to the anus



**MIRAJ BY SULTAN  
MUHAMMAD**

turns into the **pneumatic** soul (*ruhe nafsani*). The remnants of the pneumatic soul are spread throughout the body via the organs. Thus do senses and volitional movement appear in all the organs. This is the essential aspect of the animal soul. All this happens over one month. Hence, the growth and development of the four elements, plants and minerals continues over four months.

There are ten types of sensation: five external and five internal. The comprehending and motive pneumatic soul, found in the brain, perceives in two ways: internally and externally. The external senses are hearing, vision, smell, taste and touch. The overall internal sense (*hiss-e mushtarak*) is the reflection of perception. This comprehends both what is evident (*shahid*) and what is absent. Everything comprehended by the external senses is comprehended by the internal sense, and everything is accumulated in the overall sense. This is why the sense that comprehends the essence of heard (*musame'at*), seen (*mubasirat*), smelt (*mashmuat*), tasted (*muzafiqat*) and touched (*musalammat*) sensations is called the overall sense. All these are accumulated in the overall sense in that they perceive them altogether and comprehend the essence of **enmity** within enmity and friendship within friendship.

The masterful sense (*muttasarif*) comprehends in a similar way that which is preserved.

The motive force is also dual, comprising a motivational force and an active force. When people imagine desirable images, this is considered an action of the motivational

is the distributor of food in the body. The liver, which is found on the right side, is the receptacle of the vegetable soul. Once the blood has been spread throughout the body, growth and development begins. During the vegetable soul's development (which takes place over a month), the liver (*jigar*) and stomach (*meda*) gradually strengthen, and become capable of digestion. The heart absorbs the essence of the vegetable soul, which is in the liver. This essence turns into blood and occupies a place in the heart. Thus, blood appears in the heart. After secondary digestion, ... it turns into the vital force. The remainder, or, rather, the essence in the heart, turns into the animal soul. During the process of growth and development, the remnants of this relative soul are spread to all the organs, and as a result become vitally active.

It is the animal soul that is the distributor of life (*kussam-e hayat*) in the body. Its place in the body is the heart, which is found on the left-hand side. The fatty substance in the heart that is the essence of the animal soul is absorbed by the brain. As a result of this, a blood clot is formed, where it is again digested and

**pneumatic** -  
consisting of, or resembling,  
air; gaseous

**enmity** -  
deep-seated, often mutual  
hatred



force. The cause of the motivational force is the motive force, and the movement of the organs proceeds from it. The motive force is subject to and obeys the motivational force. The motivational force, which is the cause of the motive force, pursues two aims: to gain benefit and enjoyment (with regard to which it is called the force of desire), or to **repel** or eliminate injury and harm (with regard to which it is called the force of rage and **indignation**).

### THE RELATIVE SOUL AND TALENT

As we have said, people and animals both have three types of spirit: vegetable, animal and mental. Know this. But there is another soul, which animals lack: the human soul. This is called the relative soul, as it comes from God. We have said several times that the relative soul has many names: 'the primary substance'; 'primary reason'; 'the qalam' ('the pen'); 'the spirit' and 'the spirit of Muhammad'. In this book we will call it the relative soul. Until a person moves away from the stage of animals and beasts, Satan and angels, he will not achieve the human stage. And if he does achieve the human stage but does not acquire a certain capacity, he will not be inspired by the relative soul. This capacity consists of the ability of someone who has gone through the above-mentioned stages and achieved the human stage, becoming absolutely purified from evil qualities and **vices** and attaining good qualities, to take in the relative soul. Some people attain the relative soul at the age of twenty, others at thirty, a third group at forty. To be more precise, age is not important here; everything depends on the capacity. Whoever acquires this capacity will be inspired by this soul. Shaikh ul-Mashaikh (the mentor of mentors) Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-Arabi, in *Fusus*, writes: 'Adam – may Allah bless him! – said: "Achieving **equilibrium** is a capacity and a talent; the breath of the soul is the acceptance of the soul. The possibility of becoming vivified through this soul depends on two conditions: reaching the human stage and acquiring the capacity and talent. Whoever fulfils these conditions will become a Muslim and will become **vivified** through this soul. If you want to know which stage you are at, I will explain in detail here, even though I have already talked about this elsewhere. Know that if you engage in and wish for nothing but sleep and lustful desire, you will be considered an animal. If, furthermore, you get angry and enter into arguments with people so as to eat and sleep, you will be considered one of the ferocious beasts. If, in addition, you live **perfidiously** and craftily, and lie, you will be considered a Satan. But despite the fact that you will eat, sleep, and commit adultery, if you hurt no one, but, on the contrary, do people good and give them rest, and if you do not lie but treat everyone with kind words and kind deeds, you will be considered an angel. Besides all these qualities there is the aspiration to learning and understanding, so as to know oneself. In this case you will be considered a human. It is time to

**repel** -

fight against

**indignation** -

anger aroused by something unjust, mean, or unworthy

**vice** -

evil, degrading, or immoral habit

**equilibrium** -

balanced position

**vivified** -

made more lively

**perfidiously** -

violating faith or loyalty

acquire the capacity and talent, to become vivified by the soul. As we have said, capacity and talent involves becoming purified of evil qualities and bad morals and then becoming enhanced with good morals and the best qualities and learning, at which point the relative soul accepts the talent.

Development (tarakki) and ascension (wauzu'): know that when someone recognizes the prophets and becomes a believer, that person is called a mumin (believer). If, furthermore, he prays and worships God, he is considered an 'abid (devout). If he renounces the world and worldly life and takes up an ascetic lifestyle, he is called an ascetic. If, besides adopting asceticism, he cognizes God and the essence of philosophy and things, and attains the stage of cognition, he is called an arif (**gnostic**). If, in addition to cognition, God Almighty **bestows** on him divine grace and special inspiration, he is considered a wali (saint). If, in addition to inspiration, the Almighty bestows on him the capacity to work miracles and prophesy, he is called a nabi (prophet). If, besides miracles and revelations, God sends down to him a book and relics, his name becomes Messenger. If he **rescinds** the existing Shari'ah (code of religious laws) and creates a new one and a new Ka'ba (the direction Muslims turn to when praying), he is considered the final prophet. Just as divine learning and wisdom have no limits or boundaries, so this development and ascension also have no limits.

**gnostic** -  
possessing intellectual or  
spiritual knowledge

**bestow** -  
present as a gift or an honor

**rescind** -  
make void; repeal or annul

**SOURCE:** KABUL STATE ARCHIVE MANUSCRIPT, LIB-L50A.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What main characteristics of human nature does Nasafi identify in his work?
2. How does Nasafi describe the microcosm and the macrocosm?
3. How does he describe the role of external (planetary and stellar) and internal (biological and mental) factors in a person's development?
4. By what characteristics does human nature differ from the nature of animals?
5. How does one become 'human'? What role do abilities and talent play in this process?
6. To what extent can human nature change, and by what means is this possible?
7. How do Sufis see the issue of people's development? How are shari'ah, tariqa and haqiqa linked?
8. How far does a change in people's nature depend on a mentor, and how much does it depend on people themselves?
9. Do egoism, emotions, reason, passion, will, etc. hinder change in human nature? What other factors might hinder change?
10. What is the role of activities? How sufficient, from the modern viewpoint, are the activities of supporters of tariqa and haqiqa in changing people? What is this action aimed at amongst Sufis?
11. How do Sufis understand freedom? How do people achieve freedom?
12. Which forms of passion hinder the achievement of freedom?
13. How apt is the Sufi analogy between a person and the universe?
14. To what extent does change in people's nature depend on their surroundings? How much does it depend on their biology? How much does it depend on their talent and capabilities?
15. According to Aziz Nasafi, what are the limits to human change and development?

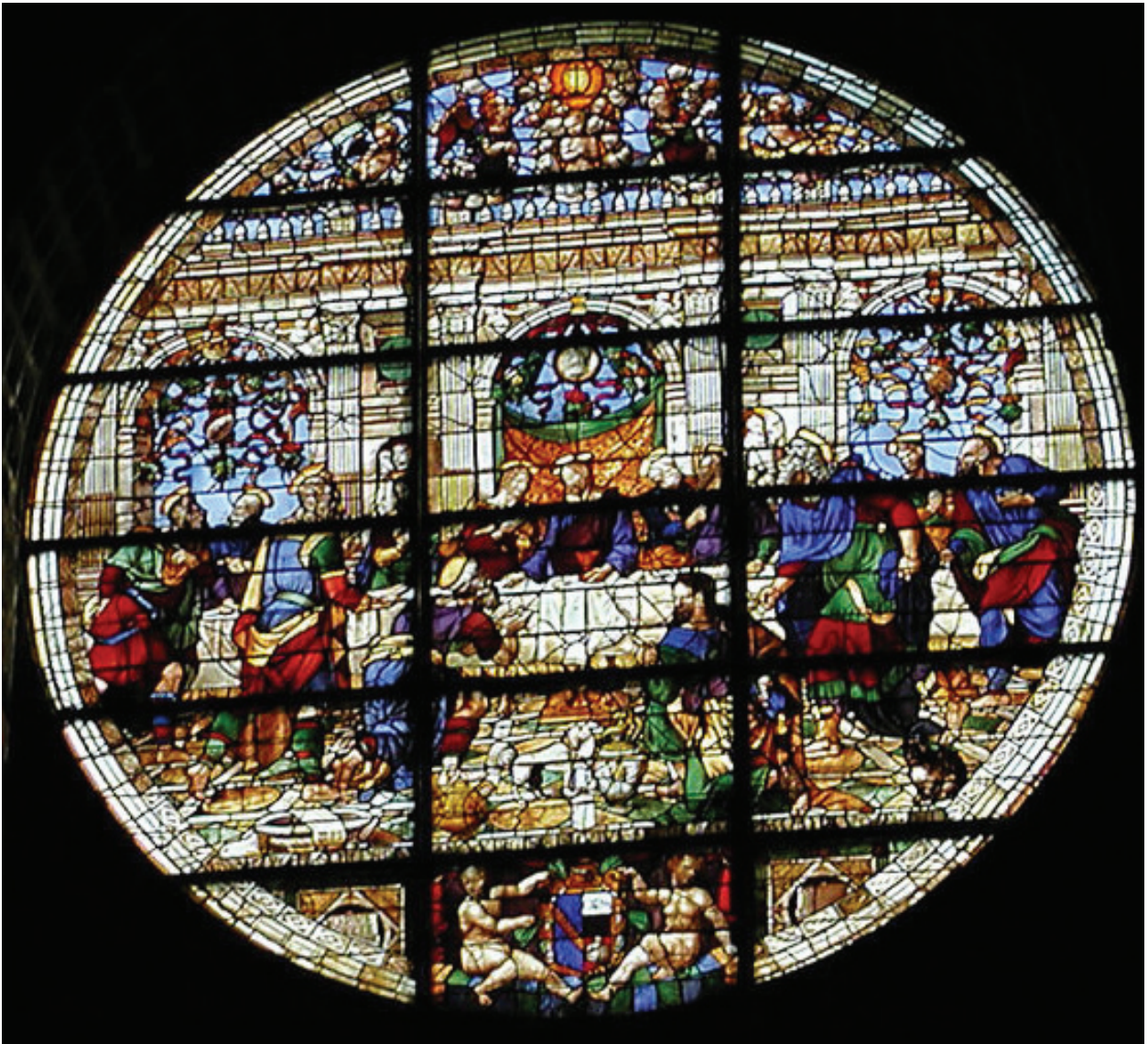
**REVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Nasafi, like Arabi, Rumi and others, was a Sufi. Does Nasafi's version of Sufism present a different version of human nature? Support your answer with references to specific passages.
2. Can you compare the concepts of "duty" and "action" in the Bhagavad Gita with Nasafi's concepts of "freedom" and "action"? What do you learn from attempting this comparison?
3. Nasafi makes an analogy between the individual and the universe. Does the same idea exist in the various Buddhist texts that you read?

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CATHERINE'S CHURCH IN SIENA, ITALY

## THE DIALOGUE: A TREATISE OF DISCRETION HOW GOD INDUCES THE SOUL TO LOOK AT THE GREATNESS OF THIS BRIDGE, INASMUCH AS IT REACHES FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN

Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Italian mystic and diplomat, was a member of the third order of Dominicans during the age of the calamitous Great Western Schism (1378-1417). She was born in Siena, the last of a family of twenty-three children. From a very young age, Catherine began practicing rigorous forms of asceticism (punishing one's physical body for spiritual salvation) and to see visions, which she interpreted as communication with the divine. She was one of the most important and influential figures in the social, religious and political development of the fourteenth century. Catherine of Siena stood out in the midst of the chaos and fragmentation of the times as a figure that is inspired reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Apart from the extraordinary circumstances of its production, the Dialogues have a special interest for readers today. She dictated the following work to her secretaries during a vision in which she had a conversation with God. As you read this excerpt, consider how the nature of man is conceived by St. Catherine. Consider how the mystic eye envisions a human being and especially the union that humanity has with the divine.

"Open, my daughter, the eye of your intellect, and you will see the accepted and the ignorant, the imperfect, and also the perfect who follow Me in truth, so that you may grieve over the damnation of the ignorant, and rejoice over the perfection of My beloved servants.

"You will see further how those bear themselves who walk in the light, and those who walk in the darkness. I also wish you to look at the Bridge of My only-begotten Son, and see the greatness thereof, for it reaches from Heaven to earth, that is, that the earth of your humanity is joined to the greatness of the **Deity** thereby. I say then that this Bridge reaches from Heaven to earth, and constitutes the union which I have made with man.

"This was necessary, in order to reform the road which was broken, as I said to you, in order that man should pass through the **bitterness** of the world, and arrive at life; but the Bridge could not be made of earth sufficiently large to span the flood and give you **Eternal** Life, because the earth of human nature was not sufficient to satisfy for guilt, to remove the stain of Adam's sin which stain corrupted the whole human race and gave out a stench, as I have said to you above. It was, therefore, necessary to join human nature with the height of My nature, the Eternal Deity, so that it might be sufficient to satisfy for the whole human race, so that human nature should sustain the punishment, and that the Divine nature, united with the human, should make acceptable the sacrifice of My only Son, offered to Me to take death from you and to give you life.

"So the height of the Divinity, humbled to the earth, and joined with your humanity, made the Bridge and reformed the road. Why was this done? In order that man might come to his true happiness with the angels. And observe that it is not enough, in order that you should have life, that My Son should have made you this Bridge, unless you walk thereon."

**Deity** -  
God

**bitterness** -  
feeling of deep and bitter anger  
and ill-will

**eternal** -  
continuing without  
interruption; forever

## HOW THIS SOUL PRAYS GOD TO SHOW HER THOSE WHO CROSS BY THE AFORESAID BRIDGE, AND THOSE WHO DO NOT.

Then this soul exclaimed with **ardent** love, “Oh, **inestimable Charity**, sweet above all sweetness! Who would not be inflamed by such great love? What heart can help breaking at such tenderness? It seems, oh, Abyss of Charity, as if you were mad with love of Your creature, as if You could not live without him, and yet You are our God who have no heed of us, Your greatness does not increase through our good, for You are unchangeable, and our evil causes You no harm, for You are the Supreme and Eternal Goodness. What moves You to do us such mercy through pure love, and on account of no debt that You owed us, or need that You had of us? We are rather Your guilty and **malignant** debtors. Wherefore, if I understand aright, Oh, Supreme and Eternal Truth, I am the thief and You have been punished for me. For I see Your Word, Your Son, fastened and nailed to the Cross, of which You have made me a Bridge, as You have shown me, Your miserable servant, for which reason, my heart is bursting, and yet cannot burst, through the hunger and the desire which it has conceived towards You. I remember, my Lord, that You were willing to show me who are those who go by the Bridge and those who do not; should it please Your goodness to manifest this to me, willingly would I see and hear it.”

## HOW THIS BRIDGE HAS THREE STEPS, WHICH SIGNIFY THE THREE STATES OF THE SOUL; AND HOW, BEING LIFTED ON HIGH, YET IT IS NOT SEPARATED FROM THE EARTH; AND HOW THESE WORDS ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD: “IF I AM LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH, I WILL DRAW ALL THINGS UNTO ME.”

Then the Eternal God, to enamor and excite that soul still more for the **salvation** of souls, replied to her, and said: “First, as I have shown you that for which you wished, and ask Me, I will now explain to you the nature of this Bridge. I have told you, My daughter, that the Bridge reaches from Heaven to earth; this is through the union which I have made with man, whom I formed of the clay of the earth. Now learn that this Bridge, My only-begotten Son, has three steps, of which two were made with the wood of the most Holy Cross, and the third still retains the great bitterness He tasted, when He was given **gall** and **vinegar** to drink. In these three steps you will recognize three states of the soul, which I will explain to you below. The feet of the soul, signifying her **affection**, are the first step, for the feet carry the body as the affection carries the soul. Wherefore these pierced Feet are steps by which you can arrive at His side, which **manifests** to you the secret of His Heart, because the soul, rising on the steps of her affection, commences to taste the love of His Heart, gazing into that open Heart of My Son, with the eye of the intellect, and finds It consumed with **ineffable** love. I say consumed, because He does not love you for His own profit, because you can be of no profit to Him, He being one and the same thing with Me. Then the soul is filled with love, seeing herself so much loved. Having passed the second step, the soul reaches out to the third – that is – to the Mouth, where she finds peace from the terrible war she has been waging with her sin. On the first step, then, lifting her feet from the affections of the earth, the soul strips herself of vice; on the second she fills herself with love and virtue; and on the third she tastes peace. So the Bridge has three steps, in order that, climbing past the first and the second, you may reach the last, which is lifted on high, so that the water, running beneath, may not touch it; for, in My Son was no **venom** of sin. This Bridge is lifted on high, and yet, at the same time, joined to the earth. Do you know when it was lifted on high? When My Son was lifted up on the wood of the most Holy Cross, the Divine nature remaining joined to the lowliness of the earth of your humanity.

**ardent** -  
expressing or characterised by  
warmth of feeling; passionate

**inestimable** -  
impossible to estimate or  
compute

**charity** -  
the theological virtue defined  
as love directed first toward  
God but also toward oneself  
and one's neighbours as  
objects of God's love

**malignant** -  
threatening to life, as a disease;  
virulent

**salvation** -  
deliverance from the power or  
penalty of sin; redemption

**gall** -  
bile; a bitter substance

**vinegar** -  
an impure dilute solution  
of acetic acid obtained by  
fermentation beyond the  
alcohol stage and used as a  
condiment and preservative

**affection** -  
feeling or emotion

**manifest** -  
show or demonstrate plainly;  
reveal

**ineffable** -  
incapable of being expressed;  
indescribable or unutterable

**venom** -  
poison

“For this reason I said to you that, being lifted on high, He was not lifted out of the earth, for the Divine nature is united and **kneaded** into one thing with it. And there was no one who could go on the Bridge until It had been lifted on high, wherefore He said, ‘*Si exaltatus fuero a terra omnia traham ad me ipsum*,’ that is, ‘If I am lifted on high I will draw all things to Me.’ My Goodness, seeing that in no other way could you be drawn to Me, I sent Him in order that He should be lifted on high on the wood of the Cross, making of it an anvil on which My Son, born of human generation, should be remade, in order to free you from death, and to restore you to the life of grace; wherefore He drew everything to Himself by this means, namely, by showing the ineffable love, with which I love you, the heart of man being always attracted by love. Greater love, then, I could not show you, than to lay down My life for you; perforce, then, My Son was treated in this way by love, in order that ignorant man should be unable to resist being drawn to Me.

“In very truth, then, My Son said, that, being lifted on high, He would draw all things to Him. And this is to be understood in two ways. Firstly, that, when the heart of man is drawn by the affection of love, as I have said, it is drawn together with all the powers of his soul, that is, with the Memory, the Intellect, and the Will; now, when these three powers are **harmoniously** joined together in My Name, all the other operations which the man performs, whether in deed or thought, are pleasing, and joined together by the effect of love, because love is lifted on high, following the Sorrowful **Crucified** One; so My Truth said well, ‘If I am lifted on high,’ etc., meaning, that if the heart and the powers of the soul are drawn to Him, all the actions are also drawn to Him. Secondly, everything has been created for the service of man, to serve the necessities of rational creatures, and the rational creature has not been made for them, but for Me, in order to serve Me with all his heart, and with all his affection. See, then, that man being drawn, everything else is drawn with him, because everything else has been made for him. It was therefore necessary that the Bridge should be lifted on high, and has steps, in order that it might be climbed with greater facility.”

**HOW THIS BRIDGE IS BUILT OF STONES WHICH SIGNIFY VIRTUES; AND HOW ON THE BRIDGE IS A HOSTELRY WHERE FOOD IS GIVEN TO THE TRAVELLERS; AND HOW HE WHO GOES OVER THE BRIDGE GOES TO LIFE, WHILE HE WHO GOES UNDER IT GOES TO PERDITION AND DEATH.**

“This Bridge is built of stones, so that, if the rain comes, it may not **impede** the traveler. Do you know what these stones are? They are the stones of true and sincere virtues. These stones were not built into the walls before the Passion of My Son, and therefore even those who attempted to walk by the road of virtue were prevented from arriving at their journey’s end, because Heaven was not yet unlocked with the key of the Blood, and the rain of Justice did not let them pass; but, after the stones were made, and built up on the Body of My sweet Son, My

**kneaded -**

mixed and worked into a uniform mass, as by folding, pressing, and stretching with the hands

**harmoniously -**

in a manner exhibiting accord in feeling or action

**crucified -**

put (a person) to death by nailing or binding to a cross

**impede -**

to retard or obstruct the progress of



Word, of whom I have spoken to you, He, who was Himself the Bridge, **moistened** the **mortar** for its building with His Blood. That is, His Blood was united with the mortar of **divinity**, and with the **fortitude**, and the fire of love; and, by My power, these stones of the virtues were built into a wall, upon Him as the foundation, for there is no virtue which has not been proved in Him, and from Him all virtues have their life. Wherefore no one can have the virtue given by a life of grace, but from Him, that is, without following the footsteps of His doctrine. He has built a wall of the virtues, planting them as living stones, and cementing them with His Blood, so that every believer may walk speedily, and without any **servile** fear of the rain of Divine justice, for he is **sheltered** by the mercy which descended from Heaven in the **Incarnation** of this My Son. How was Heaven opened? With the key of His Blood; so you see that the Bridge is walled and roofed with Mercy. His also is the **Hostelry** in the Garden of the Holy Church, which keeps and ministers the Bread of Life, and gives to drink of the Blood, so that My creatures, journeying on their **pilgrimage**, may not, through weariness, faint by the way; and for this reason My love has ordained that the Blood and the Body of My only-begotten Son, wholly God and wholly man, may be ministered to you. The pilgrim, having passed the Bridge, arrives at the door which is part of the Bridge, at which all must enter, wherefore He says: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, he who follows Me does not walk in darkness, but in light.' And in another place My Truth says, 'That no man can come to Me if not by Him,' and so indeed it is. Therefore He says of Himself that He is the Road, and this is the truth, and I have already shown you that He is a Road in the form of the Bridge. And He says that He is the Truth, and so He is, because He is united with Me who am the Truth, and he who follows Him, walks in the Truth, and in Life, because he who follows this Truth receives the life of grace, and cannot faint from hunger, because the Truth has become your food, nor fall in the darkness, because He is light without any falsehood. And, with that Truth, He **confounded** and destroyed the lie that the Devil told to Eve, with which he broke up the road to Heaven, and the Truth brought the pieces together again, and cemented them with His Blood. Wherefore, those who follow this road are the sons of the Truth, because they follow the Truth, and pass through the door of Truth and find themselves united to Me, who am the Door and the Road and at the same time Infinite Peace.

"But he who walks not on this road, goes under the Bridge, in the river where there are no stones, only water, and since there are no supports in the water, no one can travel that way without drowning; thus have come to pass the sins, and the condition of the world. Wherefore, if the affection is not placed on the stones, but is placed, with inordinate love, on creatures, loving them, and being kept by them far from Me, the soul drowns, for creatures are like water that continually runs past, and man also passes continually like the river, although it seems to him that he stands still and the creatures that he loves pass by, and yet he is passing himself continually to the end of his journey – death! And he would gladly **retain** himself (that is his life, and the things that he loves), but he does not succeed, either, through death, by which he has to leave them, or through my disposition, by which these created things are taken from the sight of My creatures. Such as these follow a lie, walking on the road of falsehood, and are sons of the Devil, who is the Father of Lies; and, because they pass by the door of falsehood, they receive eternal damnation. So then you see, that I have shown you both Truth and Falsehood, that is, My road which is Truth, and the Devil's which is Falsehood."

**moisten -**  
make damp; to wet in a small degree

**mortar -**  
building material for joining bricks together

**divinity -**  
the state or quality of being divine

**fortitude -**  
strength of mind that allows one to endure pain or adversity with courage

**servile -**  
abjectly submissive; slavish

**sheltered -**  
protected from danger or bad weather

**incarnation -**  
bodily manifestation of a supernatural being; the doctrine that the Son of God was conceived in the womb of Mary and that Jesus is true God and true man

**hostelry -**  
an inn; a hotel

**pilgrimage -**  
journey to a shrine or sacred place

**confounded -**  
perplexed by many conflicting situations or statements

**retain -**  
maintain possession of

**HOW TRAVELLING ON BOTH OF THESE ROADS, THAT IS THE BRIDGE AND THE RIVER, IS FATIGUING; AND OF THE DELIGHT WHICH THE SOUL FEELS IN TRAVELLING BY THE BRIDGE.**

“These are the two roads, and both are hard to travel. Wonder, then, at the ignorance and blindness of man, who, having a Road made for him, which causes such delight to those who use It, that every bitterness becomes sweet, and every burden light, yet prefers to walk over the water. For those who cross by the Bridge, being still in the darkness of the body, find light, and, being mortal, find immortal life, tasting, through love, the light of Eternal Truth which promises refreshment to him who **wearies** himself for Me, who am grateful and just, and render to every man according as he deserves. Wherefore every good deed is rewarded, and every fault is punished. The tongue would not be sufficient to relate the delight felt by him who goes on this road, for, even in this life, he tastes and participates in that good which has been prepared for him in eternal life. He, therefore, is a fool indeed, who despises so great a good, and chooses rather to receive in this life the earnest money of Hell, walking by the lower road with great **toil**, and without any refreshment or advantage. Wherefore, through their sins, they are deprived of Me, who am the Supreme and Eternal Good. Truly then have you reason for grief, and I will that you and My other servants remain in continual bitterness of soul at the offence done to Me, and in compassion for the ignorant, and the loss of those who, in their ignorance, thus offend Me. Now you have seen and heard about this Bridge, how it is, and this I have told you in order to explain My words, that My only-begotten Son was a Bridge. And thus, you see that He is the Truth, made in the way that I have shown you, that is – by the union of height and lowliness.”

**HOW THIS BRIDGE, HAVING REACHED TO HEAVEN ON THE DAY OF THE ASCENSION, DID NOT FOR THAT REASON LEAVE THE EARTH.**

“When My only-begotten Son returned to Me, forty days after the resurrection, this Bridge, namely Himself, arose from the earth, that is, from among the conversation of men, and ascended into Heaven by virtue of the Divine Nature and sat at the right hand of Me, the Eternal Father, as the angels said, on the day of the **Ascension**, to the disciples, standing like dead men, their hearts lifted on high, and ascended into Heaven with the wisdom of My Son – ‘Do not stand here any longer, for He is seated at the right hand of the Father!’ When He, then, had thus ascended on high, and returned to Me the Father, I sent the Master, that is the Holy Spirit, who came to you with My power and the wisdom of My Son, and with His own **clemency**, which is the essence of the Holy Spirit. He is one thing with Me, the Father, and with My Son. And He built up the road of the doctrine which My Truth had left in the world. Thus, though the bodily presence of My Son left you, His doctrine remained, and the virtue

**weary -**

to make or become physically or mentally fatigued

**toil -**

exhausting labour or effort

**ascension -**

the bodily rising of Jesus into heaven on the 40th day after his Resurrection

**clemency -**

disposition to show mercy, especially toward an offender or enemy

of the stones founded upon this doctrine, which is the way made for you by this Bridge. For first, He practiced this doctrine and made the road by His actions, giving you His doctrine by example rather than by words; for He practiced, first Himself, what He afterwards taught you, then the clemency of the Holy Spirit made you certain of the doctrine, fortifying the minds of the disciples to confess the truth, and to announce this road, that is, the doctrine of Christ crucified, **reproving**, by this means, the world of its injustice and false judgment, of which injustice and false judgment, I will in time disclose to you at greater length.

**“THIS MUCH I HAVE SAID TO YOU IN ORDER THAT THERE MIGHT BE NO CLOUD OF DARKNESS IN THE MIND OF YOUR HEARERS, THAT IS, THAT THEY MAY KNOW THAT OF THIS BODY OF CHRIST I MADE A BRIDGE BY THE UNION OF THE DIVINE WITH THE HUMAN NATURE, FOR THIS IS THE TRUTH.**

“This Bridge, taking its point of departure in you, rose into Heaven, and was the one road which was taught you by the example and life of the Truth. What has now remained of all this, and where is the road to be found? I will tell you, that is, I will rather tell those who might fall into ignorance on this point. I tell you that this way of His doctrine, of which I have spoken to you, confirmed by the Apostles, declared by the blood of the **martyrs**, illuminated by the light of doctors, confessed by the confessors, **narrated** in all its love by the **Evangelists**, all of whom stand as witnesses to confess the Truth, is found in the mystical body of the Holy Church. These witnesses are like the light placed on a candlestick, to show forth the way of the Truth which leads to life with a perfect light, as I have said to you, and, as they themselves say to you, with proof, since they have proved in their own cases, that every person may, if he will, be illuminated to know the Truth, unless he choose to deprive his reason of light by his **inordinate** self-love. It is, indeed, the truth that His doctrine is true, and has remained like a lifeboat to draw the soul out of the **tempestuous** sea and to conduct her to the port of salvation.

“Wherefore, first I gave you the Bridge of My Son living and conversing in very deed amongst men, and when He, the living Bridge, left you, there remained the Bridge and the road of His doctrine, as has been said, His doctrine being joined with My power and with His wisdom, and with the clemency of the Holy Spirit. This power of Mine gives the virtue of fortitude to whoever follows this road, wisdom gives him light, so that, in this road, he may recognize the truth, and the Holy Spirit gives him love, which consumes and takes away all sensitive love out of the soul, leaving there only the love of virtue. Thus, in both ways, both actually and through His doctrine, He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that is, the Bridge which leads you to the height of Heaven. This is what He meant when He said, ‘I came from the Father, and I return to the Father, and shall return to you’; that is to say, ‘My Father sent Me to you, and made Me your Bridge, so that you might be saved from the river and attain to life.’ Then He says, ‘I will return to you, I will not leave you orphans, but will send you the **Paraclete**’ – as if My Truth should say, ‘I will go to the Father and return; that is, that when the Holy Spirit shall come, who is called the Paraclete, He will show you more clearly, and will confirm you in the way of truth, that I have given you.’ He said that He would return, and He did return, because the Holy Spirit came not alone, but with the power of the Father, and the wisdom of the Son, and the clemency of His own Essence.

**reproving -**

voicing or conveying  
disapproval of; rebuke

**martyr -**

one who makes great sacrifices  
or suffers much in order to  
further a belief, cause, or  
principle

**narrated -**

told

**Evangelist -**

one of the four writers of the  
gospels

**inordinate -**

not regulated; disorderly

**tempestuous -**

stormy; as if showing violent  
anger

**Paraclete -**

The Holy Spirit



“See then how He returns, not in actual flesh and blood, but, as I have said, building the road of His doctrine, with His power, which road cannot be destroyed or taken away from him who wishes to follow it, because it is firm and stable, and proceeds from Me, who is immovable.

“Manfully, then, should you follow this road, without any cloud of doubt, but with the light of faith which has been given you as a principle in Holy Baptism.

“Now I have fully shown to you the Bridge as it actually is, and the doctrine, which is one and the same thing with it. And I have shown it to the ignorant, in order that they may see where this road of Truth is, and where stand those who teach it; and I have explained that they are the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Evangelists, and Holy Doctors, placed like **lanterns** in the Holy Church.

“And I have shown how My Son, returning to Me, nonetheless, returned to you, not in His bodily presence, but by His power, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, as I have said. For in His bodily presence He will not return until the last Day of Judgment, when He will come again with My Majesty and Divine Power to judge the world, to **render** good to the virtuous, and reward them for their labors, both in body and soul, and to **dispense** the evil of eternal death to those who have lived **wickedly** in the world.

“And now I wish to tell you that which I, the Truth, promised you, that is, to show you the perfect, the imperfect, and the **supremely** perfect; and the wicked, who, through their **iniquities**, drown in the river, attaining to punishment and **torment**; wherefore I say to you, My dearest sons, walk over the Bridge, and not underneath it, because underneath is not the way of truth, but the way of falsehood, by which walk the wicked, of whom I will presently speak to you. These are those sinners for whom I beg you to pray to Me, and for whom I ask in addition your tears and sweat, in order that they may receive mercy from Me.”

### HOW THIS SOUL WONDERING AT THE MERCY OF GOD, RELATES MANY GIFTS AND GRACES GIVEN TO THE HUMAN RACE.

Then this soul, as it were, like one intoxicated, could not contain herself, but standing before the face of God, exclaimed, “How great is the Eternal Mercy with which You cover the sins of Your creatures! I do not wonder that You say of those who abandon mortal sin and return to You, ‘I do not remember that you have ever offended Me.’ Oh, ineffable Mercy! I do not wonder that You say this to those who are converted, when You say of those who persecute You, ‘I wish you to pray for such, in order that I may do them mercy.’ Oh, Mercy, who proceeds from Your Eternal Father, the Divinity who governs with Your power the whole world, by You were we created, in You were we re-created in the Blood of Your Son. Your Mercy preserves us, Your Mercy caused Your Son to do battle for us, hanging by His arms on the wood of the Cross, life and death battling together;

**lantern -**

a light and its protective or decorative case

**render -**

submit or present, as for consideration, approval, or payment

**dispense -**

get rid of; do away with

**wickedly -**

in an evil manner

**supremely -**

to the maximum degree

**iniquity -**

gross immorality or injustice; wickedness

**torment -**

great physical pain or mental anguish

then life confounded the death of our sin, and the death of our sin destroyed the bodily life of the **Immaculate** Lamb. Which was finally conquered? Death! By what means? Mercy! Your Mercy gives light and life, by which Your clemency is known in all Your creatures, both the just and the unjust. In the height of Heaven Your Mercy shines, that is, in Your saints. If I turn to the earth, it abounds with Your Mercy. In the darkness of Hell Your Mercy shines, for the damned do not receive the pains they deserve; with Your Mercy You temper Justice. By Mercy You have washed us in the Blood, and by Mercy You wish to converse with Your creatures. Oh, Loving **Madman**! Was it not enough for You to become Incarnate, that You must also die? Was not death enough, that You must also descend into **Limbo**, taking thence the holy fathers to fulfill Your Mercy and Your Truth in them? Because Your goodness promises a reward to them that serve You in truth, You descended to Limbo, to withdraw from their pain Your servants, and give them the fruit of their labors. Your Mercy constrains You to give even more to man, namely, to leave Yourself to him in food, so that we, weak ones, should have comfort, and the ignorant **commemorating** You, should not lose the memory of Your benefits. Wherefore every day You give Yourself to man, representing Yourself in the **Sacrament** of the Altar, in the body of Your Holy Church. What has done this? Your Mercy. Oh, Divine Mercy! My heart suffocates in thinking of you, for on every side to which I turn my thought, I find nothing but mercy. Oh, Eternal Father! Forgive my ignorance, that I presume thus to chatter to You, but the love of Your Mercy will be my excuse before the Face of Your loving-kindness.”

**OF THE BASENESS OF THOSE WHO PASS BY THE RIVER UNDER THE BRIDGE; AND HOW THE SOUL, THAT PASSES UNDERNEATH, IS CALLED BY GOD THE TREE OF DEATH, WHOSE ROOTS ARE HELD IN FOUR VICES.**

After this soul had refreshed a little her heart in the mercy of God, by these words, she humbly waited for the fulfillment of the promise made to her, and God continuing His discourse said: “Dearest daughter, you have spoken before Me of My mercy, because I gave it you to taste and to see in the word which I spoke to you when I said: ‘these are those for whom I pray you to **intercede** with Me,’ but know, that My mercy is without any comparison, far more than you can see, because your sight is imperfect, and My mercy perfect and infinite, so that there can be no comparison between the two, except what may be between a finite and an infinite thing. But I have wished that you should taste this mercy, and also the dignity of man, which I have shown you above, so that you might know better the cruelty of those wicked men who travel below the Bridge. Open the eye of your intellect, and wonder at those who voluntarily drown themselves, and at the baseness to which they are fallen by their fault, from which cause, they have first become weak, and this was when they conceived mortal sin in their minds, for they then bring it forth, and lose the life of grace. And, as a corpse which can have no feeling or movement of itself, but only when it is moved and lifted by others, so those, who are drowned in the stream of inordinate love of the world, are dead to grace. Wherefore because they are dead their memory takes no heed of My mercy. The eye of their intellect sees not and knows not My Truth, because their feeling is dead, that is, their intellect has no object before it but themselves, with the dead love of their own sensuality, and so their will is dead to My will because

**immaculate** -  
free from fault or error; pure

**madman** -  
a man who is or seems to be  
mentally ill

**limbo** -  
the abode of unbaptised but  
innocent or righteous souls,  
as those of infants or virtuous  
individuals who lived before  
the coming of Christ

**commemorating** -  
honouring the memory of with  
a ceremony

**sacrament** -  
a rite believed to be a means of  
or visible form of grace

**intercede** -  
to plead on another's behalf

it loves nothing but dead things. These three powers then being dead, all the soul's operations both in deed and thought are dead as far as grace is concerned. For the soul cannot defend herself against her enemies, nor help herself through her own power, but only so far as she is helped by Me. It is true indeed, that every time that this corpse, in whom only free-will has remained (which remains as long as the mortal body lives), asks My help, he can have it, but never can he help himself; he has become insupportable to himself, and, wishing to govern the world, is governed by that which is not, that is by sin, for sin in itself is nothing, and such men have become the servants and slaves of sin. I have made them trees of love with the life of grace which they received in Holy Baptism; and they have become trees of death, because they are dead, as I have already said to you. Do you know how this tree finds such roots? In the height of pride which is nourished by their own sensitive self-love. Its branch is their own impatience, and its **offshoot indiscretion**: these are the four principal vices which destroy the soul of him who is a tree of death, because he has not drawn life from grace. Inside the tree is nourished the worm of conscience, which, while man lives in mortal sin, is blinded by self-love, and therefore felt but little; the fruits of this tree are mortal, for they have drawn their nourishment, which should have been humility, from the roots of pride, and the miserable soul is full of ingratitude, whence proceeds every evil. But if she were grateful for the benefits she has received, she would know Me, and knowing Me would know herself, and so would remain in My love: but she, as if blind, goes **groping** down the river, and she does not see that the water does not support her."

#### HOW THE FRUITS OF THIS TREE ARE AS DIVERSE AS ARE THE SINS; AND FIRST, OF THE SIN OF SENSUALITY.

"The fruits of this death-giving tree, are as diverse as sins are diverse. See that some of these fruits are the food of beasts who live **impurely**, using their body and their mind like a **swine** who **wallows** in mud, for in the same way they wallow in the **mire** of sensuality. Oh, ugly soul, where have you left your dignity? You were made sister to the angels, and now you are become a brute beast. To such misery come sinners, **notwithstanding** that they are sustained by Me, who is Supreme Purity, notwithstanding that the very devils, whose friends and servants they have become, cannot endure the sight of such **filthy** actions. Neither does any sin, **abominable** as it may be, take away the light of the intellect from man, so much as does this one. This the philosophers knew, not by the light of grace, because they had it not, but because nature gave them the light to know that this sin obscured the intellect, and for that reason they preserved themselves in continence the better to study. Thus also they **flung away** their riches in order that the thought of them should not occupy their heart. Not so does the ignorant and false Christian, who has lost grace by sin."

- offshoot** -  
branch or descendant
- indiscretion** -  
the quality or state of being indiscreet; want of discretion
- groping** -  
reaching about uncertainly; feel one's way
- impurely** -  
in an immoral or sinful manner
- swine** -  
pig
- wallow** -  
roll the body about indolently or clumsily in or as if in water, snow, or mud
- mire** -  
area of wet, soggy, muddy ground; a bog
- notwithstanding** -  
in spite of the fact that; although
- filthy** -  
very dirty
- abominable** -  
thoroughly unpleasant or disagreeable
- flung away** -  
throw or cast away

## HOW THE FRUIT OF OTHERS IS AVARICE; AND OF THE EVILS THAT PROCEED FROM IT.

“A fruit of the earth belongs to some others, who are covetous misers, acting like the mole, who always feeds on earth till death, and when they arrive at death they find no remedy. Such as these, with their meanness, despise My generosity, selling time to their neighbor. They are cruel usurers and robbers of their neighbor; because in their memory they have not the remembrance of My mercy, for if they had it they would not be cruel to themselves or to their neighbor; on the contrary, they would be compassionate and merciful to themselves, practicing the virtues on their neighbor and succoring him charitably. Oh, how many are the evils that come of this cursed sin of avarice, how many homicides and thefts, and how much pillage with unlawful gain, and cruelty of heart and injustice! It kills the soul and makes her the slave of riches, so that she cares not to observe My commandments.

“A **miser** loves no one except for his own profit. Avarice proceeds from and feeds pride, the one follows from the other, because the miser always carries with him the thought of his own reputation, and thus avarice, which is immediately combined with pride, full of its own opinions, goes on from bad to worse. It is a fire which always **germinates** the smoke of **vainglory** and **vanity** of heart, and boasting in that which does not belong to it. It is a root which has many branches, and the principal one is that which makes a man care for his own reputation, from whence proceeds his desire to be greater than his neighbor. It also brings forth the deceitful heart that is neither pure nor liberal, but is double, making a man show one thing with his tongue, while he has another in his heart, and making him conceal the truth and tell lies for his own profit. And it produces envy, which is a worm that is always **gnawing**, and does not let the miser have any happiness out of his own or others’ good. How will these wicked ones in so wretched a state give of their substance to the poor, when they rob others? How will they draw their foul soul out of the mire, when they themselves put it there? Sometimes even do they become so brutish, that they do not consider their children and relations, and cause them to fall with them into great misery. And, nevertheless, in My mercy I sustain them, I do not command the earth to swallow them up, that they may repent of their sins. Would they then give their life for the salvation of souls, when they will not give their substance? Would they give their affections when they are gnawed with envy? Oh, miserable vices that destroy the heaven of the soul. Heaven I call her (the soul) because so I made her, living in her at first by grace, and hiding Myself within her, and making of her a **mansion** through affection of love. Now she has separated herself from Me, like an **adulteress**, loving herself, and creatures more than Me, and has made a god of herself, persecuting Me with many and diverse sins. And this she does because she does not consider the benefit of the Blood that was shed with so great a Fire of Love.”

**miser** -  
one who lives very meagerly in order to hoard money

**germinate** -  
to cause to sprout or grow.

**vainglory** -  
boastful, unwarranted pride in one's accomplishments or qualities

**vanity** -  
excessive pride in one's appearance or accomplishments; conceit

**gnawing** -  
biting, chewing on, or eroding with the teeth

**mansion** -  
a large stately house

**adulteress** -  
a woman who commits adultery

## HOW SOME OTHERS HOLD POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY, AND BRING FORTH FRUITS OF INJUSTICE.

“There are others who hold their heads high by their position of authority, and who bear the banner of injustice – using injustice against Me, God, and against their neighbor, and against themselves – to themselves by not paying the debt of virtue, and towards Me by not paying the debt of honor in glorifying and praising My Name, which debt they are bound to pay. But they, like thieves, steal what

is Mine, and give it to the service of their own sensuality. So that they commit injustice towards Me and towards themselves, like blind and ignorant men who do not recognize Me in themselves on account of self-love, like the Jews and the ministers of the Law who, with envy and self-love, blinded themselves so that they did not recognize the Truth, My only-begotten Son, and rendered not His due to the Eternal Truth, who was amongst them, as said My Truth: 'The Kingdom of God is among you.' But they knew it not, because, in the **aforsaid** way, they had lost the light of reason, and so they did not pay their debt of honor and glory to Me, and to Him, who was one thing with Me, and like blind ones committed injustice, persecuting Him with much **ignominy**, even to the death of the Cross.

"Thus are such as these unjust to themselves, to Me, and to their neighbor, unjustly selling the flesh of their dependents, and of any person who falls into their hands."

#### HOW THROUGH THESE AND THROUGH OTHER DEFECTS, ONE FALLS INTO FALSE JUDGMENT; AND OF THE INDIGNITY TO WHICH ONE COMES.

"By these and by other sins men fall into false judgment, as I will explain to you below. They are continually being scandalized by My works, which are all just, and all performed in truth through love and mercy. With this false judgment, and with the poison of envy and pride, the works of My Son were slandered and unjustly judged, and with lies did His enemies say: 'This man works by virtue of **Beelzebub**.' Thus wicked men, standing in self-love, impurity, pride, and avarice, and founded in envy, and in perverse **rashness** with impatience, are forever scandalized at Me and at My servants, whom they judge to be **feignedly** practicing the virtues, because their heart is rotten, and, having spoiled their taste, good things seem evil to them, and bad things, that is to say disorderly living, seem good to them. Oh, how blind is the human generation in that it considers not its own dignity! From being great you have become small, from a ruler you have become a slave and that in the **vilest** service that can be had, because you are the servant and slave of sin, and are become like unto that which you do serve.

"Sin is nothing. You, then, have become nothing; it has deprived you of life, and given you death. This life and power were given you by the Word, My only-begotten Son, the glorious Bridge, He drawing you from out of your servitude when you were servants of the devil, Himself becoming as a servant to take you out of servitude, imposing on Himself obedience to do away the disobedience of Adam, and **humbling** Himself to the shameful death of the Cross to confound pride. By His death He destroyed every vice, so that no one could say that any vice remained that was not punished and beaten out with pains, as I said to you above, when I said that of His Body He had made an **anvil**. All the remedies are ready to save men from eternal death, and they despise the Blood, and have trampled It under the feet of their inordinate affection; and it is

**aforsaid** -

spoken of earlier

**ignominy** -

shameful or disgraceful action, conduct, or character

**Beelzebub** -

the Devil; Satan

**rashness** -

the trait of giving little thought to danger

**feigned** -

not real or genuine; pretended; counterfeit; insincere; false

**vile** -

unpleasant or objectionable

**humbling** -

submitting to

**anvil** -

anything resembling a heavy block of iron or steel with a smooth, flat top on which metals are shaped by hammering

for this injustice and false judgment that the world is **reproved**, and will be reproved on the Last Day of Judgment.

“This was meant by My Truth when He said: ‘I will send the Paraclete, who will reprove the world of injustice and false judgment.’ And it was reproved when I sent the Holy Spirit on the Apostles.”

**OF THE WORDS THAT CHRIST SAID: “I WILL SEND THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO WILL REPROVE THE WORLD OF INJUSTICE AND OF FALSE JUDGMENT”; AND HOW ONE OF THESE REPROOFS IS CONTINUOUS.**

“There are three reproofs. One was given when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, who, as it is said, being fortified by My power, and illuminated by the wisdom of My beloved Son, received all in the plenitude of the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit, who is one thing with Me and with My Son, reproved the world by the mouth of the Apostles, with the doctrine of My Truth. They and all others, who are descended from them, following the truth which they understand through the same means, reprove the world.

“This is that continuous reproof that I make to the world by means of the Holy Scriptures, and My servants, putting the Holy Spirit on their tongues to announce My truth, even as the Devil puts himself on the tongues of his servants, that is to say, of those who pass through the river in iniquity. This is that sweet reproof that I have fixed forever, in the aforesaid way, out of My most great affection of love for the salvation of souls. And they cannot say ‘I had no one who reproved me,’ because the truth is revealed to them showing them vice and virtue. And I have made them see the fruit of virtue, and the hurtfulness of vice, to give them love and holy fear with hatred of vice and love of virtue, and this truth has not been shown them by an angel, so that they cannot say, ‘the angel is a blessed spirit who cannot offend, and feels not the **vexations** of the flesh as we do, neither the heaviness of our body,’ because the Incarnate Word of My Truth has been given to them with your mortal flesh.

“Who were the others who followed this Word? Mortal creatures, **susceptible** of pain like you, having the same opposition of the flesh to the Spirit, as had the glorious Paul, My standard-bearer, and many other saints who, by one thing or another, have been tormented. Which torments I permitted for the increase of grace and virtue in their souls. Thus, they were born in sin like you, and nourished with a like food, and I am God now as then. My power is not weakened, and cannot become weak. So that I can and will succor him who wishes to be succored by Me. Man wants My succor when he comes out of the river, and walks by the Bridge, following the doctrine of My Truth. Thus no one has any excuse, because both reproof and truth are constantly given to them. Wherefore, if they do not amend while they have time, they will be condemned by the second condemnation which will take place at the extremity of death, when My Justice will cry to them, ‘Rise, you dead, and come to judgment!’ That is to say, ‘You, who are dead to grace, and have reached the moment of your corporal death, arise and come before the Supreme Judge with your injustice and false judgment, and with the **extinguished** light of faith which you received burning in Holy Baptism (and which you have blown out with the wind of pride), and with the vanity of your heart, with which you set your sails to winds which were contrary to your salvation, for with the wind of self-esteem, you filled the sail of self-love.’ Thus you hastened down the

**reprove** -  
to voice or convey disapproval  
of; rebuke

**vexation** -  
the act of annoying, irritating

**susceptible** -  
easily influenced or affected

**extinguished** -  
caused to die out because of  
the asence or withdrawal of  
reinforcements

stream of the delights and dignities of the world at your own will, following your **fragile** flesh and the temptations of the devil, who, with the sail of your own will set, has led you along the under way which is a running stream, and so has brought you with himself to eternal damnation.”

### OF THE SECOND REPROOF OF INJUSTICE, AND OF FALSE JUDGMENT, IN GENERAL AND IN PARTICULAR.

“This second reproof, dearest daughter, is indeed a condemnation, for the soul has arrived at the end, where there can be no remedy, for she is at the extremity of death, where is the worm of **conscience**, which I told you was blinded self-love. Now at the time of death, since she cannot get out of My hands, she begins to see, and therefore is gnawed with **remorse**, seeing that her own sin has brought her into so great evil. But if the soul have light to know and grieve for her fault, not on account of the pain of Hell that follows upon it, but on account of pain at her offence against Me, who am Supreme and Eternal Good, still she can find mercy. But if she pass the Bridge of death without light, and alone, with the worm of conscience, without the hope of the Blood, and **bewailing** herself more on account of her first condemnation than on account of My displeasure, she arrives at eternal damnation. And then she is reproofed cruelly by My Justice of injustice and of false judgment, and not so much of general injustice and false judgment which she has practiced generally in all her works, but much more on account of the particular injustice and false judgment which she practices at the end, in judging her misery greater than My mercy. This is that sin which is neither pardoned here nor there, because the soul would not be pardoned, depreciating My mercy. Therefore is this last sin graver to Me than all the other sins that the soul has committed. Wherefore the despair of **Judas** displeased Me more, and was more grave to My Son than was his betrayal of Him. So that they are reproofed of this false judgment, which is to have held their sin to be greater than My mercy, and, on that account, are they punished with the devils, and eternally tortured with them. And they are reproofed of injustice because they grieve more over their condemnation than over My displeasure, and do not render to Me that which is Mine, and to themselves that which is theirs. For to Me, they ought to render love, and to themselves bitterness, with **contrition** of heart, and offer it to Me, for the offence they have done Me. And they do the contrary because they give to themselves love, pitying themselves, and grieving on account of the pain they expect for their sin; so you see that they are guilty of injustice and false judgment, and are punished for the one and the other together. Wherefore, they, having depreciated My mercy, I with justice send them, with their cruel servant, sensuality, and the cruel tyrant the Devil, whose servants they made themselves through their own sensuality, so that, together, they are punished and tormented, as together they have offended Me. Tormented, I say, by My ministering devils whom My judgment has appointed to torment those who have done evil.”

**fragile -**

easily broken, damaged, or destroyed

**conscience -**

the awareness of a moral or ethical aspect to one's conduct together with the urge to prefer right over wrong

**remorse -**

moral anguish arising from repentance for past misdeeds; bitter regret

**bewailing -**

expressing deep sorrow for, as by wailing; lamenting

**Judas -**

Jesus's betrayer in the Bible. He betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver and later committed suicide out of remorse for his actions

**contrition -**

sincere remorse for wrongdoing; repentance



## OF THE FOUR PRINCIPAL TORMENTS OF THE DAMNED, FROM WHICH FOLLOW ALL THE OTHERS; AND PARTICULARLY OF THE FOULNESS OF THE DEVIL.

“My daughter, the tongue is not sufficient to narrate the pain of these poor souls. As there are three principal vices, namely: self-love, whence proceeds the second, that is love of reputation, whence proceeds the third, that is pride, with injustice and cruelty, and with other filthiness and **iniquitous** sins, that follow upon these. So I say to you, that in Hell, the souls have four principal torments, out of which proceed all the other torments. The first is that they see themselves deprived of the vision of Me, which is such pain to them, that, were it possible, they would rather choose the fire, and the tortures and torments, and to see Me, than to be without the torments and not to see Me.

“This first pain **revives** in them, then, the second, the worm of Conscience, which gnaws **unceasingly**, seeing that the soul is deprived of Me, and of the conversation of the angels, through her sin, made worthy of the conversation and sight of the devils, which vision of the Devil is the third pain and redoubles to them their every toil. As the saints **exult** in the sight of Me, refreshing themselves with joyousness in the fruit of their toils borne for Me with such abundance of love, and displeasure of themselves, so does the sight of the Devil revive these **wretched** ones to torments, because in seeing him they know themselves more, that is to say, they know that, by their own sin, they have made themselves worthy of him. And so the worm of Conscience gnaws more and more, and the fire of this Conscience never ceases to burn. And the sight is more painful to them, because they see him in his own form, which is so horrible that the heart of man could not imagine it. And if you remember well, you know that I showed him to you in his own form for a little space of time, hardly a moment, and you chose (after you had returned to yourself) rather to walk on a road of fire, even until the Day of Judgment, than to see him again. With all this that you have seen, even you do not know well how horrible he is, because, by Divine justice, he appears more horrible to the soul that is deprived of Me, and more or less according to the **gravity** of her sin. The fourth torment that they have is the fire. This fire burns and does not consume, for the being of the soul cannot be consumed, because it is not a material thing that fire can consume. But I, by Divine justice, have permitted the fire to burn them with torments, so that it torments them, without consuming them, with the greatest pains in diverse ways according to the diversity of their sins, to some more, and to some less, according to the gravity of their fault. Out of these four torments issue all others, such as cold and heat and gnashing of the teeth and many others. Now because they did not amend themselves after the first reproof that they had of injustice and false judgment, neither in the second, which was that, in death, they would not hope in Me, nor grieve for the offence done to Me, but only for their own pain, have they thus so miserably received Eternal Punishment.”

**iniquitous** -  
wicked

**revive** -  
to return to life or  
consciousness

**unceasing** -  
not stopping; continuous

**exult** -  
to rejoice greatly

**wretched** -  
of very poor quality or  
condition

**gravity** -  
seriousness or importance

## OF THE THIRD REPROOF WHICH IS MADE ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

“Now it remains to tell of the third reproof which is on the Last Day of Judgment. Already I have told you of two, and now, so that you may see how greatly man deceives himself, I will tell you of the third – of the General Judgment, when the pain of the miserable soul is renewed and increased by the union that the soul will make with the body, with an intolerable reproof, which will generate in it confusion and shame. Know

that, in the Last Day of Judgment, when will come the Word – My Son, with My Divine Majesty to reprove the world with Divine Power, He will not come like a poor one, as when He was born, coming in the womb of the Virgin, and being born in a stable amongst the animals, and then dying between two thieves. Then I concealed My power in Him, letting Him suffer pain and torment like man, not that My divine nature was therefore separated from human nature, but I let Him suffer like man to satisfy for your guilt. He will not come thus in that last moment, but He will come, with power, to reprove in His Own Person, and will render to everyone his due, and there will be no one in that Day who will not tremble. To the miserable ones who are damned, His aspect will cause such torment and terror that the tongue cannot describe it. To the just it will cause the fear of reverence with great joy; not that His face changes, because He is unchangeable, being one thing with Me according to the divine nature, and, according to the human nature, His face was unchangeable, after it took the glory of the Resurrection. But, to the eye of the damned, it will appear such, on account of their terrible and darkened vision, that, as the sun which is so bright, appears all darkness to the **infirm** eye, but to the healthy eye light (and it is not the defect of the light that makes it appear other to the blind than to the illuminated one, but the defect of the eye which is infirm), so will the condemned ones see His countenance in darkness, in confusion, and in hatred, not through defect of My Divine Majesty, with which He will come to judge the world, but through their own defect.”

### HOW THE DAMNED CANNOT DESIRE ANY GOOD

“And their hatred is so great that they cannot will or desire any good, but they continually **blaspheme** Me. And do you know why they cannot desire good? Because the life of man ended, free-will is bound. Wherefore they cannot merit, having lost, as they have, the time to do so. If they finish their life, dying in hatred with the guilt of mortal sin, their souls, by divine justice, remain forever bound with the bonds of hatred, and forever obstinate in that evil, in which, therefore, being gnawed by themselves, their pains always increase, especially the pains of those who have been the cause of damnation to others, as that rich man, who was damned, demonstrated to you when he begged the favor that **Lazarus** might go to his brothers, who were in the world, to tell them of his pains. This, certainly, he did not do out of love or compassion for his brothers, for he was deprived of love and could not desire good, either for My honor or their salvation, because, as I have already told you, the damned souls cannot do any good to their neighbor, and they blaspheme Me, because their life ended in hatred of Me and of virtue. But why then did he do it? He did it because he was the eldest, and had nourished them up in the same miseries in which he had lived, so that he was the cause of their damnation, and he saw pain increased to himself, on account of their damnation when they should arrive in torment together with him, to be gnawed forever by hatred, because in hatred they finished their lives.”

#### **infirm -**

weak in body, especially from old age or disease

#### **blaspheme -**

speak of (God or a sacred entity) in an irreverent, impious manner

#### **Lazarus -**

the diseased beggar in Jesus' parable of the rich man and the beggar

## OF THE GLORY OF THE BLESSED

“Similarly, the just soul, for whom life finishes in the affection of charity and the bonds of love, cannot increase in virtue, time having come to **naught**, but she can always love with that affection with which she comes to Me, and that measure that is measured to her. She always desires Me, and loves Me, and her desire is not in vain – being hungry, she is satisfied, and being satisfied, she has hunger, but the **tediousness** of **satiety** and the pain of hunger are far from her. In love, the Blessed rejoice in My eternal vision, participating in that good that I have in Myself, everyone according to his measure, that is that, with that measure of love, with which they have come to Me, is it measured to them. Because they have lived in love of Me and of the neighbor, united together with the general love, and the particular, which, moreover, both proceed from the same love. And they rejoice and exult, participating in each other’s good with the affection of love, besides the universal good that they enjoy altogether. And they rejoice and exult with the angels with whom they are placed, according to their diverse and various virtues in the world, being all bound in the bonds of love. And they have a special participation with those whom they closely loved with particular affection in the world, with which affection they grew in grace, increasing virtue, and the one was the occasion to the other of manifesting the glory and praise of My name, in themselves and in their neighbor; and, in the life everlasting, they have not lost their love, but have it still, participating closely, with more abundance, the one with the other, their love being added to the universal good, and I would not that you should think that they have this particular good, of which I have told you, for themselves alone, for it is not so, but it is shared by all the proved citizens, My beloved sons, and all the angels – for, when the soul arrives at eternal life, all participate in the good of that soul, and the soul in their good. Not that her vessel or theirs can increase, nor that there be need to fill it, because it is full, but they have an **exultation**, a **mirthfulness**, a **jubilee**, a joyousness in themselves, which is refreshed by the knowledge that they have found in that soul. They see that, by My mercy, she is raised from the earth with the plenitude of grace, and therefore they exult in Me in the good of that soul, which good she has received through My goodness.

“And that soul rejoices in Me, and in the souls, and in the blessed spirits, seeing and tasting in them the beauty and the sweetness of My love. And their desires forever cry out to Me, for the salvation of the whole world. And because their life ended in the love of the neighbor, they have not left it behind, but, with it, they will pass through the Door, My only-begotten Son in the way that I will relate to you. So you see that in those bonds of love in which they finished their life, they go on and remain eternally. They are conformed so entirely to My will, that they cannot desire except what I desire, because their free-will is bound in the bond of love, in such a way that, time failing them, and, dying in a state of grace, they cannot sin any more. And their will is so united with Mine, that a father or a mother seeing their son, or a son seeing his father or his mother in Hell, do not trouble themselves, and even are contented to see them punished as My enemies. Wherefore in nothing do they disagree with Me, and their desires are all satisfied. The desire of the blessed is to see My honor in you **wayfarers**, who are pilgrims, forever running on towards the term of death. In their desire for My honor, they desire your salvation, and always pray to Me for you, which desire is fulfilled by Me, when you ignorant ones do not resist My mercy. They have a desire too, to regain the gifts of their body, but this desire does not afflict them, as they do not

- naught** -  
nonexistence; nothingness
- tediousness** -  
tiresome by reason of length,  
slowness, or dullness; boring
- satiety** -  
the condition of being full or  
gratified beyond the point of  
satisfaction; surfeit
- exultation** -  
the act or condition of rejoicing  
greatly
- mirthfulness** -  
great merriment
- jubilee** -  
season or an occasion of joyful  
celebration
- wayfarer** -  
one who travels, especially  
on foot

actually feel it, but they rejoice in tasting the desire, from the certainty they feel of having it fulfilled. Their desire does not afflict them, because, though they have it not yet fulfilled, no bliss is thereby lacking to them. Wherefore they feel not the pain of desire. And think not, that the bliss of the body after the resurrection gives more bliss to the soul, for, if this were so, it would follow that, until they had the body, they had imperfect bliss, which cannot be, because no perfection is lacking to them. So it is not the body that gives bliss to the soul, but the soul will give bliss to the body, because the soul will give of her abundance, and will re-clothe herself on the Last Day of Judgment, in the garments of her own flesh which she had quitted. For, as the soul is made immortal, stayed and established in Me, so the body in that union becomes immortal, and, having lost heaviness, is made fine and light. Wherefore, know that the glorified body can pass through a wall, and that neither water nor fire can injure it, not by virtue of itself, but by virtue of the soul, which virtue is of Me, given to her by grace, and by the ineffable love with which I created her in My image and likeness. The eye of your intellect is not sufficient to see, nor your ear to hear, nor your tongue to tell of the good of the Blessed. Oh, how much delight they have in seeing Me, who is every good! Oh, how much delight they will have in being with the glorified body, though, not having that delight from now to the general Judgment, they have not, on that account, pain, because no bliss is lacking to them, the soul being satisfied in herself, and, as I have told you, the body will participate in this bliss.

“I told you of the happiness which the glorified body would take in the glorified humanity of My only-begotten Son, which gives you assurance of your resurrection. There, they exult in His wounds, which have remained fresh, and the **Scars** in His Body are preserved, and continually cry for mercy for you, to Me, the Supreme and Eternal Father. And they are all conformed with Him, in joyousness and **mirth**, and you will all be conformed with Him, eye with eye, and hand with hand, and with the whole Body of the sweet Word My Son, and, dwelling in Me, you will dwell in Him, because He is one thing with Me. But their bodily eye, as I told you, will delight itself in the glorified humanity of the Word, My only-begotten Son. Why so? Because their life finished in the affection of My love, and therefore will this delight endure for them eternally. Not that they can work any good, but they rejoice and delight in that good which they have brought with them, that is, they cannot do any **meritorious** act, by which they could merit anything, because in this life alone can they merit and sin, according as they please, with free-will.

“These then do not await, with fear, the Divine judgment, but with joy, and the Face of My Son will not seem to them terrible, or full of hatred, because they finished their lives in love and affection for Me, and good-will towards their neighbor. So you see then, that the transformation is not in His Face, when He comes to judge with My Divine Majesty, but in the vision of those who will be judged by Him. To the damned He will appear with hatred and with justice. And to the saved with love and mercy.”

**scar -**

mark left on the skin after a surface injury or wound has healed

**mirth -**

gladness and gaiety, especially when expressed by laughter

**meritorious -**

deserving reward or praise; having merit

## HOW, AFTER THE GENERAL JUDGMENT, THE PAIN OF THE DAMNED WILL INCREASE

“I have told you of the dignity of the Righteous, so that you may the better know the misery of the damned. For this is another of their pains, namely, the vision of the bliss of the righteous, which is to them an increase of pain, as, to the righteous, the damnation of the damned is an increase of exultation in My goodness. As light is seen better near darkness, and darkness near light, so the sight of the Blessed increases their pain. With pain they await the Last Day of Judgment, because they see, following it, an increase of pain to themselves. And so will it be, because when that terrible voice shall say to them, ‘Arise, you dead, and come to judgment,’ the soul will return with the body, in the just to be glorified, and in the damned to be tortured eternally. And the aspect of My Truth, and of all the blessed ones will reproach them greatly, and make them ashamed, and the worm of conscience will gnaw the **pith** of the tree, that is the soul, and also the bark outside, which is the body. They will be reproached by the Blood that was shed for them, and by the works of mercy, spiritual and temporal, which I did for them by means of My Son, and which they should have done for their neighbor, as is contained in the Holy Gospel. They will be reproofed for their cruelty towards their neighbor, for their pride and self-love, for their filthiness and **avarice**; and when they see the mercy that they have received from Me, their reproof will seem to be intensified in harshness. At the time of death, the soul only is reproofed, but, at the General Judgment, the soul is reproofed together with the body, because the body has been the companion and instrument of the soul – to do good and evil according as the free-will pleased. Every work, good or bad, is done by means of the body. And, therefore, justly, My daughter, glory and infinite good are rendered to My elect ones with their glorified body, rewarding them for the toils they bore for Me, together with the soul. And to the perverse ones will be rendered eternal pains by means of their body, because their body was the instrument of evil. Wherefore, being their body, restored, their pains will revive and increase at the aspect of My Son, their miserable sensuality with its filthiness, in the vision of their nature (that is, the humanity of Christ), united with the purity of My Deity, and of this mass of their nature Adam raised above all the choirs of Angels, and themselves, by their own fault, sunk into the depths of Hell. And they will see generosity and mercy shining in the blessed ones, who receive the fruit of the Blood of the Lamb, the pains that they have borne remaining as ornaments on their bodies, like the dye upon the cloth, not by virtue of the body but only out of the fullness of the soul, representing in the body the fruit of its labor, because it was the companion of the soul in the working of virtue. As in the mirror is represented the face of the man, so in the body is represented the fruit of bodily toils, in the way that I have told you.

“The pain and confusion of the darkened ones, on seeing so great a dignity (of which they are deprived), will increase, and on their bodies will appear the sign of the wickedness they have committed, with pain and torture. And when they hear that terrible speech, ‘Go, *cursed ones, to the Eternal Fire*,’ the soul and the body will go to be with the Devil without any remedy or hope – each one being wrapped up in diverse filth of earth, according to his evil works. The miser with the filth of avarice, wrapping himself up with the worldly substance which he loved inordinately, and the burning in the fire; the cruel one with cruelty; the foul man with foulness and miserable **concupiscence**; the unjust with his injustice; the envious with envy; and the hater of his neighbor with hatred. And inordinate self-love, whence were born all

### **pith -**

the essential or central part;  
the heart or essence

### **avarice -**

immoderate desire for wealth;  
cupidity

### **concupiscence -**

a strong desire, especially  
sexual desire; lust

their ills, will be burnt with intolerable pain, as the head and principle of every evil, in company with pride. So that body and soul together will be punished in diverse ways. Thus miserably do they arrive at their end who go by the lower way, that is, by the river, not turning back to see their sins and My Mercy. And they arrive at the Gate of the Lie, because they follow the doctrine of the Devil, who is the Father of Lies; and this Devil is their Door, through which they go to Eternal Damnation, as has been said, as the elect and My sons, keeping by the way above, that is by the Bridge, follow the Way of Truth, and this Truth is the Door, and therefore said My Truth, *'No one can go to the Father but by Me.'* He is the Door and the Way through which they pass to enter the Sea Pacific. It is the contrary for those who have kept the Way of the Lie, which leads them to the water of death. And it is to this that the Devil calls them, and they are as blind and mad, and do not perceive it, because they have lost the light of faith. The Devil says, as it were, to them: *'Whosoever thirsts for the water of death, let him come and I will give it to him.'*"

#### OF THE USE OF TEMPTATIONS, AND HOW EVERY SOUL IN HER EXTREMITY SEES HER FINAL PLACE EITHER OF PAIN OR OF GLORY, BEFORE SHE IS SEPARATED FROM THE BODY

"The Devil, dearest daughter, is the instrument of My Justice to torment the souls who have miserably offended Me. And I have set him in this life to tempt and **molest** My creatures, not for My creatures to be conquered, but that they may conquer, proving their virtue, and receive from Me the glory of victory. And no one should fear any battle or temptation of the Devil that may come to him, because I have made My creatures strong, and have given them strength of will, fortified in the Blood of my Son, which will, neither Devil nor creature can move, because it is yours, given by Me. You therefore, with free **arbitration**, can hold it or leave it, according as you please. It is an arm, which, if you place it in the hands of the Devil, straightway becomes a knife, with which he strikes you and slays you. But if a man does not give this knife of his will into the hands of the Devil, that is, if he does not consent to his temptations and molestations, he will never be injured by the guilt of sin in any temptation, but will even be fortified by it, when the eye of his intellect is opened to see My love which allowed him to be tempted, so as to arrive at virtue, by being proved. For one does not arrive at virtue except through knowledge of self, and knowledge of Me, which knowledge is more perfectly acquired in the time of temptation, because then man knows himself to be nothing, being unable to lift off himself the pains and **vexations** which he would flee; and he knows Me in his will, which is fortified by My goodness, so that it does not yield to these thoughts. And he has seen that My love permits these temptations, for the devil is weak, and by himself can do nothing, unless I allow him. And I let him tempt, through love, and not through hatred, that you may conquer, and not

##### **molest -**

disturb, interfere with, or annoy

##### **arbitration -**

the process by which the parties to a dispute submit their differences to the judgment of an impartial person or group appointed by mutual consent or statutory provision

##### **vexation -**

the quality or condition of being vexed; annoyance

that you may be conquered, and that you may come to a perfect knowledge of yourself, and of Me, and that virtue may be proved, for it is not proved except by its contrary. You see, then, that he is my Minister to torture the damned in Hell, and in this life, to exercise and prove virtue in the soul. Not that it is the intention of the Devil to prove virtue in you (for he has not love), but rather to deprive you of it, and this he cannot do, if you do not wish it. Now you see, then, how great is the foolishness of men in making themselves feeble, when I have made them strong, and in putting themselves into the hands of the Devil. Wherefore, know, that at the moment of death, they, having passed their life under the lordship of the Devil (not that they were forced to do so, for as I told you they cannot be forced, but they voluntarily put themselves into his hands), and, arriving at the extremity of their death under this perverse lordship, they await no other judgment than that of their own conscience, and desperately, despairingly, come to eternal damnation. Wherefore Hell, through their hate, surges up to them in the extremity of death, and before they get there, they take hold of it, by means of their lord the Devil. As the righteous, who have lived in charity and died in love, if they have lived perfectly in virtue, illuminated with the light of faith, with perfect hope in the Blood of the Lamb, when the extremity of death comes, see the good which I have prepared for them, and embrace it with the arms of love, holding fast with pressure of love to Me, the Supreme and Eternal Good. And so they taste eternal life before they have left the mortal body, that is, before the soul be separated from the body. Others who have passed their lives, and have arrived at the last extremity of death with an ordinary charity (not in that great perfection), embrace My mercy with the same light of faith and hope that had those perfect ones, but, in them, it is imperfect, for, because they were imperfect, they constrained My mercy, counting My mercy greater than their sins. The wicked sinners do the contrary, for, seeing, with desperation, their **destination**, they embrace it with hatred, as I told you. So that neither the one nor the other waits for judgment, but, in departing this life, they receive every one their place, as I have told you, and they taste it and possess it before they depart from the body, at the extremity of death – the damned with hatred and with despair, and the perfect ones with love and the light of faith and with the hope of the Blood. And the imperfect arrive at the place of **Purgatory**, with mercy and the same.

**HOW THE DEVIL GETS HOLD OF SOULS, UNDER PRETENCE OF SOME GOOD: AND, HOW THOSE ARE DECEIVED WHO KEEP BY THE RIVER, AND NOT BY THE AFORESAID BRIDGE, FOR, WISHING TO FLY PAINS, THEY FALL INTO THEM; AND OF THE VISION OF A TREE, THAT THIS SOUL ONCE HAD**

“I have told you that the Devil invites men to the water of death, that is, to that which he has, and, blinding them with the pleasures and conditions of the world, he catches them with the hook of pleasure, under the pretence of good, because in no other way could he catch them, for they would not allow themselves to be caught if they saw that no good or pleasure to themselves were to be obtained thereby. For the soul, from her nature, always relishes good, though it is true that the soul, blinded by self-love, does not know and discern what is true good, and of profit to the soul and to the body. And, therefore, the Devil, seeing them blinded by self-love, **iniquitously** places before them diverse and various delights,

**destination -**  
the ultimate purpose for  
which something is created or  
intended

**purgatory -**  
state in which the souls of  
those who have died in grace  
must expiate their sins

**iniquitously -**  
unjustly



colored so as to have the appearance of some benefit or good; and he gives to everyone according to his condition and those principal vices to which he sees him to be most disposed – of one kind to the secular, of another to the religious, and others to **prelates** and noblemen, according to their different conditions. I have told you this, because I now speak to you of those who drown themselves in the river, and who care for nothing but themselves, to love themselves to My injury, and I will relate to you their end.

“Now I want to show you how they deceive themselves, and how, wishing to flee troubles, they fall into them. For, because it seems to them that following Me, that is, walking by the way of the Bridge, the Word, My Son, is great toil, they draw back, fearing the thorn. This is because they are blinded and do not know or see the Truth, as, you know, I showed you in the beginning of your life, when you prayed to Me to have mercy on the world, and draw it out of the darkness of mortal sin. You know that I then showed you Myself under the figure of a Tree, of which you saw neither the beginning nor the end, so that you did not see that the roots were united with the earth of your humanity. At the foot of the Tree, if you remember well, there was a certain thorn, from which thorn all those who love their own sensuality kept away, and ran to a mountain of Lolla, in which you figured to yourself all the delights of the world. That Lolla seemed to be of corn and was not, and, therefore, as you saw, many souls thereon died of hunger, and many, recognizing the **deceits** of the world, returned to the Tree and passed the thorn, which is the deliberation of the will. Which deliberation, before it is made, is a thorn which appears to man to stand in the way of following the Truth. And conscience always fights on one side, and sensuality on the other; but as soon as he, with hatred and displeasure of himself, manfully makes up his mind, saying, ‘I wish to follow Christ crucified,’ he breaks at once the thorn, and finds inestimable sweetness, as I showed you then, some finding more and some less, according to their disposition and desire. And you know that then I said to you, ‘I am your God, unmoving and unchangeable,’ and I do not draw away from any creature who wants to come to Me. I have shown them the Truth, making Myself visible to them, and I have shown them what it is to love anything without Me. But they, as if blinded by the fog of inordinate love, know neither Me nor themselves. You see how deceived they are, choosing rather to die of hunger than to pass a little thorn. And they cannot escape enduring pain, for no one can pass through this life without a cross, far less those who travel by the lower way. Not that My servants pass without pain, but their pain is alleviated. And because – by sin, as I said to you above – the world germinates thorns and **tribulations**, and because this river flows with tempestuous waters, I gave you the Bridge, so that you might not be drowned.

“I have shown you how they are deceived by inordinate fear, and how I am your God, immovable, who am not an Acceptor of persons but of holy desire. And this I have shown you under the figure of the Tree, as I told you.”

**prelate** -

high-ranking member of the clergy, especially a bishop

**deceit** -

the act or practice of deceiving; deception

**tribulations** -

great affliction, trial, or distress; suffering

**HOW, THE WORLD HAVING GERMINATED THORNS, WHO THOSE ARE WHOM THEY DO NOT HARM; ALTHOUGH NO ONE PASSES THIS LIFE WITHOUT PAIN**

“Now I want to show you to whom the thorns and tribulations that the world germinated through sin do harm, and to whom they do not. And as, so far, I have shown you the damnation of sinners, together with My goodness, and have told you how they are deceived by their own sensuality, now I wish to tell you how it is only they themselves who are injured by the thorns. No one born passes this life without pain, bodily or mental. Bodily pain My servants bear, but their minds are free, that is, they do not feel the weariness of the pain; for their will is accorded with Mine, and it is the will that gives trouble to man. Pain of mind and of body have those, of whom I have narrated to you, who, in this life, taste the earnest money of hell, as My servants taste the earnest money of eternal life. Do you know what is the special good of the blessed ones? It is having their desire filled with what they desire; wherefore desiring Me, they have Me, and taste Me without any revolt, for they have left the burden of the body, which was a law that opposed the spirit, and came between it and the perfect knowledge of the Truth, preventing it from seeing Me face to face. But after the soul has left the weight of the body, her desire is full, for, desiring to see Me, she sees Me, in which vision is her bliss; and seeing she knows, and knowing she loves, and loving she tastes Me, Supreme and Eternal Good, and, in tasting Me, she is satisfied, and her desire is fulfilled, that is, the desire she had to see and know Me; wherefore desiring she has, and having she desires. And as I told you pain is far from the desire, and weariness from the satisfaction of it. So you see that My servants are blessed principally in seeing and in knowing Me, in which vision and knowledge their will is fulfilled, for they have that which they desired to have, and so are they satisfied. Wherefore I told you that the tasting of eternal life consisted especially in having that which the will desires, and thus being satisfied; but know that the will is satisfied in seeing and knowing Me, as I have told you. In this life then, they taste the earnest money of eternal life, tasting the above, with which I have told you they will be satisfied.

“But how have they the earnest money in this present life? I reply to you, they have it in seeing My goodness in themselves, and in the knowledge of My Truth, which knowledge, the intellect (which is the eye of the soul) illuminated in Me, possesses. This eye has the pupil of the most holy faith, which light of faith enables the soul to **discern**, to know, and to follow the way and the doctrine of My Truth – the Word Incarnate; and without this pupil of faith she would not see, except as a man who has the form of the eye, but who has covered the pupil (which causes the eye to see) with a cloth. So the pupil of the intellect is faith, and if the soul has covered it with the cloth of **infidelity**, drawn over it by self-love, she does not see, but only has the form of the eye without the light, because she has hidden it. Thus you see, that in seeing they know, and in knowing they love, and in loving they deny and lose their self-will. Their own will lost, they clothe themselves in Mine, and I will nothing but your **sanctification**. At once they set to, turning their back to the way below, and begin to ascend by the Bridge, and pass over the thorns, which do not hurt them, their feet being shod with the affection of My love. For I told you that My servants suffered corporally but not mentally, because the sensitive will, which gives pain and afflicts the mind of the creature, is dead. Wherefore, the will not being there, neither is there any pain. They bear everything with reverence, deeming themselves favored in having tribulation for My sake, and they desire nothing but what I desire. If I allow the Devil to trouble them, permitting temptations to prove them in virtue, as I told you above, they resist

**discern -**

to perceive with the eyes or  
intellect; detect

**infidelity -**

lack of religious belief, lack of  
loyalty

**sanctification -**

being made holy

with their will fortified in Me, humiliating themselves, and deeming themselves unworthy of peace and quiet of mind and deserving of pain, and so they proceed with cheerfulness and self-knowledge, without painful affliction. And if tribulations on man's account, or infirmity, or poverty, or change of worldly condition, or loss of children, or of other much loved creatures (all of which are thorns that the earth produced after sin) come upon them, they endure them all with the light of reason and holy faith, looking to Me, who am the Supreme Good, and who cannot desire other than good, for which I permit these tribulations through love, and not through hatred. And they that love Me recognize this, and, examining themselves, they see their sins, and understand by the light of faith, that good must be rewarded and evil punished. And they see that every little sin merits infinite pain, because it is against Me, who am Infinite Good, wherefore they deem themselves favored because I wish to punish them in this life, and in this finite time; they drive away sin with contrition of heart, and with perfect patience do they merit, and their labors are rewarded with infinite good. Hereafter they know that all labor in this life is small, on account of the shortness of time. Time is as the point of a needle and no more; and, when time has passed labor is ended, therefore you see that the labor is small. They endure with patience, and the thorns they pass through do not touch their heart, because their heart is drawn out of them and united to Me by the affection of love. It is a good truth then that these do taste eternal life, receiving the earnest money of it in this life, and that, though they walk on thorns, they are not pricked, because as I told you, they have known My Supreme Goodness, and sought for it where it was to be found, that is in the Word, My only-begotten son."

**SOURCE:** *The Dialogue of Catherine of Siena*, Translated by Algar Thorold. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1907. Online version. Internet Medieval Source Book. URL: <http://www.ccel.org/c/catherine/dialog/cache/dialog.html>3.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the eye of the intellect? How did sin obscure the intellect of the philosophers according to Catherine of Siena?
2. Why, for Catherine of Siena, does God need to "mend the broken road"? Why does He need His Son to mend it?
3. St. Catherine refers to herself as "this soul." How does this influence the picture that she draws of human nature? Is the soul part of human nature? What might the other parts be?
4. The voice of God describes to St. Catherine many details of this bridge. What are the metaphorical meanings of the steps, the stones and the span of the bridge? How is the nature of this bridge related to the nature of human existence and the soul?
5. What are the three principle vices and the four torments of the soul? Why is the "worm of conscience" such a terrible thing?

6. In the Dialogues, St Catherine is having a spiritual conversation with God, something some people may have difficulty imagining or believing. Whether this conversation actually took place or not, however, is not so relevant for our purposes. We want instead to look at the Dialogues to see what we can learn from them about the culture which they represent. How is human nature represented in St. Catherine's Dialogues? How does human nature differ from divine nature according to them?
7. To build the bridge, it was necessary for the divine nature to unite with the human nature. Why was this important to St. Catherine, to the Catholic Church and to humanity in general? Is it possible that something perfect (divine) could be joined with something imperfect (human)?
8. For St. Catherine humanity is free to act and the actions taken by the body will be judged on Judgment Day. She seems to suggest that humanity has free will. Would you agree with this? Do other forces control our actions? What might they be?
9. St. Catherine describes how the eye of the intellect is faith and how the light of reason is only possible through avoidance of sin. In her view faith and reason do not seem to be opposed. Do you agree with this?
10. St. Catherine emphasizes the weakness of human nature and the corruptibility of humanity. Where do you find differences or similarities between her and Nasafi and Abay? What do you think might account for this difference between these mystics?

#### REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Nasafi also talks about the relationship between man and God. Can you see substantial differences between the Catholic and Sufi concept of this relationship? If so, how?
2. Nasafi also talks about the relationship between humans and God. Compare his Sufi and St. Catherine's Catholic concepts of this relationship. Are there substantial differences? If so, what are they? Support your answer with references to the texts.
3. How would the authors of the Hindu and Buddhist texts from the first two chapters understand St. Catherine's "vices and torments of the soul"?
4. Masudi concentrated on the activities of the earthly world. Nasafi, and St. Catherine concentrate on a spiritual world. How might Masudi react to this emphasis on the spiritual life?

#### ADDITIONAL READING:

- a. The Vatican Library Raimundus de Vineis. *Legenda beate Catherine Senensis*. Biblioteca Vaticana MS 1051.
- b. "Catherine of Siena." *Catholic Online Encyclopaedia*. URL: <http://www.cathen.org>.
- c. Internet Medieval History Sourcebook. URL: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>.
- d. Tuchman, Barbara W. *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14<sup>th</sup> Century*. Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1978.

## A MAN WITH HIS TWO WIVES

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Margarita Naimovna Kasymova was born on 4th of October 1938 in Stalinabad (now Dushanbe). She was awarded the Honour of a Worker of Art of the Tajik SSR in 1976 as a director and screenwriter. She has directed several movies such as “Leto 43-goda” (“Summer of 1943”) (1968), “Govoryashchiy rodnik” (“Speaking Spring”) (1985), “Malen’kiy Boets” (“A Little Fighter”) (1997), etc.



The following film, “A Man with His Two Wives” shot in 1991 portrays a specific historical context, the post 1941–1945 war period, attempting to give a realistic depiction of life in a Tajik village where women were doing all the work of the households. The protagonist of the film is a married man who is caught up in a relationship with a young woman; a relationship which has tragic consequences and leaves the man in total confusion.

Social mores, gender relations, cultural values, human nature, and the interactions between members of the community with particular emphasis on gender relationship are the theme of the film. Students should pay attention to the stereotypes in and outside the family and community, and think over the connection between human nature and cultural norms.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the social, economic and cultural context of the village shown in the film?
2. According to the film, what is important for women in this society?
3. How is manhood portrayed in the film as opposed to womanhood?
4. How do you understand the message “moh ham dogh dorad” (the moon also has spots)?
5. How is the dichotomy between male and female nature in Tajik society shown by the filmmakers?
6. Rasul was considered as a decent and honored man in the village. Do you think his relationship with Khayri subsequently affected his reputation? Why? / Why not?
7. What do you think led him to get involved with Khayri: desire? Need? Compassion?
8. Have the filmmakers attempted to show the role of religion in people's lives?
9. What was the reaction of Zaynab after she discovers her husband's affair with Khayri? What do you think about her attitude towards her husband afterwards?
10. How are Tajik women shown in the film? In your opinion, are the characteristics attributed to women part of their “nature” or their “culture” (e.g. Qumri, Khayri, Zaynab)?

### REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Compare and contrast the film with the text from Book of Genesis? What are the similarities and differences?
2. Do you think by getting involved with a married man Khayri committed a sin? How is it similar to or different from the “original sin” (the sin for which Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise)?





## BENEDICT SPINOZA

Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) was a philosophical ethicist and rationalist who laid the groundwork for the philosophy of Enlightenment and modern Biblical criticism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He is also a philosophical ethicist. His works included: 1660, *Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being*; 1662, *On the Improvement of the Understanding*; 1663, *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*, translated by Samuel Shirley; 1670, *A theologico-Political Treatise*.



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### THE ETHICS

#### PART II.

#### ON THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE MIND

##### PREFACE

I now pass on to explaining the results, which must necessarily follow from the essence of God, or of the **eternal** and **infinite** being; not, indeed, all of them (for we proved in Part i., Prop. xvi., that an infinite number must follow in an infinite number of ways), but only those which are able to lead us, as it were by the hand, to the knowledge of the human mind and its highest blessedness.

##### DEFINITIONS

###### DEFINITION I.

By body I mean a mode which expresses in certain determinate manner the essence of God, in so far as he is considered as an extended thing. (See Pt. i., Prop. xxv. Coroll.)

###### DEFINITION II.

I consider as belonging to the essence of a thing that, which being given, the thing is necessarily given also, and, which being removed, the thing is necessarily removed also; in other words, that without which the thing, and which itself without the thing, can neither be nor be **conceived**.

###### DEFINITION III.

By idea, I mean the mental conception which is formed by the mind as a thinking thing. Explanation: I say conception rather than perception, because the word perception seems to imply that the mind is passive in respect to the object; whereas conception seems to express an activity of the mind.

**eternal** -

lasting forever; unending

**infinite** -

boundless, endless, without end or limits, uncountable, innumerable

**conceive** -

develop an idea; to understand someone



## DEFINITION IV.

By an adequate idea, I mean an idea which, in so far as it is considered in itself, without relation to the object, has all the properties or **intrinsic** marks of a true idea.

Explanation: I say intrinsic, in order to exclude that mark which is extrinsic, namely, the agreement between the idea and its object (ideatum).

## DEFINITION V.

Duration is the indefinite continuance of existing. Explanation: I say indefinite, because it cannot be determined through the existence itself of the existing thing, or by its efficient cause, which necessarily gives the existence of the thing, but does not take it away.

DEFINITION VI. Reality and perfection I use as synonymous terms.

DEFINITION VII. By particular things, I mean things which are finite and have a conditioned existence; but if several individual things concur in one action, so as to be all **simultaneously** the effect of one cause, I consider them all, so far, as one particular thing.

## AXIOMS

I. The essence of man does not involve necessary existence, that is, it may, in the order of nature, come to pass that this or that man does or does not exist.

II. Man thinks.

III. Modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or any other of the passions, do not take place, unless there be in the same individual an idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But the idea can exist without the presence of any other mode of thinking.

IV. We perceive that a certain body is affected in many ways.

V. We feel and perceive no particular things, save bodies and modes of thought.

N.B. The **postulates** are given after the conclusion of Prop. xiii.

## PROPOSITIONS

## PROP. I.

Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing. Proof: Particular thoughts, or this and that thought, are modes which, in a certain conditioned manner, express the nature of God (Pt. i., Prop. xxv., Coroll.). God therefore possesses the attribute (Pt. i., Def. v.) of which the concept is involved in all particular thoughts, which **latter** are conceived thereby. Thought, therefore, is one of the infinite attributes of God, which express God's eternal and infinite essence (Pt. i., Def. vi.). In other words, God is a thinking thing. Q.E.D. Note: This **proposition** is also evident from the fact that we are able to conceive an infinite thinking being. For, in proportion as a thinking being is conceived as thinking more thoughts, so is it conceived as containing more reality or perfection. Therefore a being, which can think an infinite number of things in an infinite number of ways, is, necessarily, in respect of thinking, infinite. As, therefore, from the consideration of thought alone, we conceive an infinite being, thought is necessarily (Pt. i., Deff. iv. and vi.) one of the infinite attributes of God, as we were desirous of showing.

**intrinsic -**

innate, inherent, inseparable from the thing itself, essential

**simultaneously -**

occurring at the same time

**postulate -**

something assumed without proof as being self-evident or generally accepted, especially when used as a basis for an argument; a fundamental element; a basic principle

**latter -**

relating to or being the second of two items

**proposition -**

the act of offering (an idea) for consideration; an idea or a plan offered

PROP. II. Extension is an attribute of God, or God is an extended thing.

Proof: The proof of this proposition is similar to that of the last.

PROP. III.

In God there is necessarily the idea not only of his essence, but also of all things which necessarily follow from his essence. Proof: God (by the first Prop. of this Part) can think an infinite number of things in infinite ways, or (what is the same thing, by Prop. xvi., Part i.) can form the idea of his essence, and of all things which necessarily follow there from. Now all that is in the power of God necessarily is (Pt. i., Prop. xxxv.). Therefore, such an idea as we are considering necessarily is, and in God alone. Q.E.D. (Part i., Prop. xv.) Note: The multitude understand by the power of God the free will of God, and the right over all things that exist, which latter are accordingly generally considered as **contingent**. For it is said that God has the power to destroy all things, and to reduce them to nothing. Further, the power of God is very often likened to the power of kings. But this doctrine we have **refuted** (Pt. i., Prop. xxxii. Corolls. i. and ii.), and we have shown (Part i., Prop. xvi.) that God acts by the same necessity, as that by which he understands himself; in other words, as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature (as all admit), that God understands himself, so also does it follow by the same necessity, that God performs infinite acts in infinite ways. We further showed (Part i., Prop. xxxiv.), that God's power is identical with God's essence in action; therefore it is as impossible for us to conceive God as not acting, as to conceive him as non-existent. If we might pursue the subject further, I could point out, that the power which is commonly attributed to God is not only human (as showing that God is conceived by the multitude as a man, or in the likeness of a man), but involves a **negation** of power. However, I am unwilling to go over the same ground so often. I would only beg the reader again and again, to turn over frequently in his mind what I have said in Part I from Prop. xvi. to the end. No one will be able to follow my meaning, unless he is **scrupulously** careful not to **confound** the power of God with the human power and right of kings.

PROP. IV.

The idea of God, from which an infinite number of things follow in infinite ways, can only be one. Proof: Infinite intellect comprehends nothing save the attributes of God and his modifications (Part i., Prop. xxx.). Now God is one (Part i., Prop. xiv., Coroll.). Therefore the idea of God, wherefrom an infinite number of things follow in infinite ways, can only be one. Q.E.D.

PROP. V.

The actual being of ideas owns God as its cause, only in so far as he is considered as a thinking thing, not in so far as he is unfolded in any other attribute; that is, the ideas both of the attributes of God and of particular things do not own as their ef-

**contingent -**

an event which may or may not happen; that which is unforeseen, undetermined, or dependent on something future

**refuted -**

prove (something) to be false or incorrect; to deny the truth or correctness of (something)

**negation -**

denial or contradiction

**scrupulously -**

in a careful manner, with scruple; done with careful attention to detail

**to confound -**

to confuse; to mix up; to puzzle

**contemplate -**

consider as a possibility

ficient cause their objects (ideate) or the things perceived, but God himself in so far as he is a thinking thing. Proof: This proposition is evident from Prop. iii. of this Part. We there drew the conclusion, that God can form the idea of his essence, and of all things which follow necessarily there from, solely because he is a thinking thing, and not because he is the object of his own idea. Wherefore the actual being of ideas owns for cause God, in so far as he is a thinking thing. It may be differently proved as follows: the actual being of ideas is (obviously) a mode of thought, that is (Part i., Prop. xxv., Coroll.) a mode which expresses in a certain manner the nature of God, in so far as he is a thinking thing, and therefore (Part i., Prop. x.) involves the conception of no other attribute of God, and consequently (by Part i., Ax. iv.) is not the effect of any attribute save thought. Therefore the actual being of ideas owns God as its cause, in so far as he is considered as a thinking thing, etc. Q.E.D.

#### PROP. VI.

The modes of any given attribute are caused by God, in so far as he is considered through the attribute of which they are modes, and not in so far as he is considered through any other attribute. Proof: Each attribute is conceived through itself, without any other (Part i., Prop. x.); wherefore the modes of each attribute involve the conception of that attribute, but not of any other. Thus (Part i., Ax. iv.) they are caused by God, only in so far as he is considered through the attribute whose modes they are, and not in so far as he is considered through any other. Q.E.D. Corollary: Hence the actual being of things, which are not modes of thought, does not follow from the divine nature, because that nature has prior knowledge of the things. Things represented in ideas follow, and are derived from their particular attribute, in the same manner, and with the same necessity as ideas follow (according to what we have shown) from the attribute of thought.

#### PROP. VII.

The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things. Proof: This proposition is evident from Part i., Ax. iv. For the idea of everything that is caused depends on a knowledge of the cause, whereof it is an effect. Corollary: Hence God's power of thinking is equal to his realized power of action – that is, whatsoever follows from the infinite nature of God in the world of extension (formaliter), follows without exception in the same order and connection from the idea of God in the world of thought (objective). Note: Before going any further, I wish to recall to mind what has been pointed out above – namely, that whatsoever can be perceived by the infinite intellect as constituting the essence of substance, belongs altogether only to one substance : consequently, substance thinking and substance extended are one and the same substance, comprehended now through one attribute, now through the other. So, also, a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, though expressed in two ways. This truth seems to have been dimly recognized by those Jews who maintained that God, God's intellect, and the things understood by God are identical. For instance, a circle existing in nature, and the idea of a circle existing, which is also in God, are one and the same thing displayed through different attributes. Thus, whether we conceive nature under the attribute of extension, or under the attribute of thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find the same order, or one and the same chain of causes – that is, the same things following in either case. I said that God is the cause of an idea – for instance, of the idea of a circle – in so far as he is a thinking thing; and of

a circle, in so far as he is an extended thing, simply because the actual being of the idea of a circle can only be perceived as a proximate cause through another mode of thinking, and that again through another, and so on to infinity; so that, so long as we consider things as modes of thinking, we must explain the order of the whole of nature, or the whole chain of causes, through the attribute of thought only. And, in so far as we consider things as modes of extension, we must explain the order of the whole of nature through the attributes of extension only; and so on, in the case of the other attributes. Wherefore of things as they are in themselves God is really the cause, inasmuch as he consists of infinite attributes. I cannot for the present explain my meaning more clearly.

PROP. XI.

The first element, which constitutes the actual being of the human mind, is the idea of some particular thing actually existing. Proof: The essence of man (by the Coroll. of the last Prop.) is constituted by certain modes of the attributes of God, namely (by II. Ax. ii.), by the modes of thinking, of all which (by II. Ax. iii.) the idea is prior in nature, and, when the idea is given, the other modes (namely, those of which the idea is prior in nature) must be in the same individual (by the same Axiom). Therefore an idea is the first element constituting the human mind. But not the idea of a non-existent thing, for then (II. viii. Coroll.) the idea itself cannot be said to exist; it must therefore be the idea of something actually existing. But not of an infinite thing. For an infinite thing (I.xxi., xxii.), must always necessarily exist; this would (by II. Ax. i.) involve an absurdity. Therefore the first element, which constitutes the actual being of the human mind, is the idea of something actually existing. Q.E.D. Corollary: Hence it follows, that the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God; thus when we say, that the human mind perceives this or that, we make the assertion, that God has this or that idea, not in so far as he is infinite, but in so far as he is displayed through the nature of the human mind, or in so far as he constitutes the essence of the human mind; and when we say that God has this or that idea, not only in so far as he constitutes the essence of the human mind, but also in so far as he, simultaneously with the human mind, has the further idea of another thing, we assert that the human mind perceives a thing in part or inadequately. Note: Here, I doubt not, readers will come to a stand, and will call to mind many things which will cause them to hesitate; I therefore beg them to accompany me slowly, step by step, and not to pronounce on my statements, till they have read to the end.

PROP. XX.

The idea or knowledge of the human mind is also in God, following in God in the same manner, and being referred to God in the same manner, as the idea or knowledge of the human body. Proof: Thought is an attribute of God (II. i.); there-

fore (II. iii.) there must necessarily be in God the idea both of thought itself and of all its modifications, consequently also of the human mind (II. xi.). Further, this idea or knowledge of the mind does not follow from God, in so far as he is infinite, but in so far as he is affected by another idea of an individual thing (II. ix.). But (II. vii.) the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of causes; therefore this idea or knowledge of the mind is in God and is referred to God, in the same manner as the idea or knowledge of the body. Q.E.D.

#### PROP. XLIV.

It is not in the nature of reason to regard things as contingent, but as necessary. Proof: It is in the nature of reason to perceive things truly (II. xli.), namely (I. Ax. vi.), as they are in themselves – that is (I. xxix.), not as contingent, but as necessary. Q.E.D. Corollary I: Hence it follows, that it is only through our imagination that we consider things, whether in respect to the future or the past, as contingent. Note: How this way of looking at things arises, I will briefly explain. We have shown above (II. xvii. and Coroll.) that the mind always regards things as present to itself, even though they be not in existence, until some causes arise which exclude their existence and presence. Further (II. xviii.), we showed that, if the human body has once been affected by two external bodies simultaneously, the mind, when it afterwards imagines one of the said external bodies, will straightaway remember the other – that is, it will regard both as present to itself, unless there arise causes which exclude their existence and presence. Further, no one doubts that we imagine time, from the fact that we imagine bodies to be moved some more slowly than others, some more quickly, some at equal speed. Thus, let us suppose that a child yesterday saw Peter for the first time in the morning, Paul at noon, and Simon in the evening; then, that today he again sees Peter in the morning. It is evident, from II. Prop. xviii., that, as soon as he sees the morning light, he will imagine that the sun will traverse the same parts of the sky, as it did when he saw it on the preceding day; in other words, he will imagine a complete day, and, together with his imagination of the morning, he will imagine Peter; with noon, he will imagine Paul; and with evening, he will imagine Simon – that is, he will imagine the existence of Paul and Simon in relation to a future time; on the other hand, if he sees Simon in the evening, he will refer Peter and Paul to a past time, by imagining them simultaneously with the imagination of a past time. If it should at any time happen, that on some other evening the child should see James instead of Simon, he will, on the following morning, associate with his imagination of evening sometimes Simon, sometimes James, not both together : for the child is supposed to have seen, at evening, one or other of them, not both together. His imagination will therefore waver; and, with the imagination of future evenings, he will associate first one, then the other – that is, he will imagine them in the future, neither of them as certain, but both as contingent. This wavering of the imagination will be the same, if the imagination be concerned with things which we thus **contemplate**, standing in relation to time past or time present: consequently, we may imagine things as contingent, whether they be referred to time present, past, or future. Corollary II: It is in the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain form of eternity. Proof: It is in the nature of reason to regard things, not as contingent, but as necessary (II. xli.). Reason perceives this necessity of things (II. xli.) truly – that is (I. Ax. vi.), as it is in itself. But (I. xvi.) this necessity of things is the very necessity of the eternal nature of God; therefore, it is in the nature of reason to regard things under this form of eternity. We may add that the bases of reason

are the notions (II. xxxviii.), which answer to things common to all, and which (II. xxxvii.) do not answer to the essence of any particular thing: which must therefore be conceived without any relation to time, under a certain form of eternity.

PROP. XLV.

Every idea of everybody, or of every particular thing actually existing, necessarily involves the eternal and infinite essence of God. Proof: The idea of a particular thing actually existing necessarily involves both the existence and the essence of the said thing (II. viii.). Now particular things cannot be conceived without God (I. xv.); but, inasmuch as (II. vi.) they have God for their cause, in so far as he is regarded under the attribute of which the things in question are modes, their ideas must necessarily involve (I. Ax. iv.) the conception of the attributes of those ideas – that is (I. vi.), the eternal and infinite essence of God. Q.E.D. Note: By existence I do not here mean duration – that is, existence in so far as it is conceived abstractedly, and as a certain form of quantity. I am speaking of the very nature of existence, which is assigned to particular things, because they follow in infinite numbers and in infinite ways from the eternal necessity of God's nature (I. xvi.). I am speaking, I repeat, of the very existence of particular things, in so far as they are in God. For although each particular thing be conditioned by another particular thing to exist in a given way, yet the force whereby each particular thing perseveres in existing follows from the eternal necessity of God's nature (cf. I. xxiv. Coroll.).

PROP. XLVI.

The knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God which every idea involves is adequate and perfect. Proof: The proof of the last proposition is universal; and whether a thing be considered as a part or a whole, the idea thereof, whether of the whole or of a part (by the last Prop.), will involve God's eternal and infinite essence. Wherefore, that which gives knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God, is common to all, and is equally in the part and in the whole; therefore (II. xxxviii.) this knowledge will be adequate. Q.E.D.

PROP. XLVII.

The human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God. Proof: The human mind has ideas (II. xxii.), from which (II. xxiii.) it perceives itself and its own body (II. xix.) and external bodies (II. xvi. Coroll. i. and II. xvii.) as actually existing; therefore (II. xlv. and xlvi.) it has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God. Q.E.D. Note: Hence we see that the infinite essence and the eternity of God are known to all. Now as all things are in God, and are conceived through God, we can from this knowledge infer many things, which we may adequately know, and we may form that third kind of knowledge of which we spoke in the note to II. xl., and of the excellence

and use of which we shall have occasion to speak in Part V. Men have not so clear a knowledge of God as they have of general notions, because they are unable to imagine God as they do bodies, and also because they have associated the name God with images of things that they are in the habit of seeing, as indeed they can hardly avoid doing, being, as they are, men, and continually affected by external bodies. Many errors, in truth, can be traced to this head, namely, that we do not apply names to things rightly. For instance, when a man says that the lines drawn from the centre of a circle to its circumference are not equal, he then, at all events, assuredly attaches a meaning to the word circle different from that assigned by mathematicians. So again, when men make mistakes in calculation, they have one set of figures in their mind, and another on the paper. If we could see into their minds, they do not make a mistake; they seem to do so, because we think that they have the same numbers in their mind as they have on the paper. If this were not so, we should not believe them to be in error, any more than I thought that a man was in error, whom I lately heard exclaiming that his entrance hall had flown into a neighbor's hen, for his meaning seemed to me sufficiently clear. Very many controversies have arisen from the fact that men do not rightly explain their meaning, or do not rightly interpret the meaning of others. For, as a matter of fact, as they flatly contradict themselves, they assume now one side, now another, of the argument, so as to oppose the opinions, which they consider mistaken and absurd in their opponents.

#### PROP. XLVIII.

In the mind there is no absolute or free will; but the mind is determined to wish this or that by a cause, which has also been determined by another cause, and this last by another cause, and so on to infinity. Proof: The mind is a fixed and definite mode of thought (II. xi.), therefore it cannot be the free cause of its actions (I. xvii. Coroll. ii.); in other words, it cannot have an absolute faculty of positive or negative **volition**; but (by I. xxviii.) it must be determined by a cause, which has also been determined by another cause, and this last by another, etc. Q.E.D. Note: In the same way it is proved, that there is in the mind no absolute faculty of understanding, desiring, loving, etc. Whence it follows, that these and similar faculties are either entirely **fictitious**, or are merely abstract and general terms, such as we are **accustomed** to put together from particular things. Thus the intellect and the will stand in the same relation to this or that idea, or this or that volition, as "lapidity" to this or that stone, or as "man" to Peter and Paul. The cause which leads men to consider themselves free has been set forth in the Appendix to Part I. But, before I proceed further, I would here remark that, by the will to affirm and decide, I mean the faculty, not the desire. I mean, I repeat, the faculty, whereby the mind affirms or denies what is true or false, not the desire, wherewith the mind wishes for or turns away from any given thing. After we have proved that these faculties of ours are general notions which cannot be distinguished from the particular instances on which they are based, we must **inquire** whether volitions themselves are anything besides the ideas of things. We must inquire, I say, whether there is in the mind any affirmation or negation beyond that which the idea, in so far as it is an idea, involves. On which subject see the following proposition, and II. Def. iii., lest the idea of pictures should suggest itself. For by ideas I do not mean images such as are formed at the back of the eye, or in the midst of the brain, but the conceptions of thought.

**fictitious** -  
not real; invented

**accustomed** -  
make familiar by use; to  
cause to accept; to habituate,  
familiarize, or inure

**inquire** -  
ask (about something);  
investigate



**SOURCE:** The Project Gutenberg. Text of “The Ethics”, by Benedict de Spinoza.  
Translated by R.H.M. Elwes <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext03/ethic10.txt>

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Define and explain the key words, describing the concept of Spinoza on human nature: body, mind, free will, necessarily, perception, conception, idea, object, subject, freedom, modes of thinking, love, desire, passions, power of God, the free will of God, the essence of God, the essence of things, etc.
2. What is the difference between conception and perception according to Spinoza? How do they show the human mind's activity?
3. Interpret Spinoza's two main ideas on thought and extension:
  - i) “Thought is an attribute of God, or God is thinking thing”;
  - ii) “Extension is an attribute of God, or God is an extended thing”.
4. What is the role of the concept of necessity in understanding Spinoza's view on the world and human beings: “...that God acts by the same necessity, as that by which he understands himself; in other words, as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature, that God understands himself, so also does it follow by the same necessity, that God performs infinite acts in infinite ways”.
5. Why does Spinoza think that God follows the same necessity and act accordingly? Do you agree with Spinoza that the order of things is the same as the order of ideas (“The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things”). Are the concepts of God, nature and human (mind and body), presented by Spinoza, different from orthodox religious points of view? Can you detect any conflict between science and religion in Spinoza's system of thinking which is typical for traditional religious approaches? Spinoza believes that every single part of human nature, emotions, desires, ideas, thinking is a reflection of God, the law of nature etc. and all of them follow by necessity (the order of God and things). If all of our desires are the products of the law of nature, what kind of freedom do we have then? Does free will really exist? [In the mind there is no absolute or free will, but the mind can wish this or that because of some cause, which has also been determined by another cause, and this last by another cause, and so on to infinity]. Do you accept Spinoza's point of view that a human being can gain freedom through the knowledge of nature/the order of things? What do you think of the practical aspects of this concept?

## REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Comparing all the texts presented in this chapter, can you find any similarities (ideas, concepts, views) in them? Is Spinoza's religious concept of human nature more optimistic than others? What is the status of free will in the theories of Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke? What is mind/soul, body/mind, according to Spinoza, and rational soul and inferior soul, according to Plato? Do you think that the concept of three Gunas is the reflection of nature, or is it just a mental construction suggested by scholars?
2. Compare Spinoza's theory of free will with the theories of Mary Wollstonecraft and Fatmagul Berktaý on the real rights and status of woman in history and society? What kinds of dichotomy can we find in Spinoza's approach to human beings? Write an essay using additional resources on: "How was woman's soul described by Plato and Spinoza?"
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these texts: how can they help us to solve problems of educational reform, to review our traditions, or to just develop human relationships?

## ADDITIONAL READING:

- Benedict Spinoza, Biography and his works, [www.iep.utm.edu/s/spinoza.htm](http://www.iep.utm.edu/s/spinoza.htm)
- Benedict Spinoza, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baruch\\_Spinoza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baruch_Spinoza)
- Of the Nature and Origin of the Mind Part III, Benedict Spinoza, [www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/spinoza.html](http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/spinoza.html)
- Benedict Spinoza, Studies in Comparative Philosophy, [www.swami-krishnananda.org/com/com\\_spin.html](http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/com/com_spin.html)
- A Dedication to Spinoza's insights, [www.swami-krishnananda.org/com/com\\_spin.html](http://www.swami-krishnananda.org/com/com_spin.html)

## CHAPTER FOUR: IDEOLOGY AND HUMAN NATURE

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### INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades the debate concerning human nature has heated up again. While the political right was celebrating the fall of the Soviet Union and condemning left wing ideas as against human nature, the left wing was scrambling to find another explanation. Other ideological stances also made their presence felt. In this chapter, the readers will encounter different viewpoints, some that support ideas on human nature and its existence, others that deny it, and yet others that offer provocative new insights into it. One way of understanding this chapter is to look for the role of the human will. Is the concept of will real or illusionary? Are we hardwired so totally from birth that we are incapable of changing or acting in a manner contrary to our nature?

Will Wilkinson, representing evolutionary psychology, argues for “a universal human nature” rooted in antiquity. He quotes the founding dogma of evolutionary psychology: “modern skulls house Stone Age minds.” Readers will get the opportunity to examine some ideas related to human nature, such as “mutually beneficial exchange is natural,” “property rights are natural,” and that “we are zero-sum thinkers.” Readers may choose to address the Hayekian notion that “we must learn to live in two sorts of world,” the micro-cosmic world of our ancestors and the contemporary macro-cosm that contains us now.

Roger Donway, on the other hand, carefully examines an argument for enlightened self-interest as the source of altruism in humanity. Donway seeks to find a role for human will which he doesn’t find in the evolutionary psychologist’s position. However, he does find some thought-provoking ideas in that perspective even though he is clearly in favor of a more individualist perspective on human nature.

Thomas Martin, a proponent of the anarchist perspective, offers a critical inquiry into the blank slate theory as well as cognitive science. Readers will get the opportunity to address some seminal questions: “Is violence innate?” or “Is the so-called contradictory theories of blank slate and hard-wired actually a false dichotomy?” In other words, is Martin’s argument that “free will and determinism...is a false dichotomy” accurate?

Readers examining their own lives may or may not support one theory or another with absolute surety. However, the issue ought to be addressed since so much of human systems of thought and action depend on accepted notions of human nature. The intellectual debate on human nature is generally exciting, provocative, and compelling. This course is a great opportunity to join this discourse and debate the ideas on the basis of one’s own experience.



## LITTLE PRINCE NO-FATHER

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*[The Power of Truth]*

Once upon a time, the King of Benares went on a picnic in the forest. The beautiful flowers and trees and fruits made him very happy. As he was enjoying their beauty, he slowly went deeper and deeper into the forest. Before long, he became separated from his companions and realized that he was all alone.

Then he heard the sweet voice of a young woman. She was singing as she collected firewood. To keep from being afraid of being alone in the forest, the king followed the sound of the lovely voice. When he finally came upon the singer of the songs, he saw that she was a beautiful, fair, young woman, and immediately fell in love with her. They became very friendly, and the king became the father of the firewood woman's child.

Later, he explained how he had gotten lost in the forest, and convinced her that he was indeed the King of Benares. She gave him directions for getting back to his palace. The king gave her his valuable signet ring, and said, "If you give birth to a baby girl, sell this ring and use the money to bring her up well. If our child turns out to be a baby boy, bring him to me along with this ring for recognition." So saying, he departed for Benares.

In the fullness of time, the firewood woman gave birth to a cute little baby boy. Being a simple shy woman, she was afraid to take him to the fancy court in Benares, but she saved the king's signet ring.

In a few years, the baby grew into a little boy. When he played with the other children in the village, they teased him and mistreated him, and even started fights with him. It was because his mother was not married that the other children picked on him. They yelled at him, "No-father! No-father! Your name should be No-father!"

Of course this made the little boy feel ashamed and hurt and sad. He often ran home crying to his mother. One day, he told her how the other children called him, "No-father! No-father! Your name should be No-father!" Then his mother said, "Don't be ashamed, my son. You are not just an ordinary little boy. Your father is the King of Benares!"

The little boy was very surprised. He asked his mother, "Do you have any proof of this?" So she told him about his father giving her the signet ring, and that if the baby was a boy she should bring him to Benares, along with the ring as proof. The little boy said, "Let's go then." Because of what happened, she agreed, and the next day they set out for Benares.

When they arrived at the king's palace, the gate keeper told the king the firewood woman and her little son wanted to see him. They went into the royal assembly hall, which was filled with the king's ministers and advisers. The woman reminded the king of their time together in the forest. Finally she said, "Your majesty, here is your son."

The king was ashamed in front of all the ladies and gentlemen of his court. So, even

though he knew the woman spoke the truth, he said, “He is not my son!” Then the lovely young mother showed the signet ring as proof.

Again the king was ashamed and denied the truth, saying, “It is not my ring!”

Then the poor woman thought to herself, “I have no witness and no evidence to prove what I say. I have only my faith in the power of truth.” So she said to the king, “If I throw this little boy up into the air, if he truly is your son, may he remain in the air without falling. If he is not your son, may he fall to the floor and die!”

Suddenly, she grabbed the boy by his foot and threw him up into the air. Lo and behold, the boy sat in the cross-legged position, suspended in mid-air, without falling. Everyone was astonished, to say the least! Remaining in the air, the little boy spoke to the mighty king. “My lord, I am indeed a son born to you. You take care of many people who are not related to you. You even maintain countless elephants, horses and other animals. And yet, you do not think of looking after and raising me, your own son. Please do take care of me and my mother.”

Hearing this, the king’s pride was overcome. He was humbled by the truth of the little boy’s powerful words. He held out his arms and said, “Come to me my son, and I will take good care of you.”

Amazed by such a wonder, all the others in the court put out their arms. They too asked the floating little boy to come to them. But he went directly from mid-air into his father’s arms. With his son seated on his lap, the king announced that he would be the crown prince, and his mother would be the number one queen.

In this way, the king and all his court learned the power of truth. Benares became known as a place of honest justice. In time the king died. The grown up crown prince wanted to show the people that all deserve respect, regardless of birth. So he had himself crowned under the official name, “King No-father!” He went on to rule the kingdom in a generous and righteous way.

The moral is: The truth is always stronger than a lie.

**SOURCE:** Buddhist Tales, Little Prince No-Father, [http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/btl\\_08.htm](http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/btl_08.htm)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe what happened to the king of Benares in the forest, when he lost the other travelers? Who was the singer and what happened when he met her?
2. Did the king fall in love with her? Did the girl know that he was the king of Benares?
3. What did the king warn the firewood woman about?
4. Did the firewood woman go to Benares when she gave birth to a baby boy? Was the little boy offended by the other children? By what name did they call him?
5. Why didn’t the king recognize his son when he came with his mother to Benares? Explain why his pride was hurt? How do you understand “pride”?
6. Can you characterize the human nature of the king and the firewood woman? Does this story correspond to our reality? Bring your own example.
7. How do politics, power, and human interests influence human behaviour?

## WILL WILKINSON

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**Will Wilkinson** (born 1973), is an American writer and thinker, and policy analyst at the Cato Institute, Washington, D.C., where he works on an array of issues from social security to the policy implications of happiness research. His areas of philosophical interests are meta-ethics, political philosophy, the philosophy of the social sciences, the cognitive sciences, and evolutionary psychology. He is especially interested in contractarian moral and political theory, the nature of moral progress, and the relation of findings in the cognitive sciences to the theory of rational choice.

## CAPITALISM AND HUMAN NATURE

In the spring of 1845, Karl Marx wrote, "... the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the **ensemble** of social relations." Marx's idea was that a change in the "ensemble of social relations" can change "the human essence."

In June 2004 the communist North Korean government issued a statement to its starving citizens recommending the consumption of pine needles. **Pyongyang** maintained that pine needle tea could effectively prevent and treat cancer, arteriosclerosis, diabetes, cerebral hemorrhage, and even turn grey hair to black.

Tragically, human nature isn't at all as advertised, and neither is **pine needle** tea. According to the U.S. State Department, at least one million North Koreans have died of famine since 1995.

Marx's theory of human nature, like **Kim Jong Il's** theory of pine needle tea, is a biological fantasy, and we have the corpses to prove it. Which may drive us to wonder: if communism is deadly because it is contrary to human nature, does that imply that capitalism, which is contrary to communism, is distinctively compatible with human nature?

A growing scientific discipline called **evolutionary** psychology specializes in uncovering the truth about human nature, and it is already illuminating what we know about the possibilities of human social organization. How natural is capitalism?

## Evolutionary Psychology 101

Evolutionary psychology seeks to understand the unique nature of the human mind by applying the logic and methods of contemporary evolutionary biology and **cognitive** psychology.

The main working assumption of evolutionary psychology is that the mind is a variegated toolkit of specialized functions (think of a Swiss Army knife) that has evolved through natural selection to solve specific problems faced by our forebears.

**ensemble -**

group of separate things that contribute to a coordinated whole

**Pyongyang -**

capital of North Korea

**pine needle -**

the long, pointed leaves of some conifers

**Kim Jong-Il -**

(born February 16, 1941, Vyatskoye, Soviet Union; official biographies state February 16, 1942, Baekdu Mountain, Japanese Korea) leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

**evolution -**

gradual process of development, formation, or growth, esp. one leading to a more advanced or complex form

**cognitive -**

the part of mental functions that deals with logic, as opposed to affective which deals with emotions



Distinct mental functions-e.g., perception; reading other people's intentions; responding emotionally to potential mates-are underwritten by different neurological “**circuits**” or “modules,” which can each be conceived as mini computer programs selected under environmental pressure to solve specific problems of survival and reproduction typical in the original setting of human evolution, the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptedness, the “EEA.” Strictly speaking, the EEA is a statistical composite of environmental pressures that account for the evolutionary selection of our distinctively human traits. Loosely, the EEA was the period called the Pleistocene during which humans lived as hunter-gatherers from about 1.6 million years ago up until the invention of agriculture about 10,000 years ago.

According to evolutionary psychologists, the basic constitution of the human mind hasn't changed appreciably for about 50,000 years. Thus the evolutionary psychologist's slogan: modern skulls house Stone Age minds.

As pioneers of evolutionary psychology Leda Cosmides and John Tooby put it:

The key to understanding how the modern mind works is to realize that its circuits were not designed to solve the day-to-day problems of a modern American-they were designed to solve the day-to-day problems of our hunter-gatherer ancestors.

Understanding the problems faced by members of human hunter-gatherer bands in the EEA can therefore help us to understand a great deal about human nature, and the prospects and pathologies of modern social systems.

First, a word of caution: We cannot expect to draw any straightforward positive political lessons from evolutionary psychology. It can tell us something about the kind of society that will tend not to work, and why. But it cannot tell us which of the feasible forms of society we ought to aspire to. We cannot, it turns out, infer the naturalness of capitalism from the manifest failure of communism to accommodate human nature. Nor should we be tempted to infer that natural is better. Foraging half-naked for nuts and berries is natural, while the New York Stock Exchange and open-heart surgery would boggle our ancestors' minds.

What evolutionary psychology really helps us to appreciate is just what an unlikely achievement complex, liberal, market-based societies really are. It helps us to get a better grip on why relatively free and **fabulously** wealthy societies like ours are so rare and, possibly, so **fragile**. Evolutionary psychology helps us to understand that successful market liberal societies require the cultivation of certain psychological tendencies that are weak in Stone Age minds and the suppression or **sublimation** of other tendencies that are strong. Free, capitalist societies, where they can be made to work, work with human nature. But it turns out that human nature is not easy material to work with.

There is a rapidly expanding library of books that try to spell out the moral, political and economic implications of evolutionary psychology. (The Origins of Virtue by **Matt Ridley**, Darwinian Politics by Paul Rubin, and The Company of Strangers by Paul Seabright are good ones). Below is a short tour of just a few features of human nature emphasized by evolutionary psychologists that highlight the challenges of developing and sustaining a modern market liberal order.

### We are Coalitional

The size of hunter-gather bands in the EEA ranged from 25 to about 150 people. The small size of those groups ensured that everyone would know everyone else; that social interactions would be conducted face-to-face; and that reputations for honesty,

#### circuits -

set of electrically or electromagnetically connected components or devices

#### fabulous -

extraordinary, especially in being very large

#### fragile -

easily broken or destroyed, and thus often of subtle or intricate structure

#### sublimation -

modifying the natural expression of an impulse or instinct (especially a sexual one) to one that is socially acceptable

#### Matthew White Ridley

(born February 7, 1958, Northumberland) English science writer, businessman and aristocrat. Ridley was educated at Eton and Magdalen College

hard work, and reliability would be common knowledge. Even today, people's address books usually contain no more than 150 names. And military squadrons generally contain about as many people as Pleistocene hunting expeditions.

Experiments by psychologists **Leda Cosmides** and **Robert Kurzban** have shown that human beings have specialized abilities to track shifting alliances and coalitions, and are eager to define others as inside or outside their own groups. Coalitional categories can easily lead to violence and war between groups. Think of Hutus and Tutsis, Albanians and Serbs, Shiites and Sunnis, Crips and the Bloods, and so on ad nauseam. However, coalitional categories are fairly fluid. Under the right circumstances, we can learn to care more about someone's devotion to the Red Sox or Yankees than their skin color, religion, or social class.

We cannot, however, consistently think of ourselves as members only of that one grand coalition: the Brotherhood of Mankind. Our disposition to think in terms of "us" versus "them" is **irremediable** and it has unavoidable political implications. Populist and racist political rhetoric encourages people to identify themselves as primarily rich or poor, black or white. It is important to avoid designing institutions, such as racial preference programs, that reinforce coalitional categories that have no basis in biology and may heighten some of the tensions they are meant to relax. A great deal of the animosity toward free trade, to take a different example, depends on economically and morally inappropriate coalitional distinctions between workers in Baltimore (us) and workers in Bangalore (them). Positively, free trade is laudable for the way it encourages us to see members of unfamiliar groups as partners, not enemies.

### We are Hierarchical

Like many animals and all primates, humans form hierarchies of dominance. It is easy to recognize social hierarchies in modern life. Corporations, government, chess clubs, and churches all have formal **hierarchical** structures of officers. Informal structures of dominance and status may be the leading cause of tears in junior high students.

The dynamics of dominance hierarchies in the EEA was complex. Hierarchies play an important role in guiding collective efforts and distributing scarce resources without having to resort to violence. Daily affairs run more smoothly if everyone knows what is expected of him. However, space at the top of the hierarchy is scarce and a source of conflict and competition. Those who command higher status in social hierarchies have better access to material resources and mating opportunities. Thus, evolution favors the psychology of males and females who are able successfully to compete for positions of dominance.

Living at the bottom of the dominance heap is a raw deal, and we are not built to

#### **Leda Cosmides -**

(born May 7, 1957 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)  
American psychologist, who, together with anthropologist husband John Tooby, helped pioneer the field of evolutionary psychology

#### **Robert Kurzban -**

assistant professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, specializing in evolutionary psychology

#### **irremediable -**

unable to be cured, corrected or repaired

#### **hierarchy -**

body of ruling officials organized in nested ranks

take it lying down. There is evidence that lower status males naturally form coalitions to check the power of more dominant males and to achieve relatively egalitarian distribution of resources. In his book *Hierarchy in the Forest*, anthropologist Christopher Boehm calls these coalitions against the powerful “reverse dominance hierarchies.”

Emory professor of economics and law Paul Rubin usefully distinguishes between “productive” and “allocative” hierarchies. Productive hierarchies are those that organize cooperative efforts to achieve otherwise unattainable mutually advantageous gains. Business organizations are a prime example. Allocative hierarchies, on the other hand, exist mainly to transfer resources to the top. Aristocracies and dictatorships are extreme examples. Although the nation-state can perform productive functions, there is the constant risk that it becomes dominated by allocative hierarchies. Rubin warns that our natural wariness of zero-sum allocative hierarchies, which helps us to guard against the concentration of power in too few hands, is often directed at modern positive-sum productive hierarchies, like corporations, thereby threatening the viability of enterprises that tend to make everyone better off.

There is no way to stop dominance-seeking behavior. We may hope only to channel it to non-harmful uses. A free society therefore requires that positions of dominance and status be widely available in a multitude of productive hierarchies, and that opportunities for greater status and dominance through predation are limited by the constant vigilance of “the people”—the ultimate reverse dominance hierarchy. A flourishing civil society permits almost everyone to be the leader of something, whether the local *Star Trek* fan club or the city council, thereby somewhat satisfying the human taste for hierarchical status, but to no one’s serious detriment.

### **We are Envious Zero-sum Thinkers**

Perhaps the most depressing lesson of evolutionary psychology for politics is found in its account of the deep-seated human capacity for envy and, related, of our difficulty in understanding the idea of gains from trade and increases in productivity—the idea of an ever-expanding “pie” of wealth.

There is evidence that greater skill and initiative could lead to higher status and bigger shares of resources for an individual in the EEA. But because of the social nature of hunting and gathering, the fact that food spoiled quickly, and the utter absence of privacy, the benefits of individual success in hunting or foraging could not be easily internalized by the individual, and were expected to be shared. The EEA was for the most part a zero-sum world, where increases in total wealth through invention, investment, and extended economic exchange were totally unknown. More for you was less for me. Therefore, if anyone managed to acquire a great deal more than anyone else, that was pretty good evidence that theirs was a stash of ill-gotten gains, acquired by cheating, stealing, raw force, or, at best, sheer luck. Envy of the disproportionately wealthy may have helped to reinforce generally adaptive norms of sharing and to help those of lower status on the dominance hierarchy guard against further predation by those able to amass power.

Our zero-sum mentality makes it hard for us to understand how trade and investment can increase the amount of total wealth. We are thus ill-equipped to easily understand our own economic system.

These features of human nature—that we are coalitional, hierarchical, and envious

zero-sum thinkers-would seem to make liberal capitalism extremely unlikely. And it is. However, the benefits of a liberal market order can be seen in a few further features of the human mind and social organization in the EEA.

### Property Rights are Natural

The problem of distributing scarce resources can be handled in part by implicitly **coercive** allocative hierarchies. An alternative solution to the problem of distribution is the recognition and enforcement of property rights. Property rights are prefigured in nature by the way animals mark out territories for their exclusive use in foraging, hunting, and mating. Recognition of such **rudimentary** claims to control and exclude minimizes costly conflict, which by itself provides a strong evolutionary reason to look for innate tendencies to recognize and respect norms of property.

New scientific research provides even stronger evidence for the existence of such property “instincts.” For example, recent experimental work by Oliver Goodenough, a legal theorist, and Christine Prehn, a neuroscientist, suggests that the human mind evolved specialized modules for making judgments about moral transgressions, and transgressions against property in particular.

Evolutionary psychology can help us to understand that property rights are not created simply by strokes of the legislator’s pen.

### Mutually Beneficial Exchange is Natural

Trade and mutually beneficial exchange are human universals, as is the division of labor. In their groundbreaking paper, “**Cognitive** Adaptations for Social Exchange,” Cosmides and Tooby point out that, contrary to widespread belief, hunter-gatherer life is not “a kind of retro-utopia” of “indiscriminate, egalitarian cooperation and sharing.” The archeological and ethnographic evidence shows that hunter-gatherers were involved in numerous forms of trade and exchange. Some forms of hunter-gatherer trading can involve quite complex specialization and the interaction of supply and demand.

Most impressive, Cosmides and Tooby have shown through a series of experiments that human beings are able easily to solve complex logical puzzles involving reciprocity, the accounting of costs and benefits, and the detection of people who have cheated on agreements. However, we are unable to solve formally identical puzzles that do not deal with questions of social exchange. That, they argue, points to the existence of “functionally specialized, content-dependent cognitive adaptations for social exchange.”

In other words, the human mind is “built” to trade.

#### **coercive -**

using force or authority to make a person do something against his or her will

#### **rudimentary -**

basic; minimal; with less than, or only the minimum, necessary

#### **cognitive -**

the part of mental functions that deals with logic, as opposed to affective which deals with emotions

It is easy to see a kind of in vitro capitalism in the evolved human propensity to recognize property rights, specialize in productive endeavors, and engage in fairly complex forms of social exchange. However, the kind of freedom and wealth we enjoy in the United States remains a chimera to billions. While our evolved capacities are the scaffolding upon which advanced liberal capitalism has been built, they are, quite plainly, not enough, as the hundreds of millions who live on less than a dollar a day can attest. The path from the EEA to laptops and lattes requires a great cultural leap. In recent work, Nobel Prize-winning economists **Douglass North** and **Vernon Smith** have stressed that the crucial juncture is the transition from personal to impersonal exchange.

Economic life in the EEA was based on repeated face-to-face interactions with well-known members of the community. Agreements were policed mainly by public knowledge of reputation. If you cheated or shirked, your stock of reputation would decline, and so would your prospects. Our evolutionary endowment prepared us to navigate skillfully through that world of personal exchange. However, it did not prepare us to cooperate and trade with total strangers whom we had never met and might never see again. The road to prosperity must cross a chasm of uncertainty and mistrust.

The transition to extended, impersonal market order requires the emergence of “institutions that make human beings willing to treat strangers as honorary friends” as Paul Seabright puts it. The exciting story of the way these institutions piggybacked on an evolved psychology designed to solve quite different ecological problems is the topic of Seabright’s book, *The Company of Strangers*, as well as an important part of forthcoming works by Douglass North and Vernon Smith.

As he so often did, F. A. Hayek anticipated contemporary trends. Hayek understood that our kind of economy and society, which he called an extended order, or “macro-cosmos,” is in many ways alien to our basic psychological constitution, which is geared to deal with life in small groups, the “micro-cosmos.” We live in two worlds, the face-to-face world of the tribe, family, school, and firm, and the impersonal, anonymous world of huge cities, hyper-specialization, and trans-world trade. Each world has its own set of rules, and we confuse them at our peril. As Hayek writes in *The Fatal Conceit*:

If we were to apply the unmodified, uncurbed, rules of the micro-cosmos (i.e., of the small band or troop, or of, say, our families) to the macro-cosmos (our wider civilization), as our instincts and sentimental yearnings often make us wish to do, we would destroy it. Yet if we were always to apply the rules of the extended order to our more intimate groupings, we would crush them. So we must learn to live in two sorts of worlds at once.

### **Douglass Cecil North**

(born November 5, 1920) co-recipient (with Robert William Fogel) of the 1993 Nobel Prize in Economics and Spencer T. Olin Professor in Arts and Sciences at Washington University, St. Louis

### **Vernon Lomax Smith**

(born January 1, 1927 in Wichita, Kansas) professor of economics at Chapman University School of Law and School of Business in Orange, California, research scholar at George Mason University Interdisciplinary Center for Economic Science, and a Fellow of the Mercatus Center, both in Arlington, Virginia

The balance is delicate. Once we appreciate the improbability and fragility of our wealth and freedom, it becomes clear just how much respect and gratitude we owe to the belief systems, social institutions, and personal virtues that allowed for the emergence of our “wider civilization” and that allow us to move between our two worlds without destroying or crushing either.

## Evolutionary Psychology and Political Humility

The key political lesson of evolutionary psychology is simply that there is a universal human nature. The human mind comprises many distinct, specialized functions, and is not an all-purpose learning machine that can be reformatted at will to realize political dreams. The shape of society is constrained by our evolved nature. Remaking humanity through politics is a biological impossibility on the order of curing cancer with pine needle tea. We can, however, work with human nature-and we have. We have, through culture, enhanced those traits that facilitate trust and cooperation, channeled our coalitional and status-seeking instincts toward productive uses, and built upon our natural suspicion of power to preserve our freedom. We can, of course, do better.

As **Immanuel Kant** famously remarked, “from the crooked timber of humanity no truly straight thing can be made.” But, in the words of philosopher, **Denis Dutton**,

It is not . . . that no beautiful carving or piece of furniture can be produced from twisted wood; it is rather that whatever is finally created will only endure if it takes into account the grain, texture, natural joints, knots, strengths and weaknesses of the original material.

Evolutionary psychology, by helping us better understand human nature, can aid us in cultivating social orders that do not foolishly attempt to cut against the grain of human nature. We can learn how best to work with the material of humanity to encourage and preserve societies, like our own, that are not only beautiful, but will endure.

**SOURCE:** Cato Policy Report Vol. XXVII No. 1 (January/February 2005)

### Immanuel Kant

(22 April 1724 – 12 February 1804) German philosopher from the Prussian city of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia) regarded as one of the most influential thinkers of modern Europe and of the late Enlightenment

### Denis Dutton

(born 1944) academic, web entrepreneur and libertarian media commentator/activist; associate professor of philosophy at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand; co-founder and co-editor of the websites Arts & Letters Daily, ClimateDebateDaily.com and cybereditions.com

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you understand the statement of Karl Marx? Can social relations change human nature? Explain what you think about it and why. How many Northern Koreans died of famine, according to the US State Department? What do you think of the theory of pine needle tea? Is there any similarity between the pine needle theory and Marx's theory of human nature? Is capitalism compatible with human nature? How is the issue emphasized by the author?
2. How did evolutionary psychologists describe human nature and capitalism?
3. What is the main theory of evolutionary psychology? Explain the opinion of Leda Cosmides and John Tooby?

4. What is the difference between modern society and the Stone Age according to evolutionary psychology's theory? Are we Coalitional? How do you understand the experiments of psychologists Leda Cosmides and Robert Kurzban?
5. Is human nature compatible with capitalism? Is it compatible with socialism? Bring an example based on your own experience?

### REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What are the differences between religious and ideological approaches towards human nature and what is the role of human nature in forming states and good societies? Compare this text with the concepts presented by Aziz Nasaifi and Catherine of Sienna. Does the capitalistic approach towards nature differ from the deterministic approach presented by Spinoza? What can you say about the notions: selfishness, instinct, reason, human will, freedom, desire etc? Do you think that 'natural selection' and Spinoza's determinism are the same?

### ADDITIONAL READING:

- Will Wilkinson, Biography and his works,  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will\\_Wilkinson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_Wilkinson)
- Will Wilkinson, Capitalism and Human Nature,  
[www.cato.org/research/articles/wilkinson-050201.html](http://www.cato.org/research/articles/wilkinson-050201.html)
- Politics and Culture From New Perspectives,  
Will Wilkinson, [www.the-dissident.com/globalization.shtml](http://www.the-dissident.com/globalization.shtml)
- Happiness and Public Policy, Cato Institute, Washington,  
Will Wilkinson, <http://happinesspolicy.com/>
- Capitalism and Human Nature,  
Will Wilkinson, [www.cato.org/pubs/policy\\_report/v27n1/cpr-27n1-l.pdf](http://www.cato.org/pubs/policy_report/v27n1/cpr-27n1-l.pdf)
- Liberal Capitalism: Will Wilkinson,  
[www.cis.org.au/Policy/summer%2007-08/anderson\\_summer07.html](http://www.cis.org.au/Policy/summer%2007-08/anderson_summer07.html)



## HEAD OF CHUKOTKA (NACHALNIK CHUKOTKI) FILM BY VITALIY MELNIKOV

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**Nachalnik Chukotki** (Head of Chukotka) was the debut movie for director Vitaliy Melnikov, a winner of several national film festivals. **Nachalnik Chukotki**, starring Mikhail Glazkov, Aleksey Gribov, Gennadiy Danzanov and Nikolay Volkov, premiered in 1967. A young revolutionary committee clerk arrives in Chukotka with a mission. Seeing the appalling situation in the region he appoints himself as Head of Chukotka in order to save the Chukotki men from hunger and rescue them from injustice. Now his dream is to build Socialism in this remote region. As you watch the film, consider the issue of human nature and the factors that influence it, such as ideology in this case.



### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the social, cultural and political context of the film?
2. Who do Glazkov and "aristovanniy" (Timofey Ivanov) represent in the film? Why do you think they are shown in this way?
3. In your opinion, what role does the geographical location of Chukotka play in the film? Why do you think Melnikov decided to choose this location?
4. How is the ideology of socialism portrayed through the actions and behavior of Glazkov? How do his actions contrast with the behavior of the 'whites'?
5. How are the inhabitants of Chukotka portrayed in the film? Backward? Ignorant? Naïve? Why do you think they are shown this way?
6. What can you say about the nature of the local people? How are they different from others in the film?
7. How is the self-appointment of Glazkov as the Head of Chukotka in line with or



against Soviet ideology?

8. Is the nature of the Soviet man as presented in the film by Glazkov modified or redefined by socialist ideology?
9. What was so significant about Soviet ideology? Enthusiasm? Hope for a better future? Solidarity? Patriotism? Patience?
10. How is the dichotomy between socialist and capitalist societies revealed in the film?
11. What is socialism according to the Head of Chukotka?
12. Glazkov was eager to build socialism in Chukotka. Do you think he succeeded in realizing his dreams by the end of the film?



## ROGER DONWAY

### HOW INDIVIDUALIST IS HUMAN NATURE?

“You’re right to point out the contrast I make between capitalism and morality.” So said New York Times **columnist John Tierney** in response to my 2002 article about his ongoing efforts to defend free markets. I had called my piece “Two Cheers for John Tierney,” because, after praising the libertarian columnist, I took him to task for the ethical sentiment embodied in one of his headlines: “Good? No, But **Greed** Is Useful.” “That expresses Tierney’s view perfectly,” I wrote. “**Benevolence, generosity**, the holiday season, kindness to strangers, and acts not motivated by self-interest are good. Greed is not good, but it works.”

Shortly afterward, Tierney wrote to me, pointing out that he does not compose his own headlines, but admitting his ambiguous attitude toward self-interest. Citing science writer Matt Ridley as his authority, Tierney maintained: “We evolved in clans with an apparently innate sense that goodness equates with altruism—it’s a belief common in every culture. . . . Beyond the clan, we need to rely on selfishness to produce the best moral outcome. So in that sense, selfishness is good, but we instinctively **recoil** at that thought.”

Is it true, as Tierney suggested that mankind’s resistance to ethical individualism is innate or instinctive? Recently, I decided to examine the book Tierney recommended—Ridley’s *The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation*—to see if its arguments for man’s predisposition to **altruism** were as convincing to me as to him.

#### The Framework

Ridley’s book draws heavily from the methods of evolutionary psychology, a relatively recent theory that interprets basic human behaviors and attitudes in light of certain assumptions about man’s evolutionary background. According to this theory, our brain—like the rest of our body—was shaped by natural selection during eons of biological evolution, tens of millions of years of primate evolution, and 2.5 million years of human evolution. Over that time, the brain slowly improved its ability to process information and initiate behavior in ways that led to successful survival and procreation. But the abilities that evolved were abilities to foster successful lives and procreation under the circumstances that prevailed in the Stone Age. The human brain has not had nearly enough time to adapt to modern condi-

#### columnist -

regular writer of a column, such as in a magazine or newspaper

#### John Tierney -

John Marion Tierney (born March 25, 1953) journalist for the New York Times since 1990

#### greed -

selfish or excessive desire for or pursuit of more than is needed or deserved, especially of money, wealth, food, or other possessions

#### benevolence -

charitable kindness

#### generosity -

the trait of being willing to give your money and/or time

#### recoil -

pull back, especially in disgust, horror or astonishment

#### altruism -

selfless concern for the welfare of others

#### Leda Cosmides -

(born May 7, 1957 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) American psychologist, who, together with anthropologist husband John Tooby, helped pioneer the field of evolutionary psychology

tions. The result is summarized by evolutionary psychologists **Leda Cosmides** and **John Tooby** in “Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer”: “Our modern skulls house a Stone Age mind” (<http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html>).

But why should that matter? Successful lives in the Stone Age, like successful lives today, surely required action rationally based on problem-solving. In any age, it would seem, a successful person gathers evidence, sifts it, forms hypotheses, tests them, draws conclusions, and adapts his behavior to the realities he thus comes to know.

Evolutionary psychologists dissent from that view in two major ways. First, on the basis of certain experiments, they reject the idea that the human mind works with generalized logical methods: “gathering evidence as such” or “testing hypotheses as such.” Instead, they claim to have shown that evolution has produced human minds with myriad structures for solving highly concrete problems. Secondly, they dissent from the idea that most problem-solving is carried out consciously. Rather, they hold, much of our thinking goes on subconsciously, with conclusions generally appearing in the conscious mind only after they have been formed.

Thus, evolutionary psychologists might observe that most people do not know how to employ the scientific method, with its rules for accumulating data and drawing conclusions. Yet a person’s subconscious seems able, with amazing accuracy, to accumulate data and reach conclusions about the faithfulness of his or her spouse. Why should this be? Evolutionary psychologists might explain the fact by pointing out that natural selection would highly favor such ability, because Stone Age man needed urgently to know if his spouse was violating the pair-bond that lies at the heart of human society.

In his book, Ridley employs the methods of evolutionary psychology to solve the two mysteries mentioned in his title—the evolution of cooperation and the origins of virtue. Natural selection, he maintains, favored instincts that promoted the human individual’s survival and procreation. To that extent, human nature is individualist. But two puzzles must be solved in light of that individualist premise: How did a process promoting individual survival and procreation bring about the human instinct for cooperation with strangers? And: How did such a process bring about the human instinct for preaching-and occasionally practicing—a morality of self-sacrifice?

### Altruism as Virtue

Ridley begins his argument by asserting that all cultures hold altruism to be the human moral standard.

Selfishness is almost the definition of vice. . . . Virtue is, almost by definition, the greater good of the group. . . . The conspicuously virtuous things we all praise—cooperation, altruism, generosity, sympathy, kindness, selflessness—are all unambiguously concerned with the welfare of others. This is not some **parochial** Western tradition. It is a bias shared by the whole species. . . . Consciously or implicitly, we all share a belief in pursuing the greater good. We praise selflessness and decry selfishness (p. 38).

Here, then, is the key puzzle. If natural selection has so constructed human nature that men act in their own self-interest (or occasionally in the interest of their propagation), why has natural selection also led men to establish a moral standard contradicting human nature? Ridley cites naturalist George Williams as stating the **paradox**: “How

#### John Tooby -

American anthropologist, who, together with psychologist wife Leda Cosmides, helped pioneer the field of evolutionary psychology

#### parochial -

unsophisticated focus on local concerns to the exclusion of wider contexts; elementary in scope or outlook

#### paradox -

statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is actually true

could maximizing selfishness [via natural selection] produce an organism capable of often advocating, and occasionally practicing, charity towards strangers and even towards animals?’” (p. 38).

### The Invisible Hand

As part of his search for the evolutionary source of altruistic attitudes, Ridley examines the proclivity of primitive men to exchange favors with strangers. Is such exchange a form of altruism? Ridley rejects that conclusion, invoking Adam Smith's famous analysis of trade:

Man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to **prevail** if he can interest their self-love in his favor, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. . . . It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.

Still, cash-on-the-barrel-head trade is not the whole of human interaction, not even of human interaction outside families. Humans also give gifts. They are generous. Does generosity contain the seeds of altruistic morality?

### Generosity as Self-Interest

Ridley examines the universal practice of food-sharing, particularly meat-sharing, and asks what purposes primitive men might have for sharing food with their group. He finds two explanations current in anthropological circles. The first is that sharing meat is a straightforward attempt to reduce the risk of meat shortages: The hunter shares meat with “his friends from whom he had had, or expects to have, a reciprocal favor. This evens out his supply of meat by giving him to expect a share of others' carcasses in the future” (p. 114).

That, however, cannot be the whole explanation, Ridley notes, because incompetent and idle men, from whom future meat cannot be expected, are also allowed to share. The fuller explanation must be that meat-sharing reduces risk because the sharer's generosity gains him prestige and he can later trade that prestige for meat or sex or some other good he lacks. In that way, meat-sharing welds primitive individuals into a group that looks forward to future exchanges of many and diverse kinds. It creates a standing group of potential traders, which Ridley rightly calls “the very basis of society” (p. 88).

Yet all of this generosity can be explained in terms of self-interested trade, if one looks at it in a broad enough contexts. So, although Ridley may be closing in on his search for “the evolution of cooperation,” he seems no closer to locating the origins

**prevail -**

have or gain the advantage over others; to have the upper hand; to outnumber others



of virtue, understood as altruism.

### Generosity as Charity

What about the sort of generosity exemplified by charitable donations to impersonal institutions or unknown individuals? Ridley's examples are giving blood and working in Rwanda. Are such deeds altruistic? Or can they, too, be motivated by self-interest?

Well, what might be the self-interested reasons for engaging in such generosity? Perhaps it is just that altruists take pleasure in being generous. **Ridley** admits that they do. Yet that is not a satisfactory answer to an evolutionary psychologist. Why would natural selection produce humans who took pleasure in giving away values (goods or time) that they could better employ to foster and insure their survival or self-propagation? It seems not to make sense. And so Ridley comes back to the paradox stated by George Williams: How could natural selection, a process that maximizes selfishness, produce a charitable species? What is the evolutionary origin of altruism?

Ridley has an answer: If we are going to reap the gains of cooperation through trade, he argues, we must demonstrate to potential partners that we will not "take the money and run," even if we have an opportunity to profit by doing so. The point of adhering to moral principles (such as generosity and honesty) is that it lets us prove we will "do the right thing," even if we suffer concrete losses by it. If individuals did not have a way to demonstrate such moral character, Ridley believes, "rational people would be unable to convince each other of their commitment and would never close the deals" (p. 135).

But doesn't this analysis again slip self-interest in through the back door? As Ridley puts it: "A cynic might reasonably reply that the reputation for trustworthiness that honesty earns is itself just reward amply balancing the costs of occasional altruism. . . . Therefore, far from being truly altruistic, the cooperative person is merely looking to his long-term self-interest, rather than the short term" (p. 137).

According to Ridley, however, this pursuit of long-range interest through generosity is altruistic and not selfish, because a person wishing to signal that he is trustworthy and not calculative must perform virtuous acts because of "moral sentiments," not calculation. Natural selection makes service to others an integral part of pursuing our long-range interest-but it demands that pursuing our long-range interest not be the motive of such service to others.

In the end, then, Ridley says: Human nature is individualist through and through-if one looks only at acts and their consequences. At the same time, however, humans have a deep-seated inclination to urge (and occasionally to perform) acts motivated by self-sacrifice, in order to reap the benefits of trade by demonstrating their non-calculative attitudes and thus their trustworthiness.

### An Evolving Argument

What shall we say of this? Was John Tierney correct when he wrote that "selfishness is good but we instinctively recoil at that thought"? Is the Stone Age mind that we carry in our modern skulls thoroughly selfish yet ineradicably endowed with altruist sentiments? Even if we grant Ridley all his game-theory notions, animal-behavior reports, and anthropological studies, I think he has not proven his case. Two major flaws undercut his argument.

First, the whole framework of evolutionary psychology is questionable. I am not

**Matthew White Ridley**  
(born February 7, 1958, in Northumberland) English science writer, businessman and aristocrat. Ridley was educated at Eton and Magdalen College

competent to judge the discipline's details, but anyone can see that it tries to explain human nature and social behavior while denying free will. In "Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer", Cosmides and Tooby say flatly: "The brain is a physical system whose operation is governed solely by the laws of chemistry and physics. What does this mean? It means that all your thoughts and hopes and dreams and feelings are produced by chemical reactions going on in your head." And Ridley ridicules those who believe that "we are conscious, rational, and free-willed, not like those inferior things called animals." The problem is that, in fact, we have all those characteristics he mocks, and Ridley's failure to take account of reason and volition fatally weakens the lessons he draws from animal behavior and primitive culture.

Secondly, *The Origins of Virtue* uses ethical terms in a very confused way. For example, when discussing short-range self-interest and long-range self-interest, Ridley writes: "**Amartya Sen** has called the caricature of the short-sighted self-interested person a 'rational fool.' If the rational fool turns out to be taking short-sighted decisions then he is not being rational, just short-sighted" (p. 137). Obviously, that truth is central to any argument about self-interest and altruism. Yet immediately after this passage, Ridley writes: "such quibbling aside." His all-too-frequent equation of short-term gain with rational self-interest muddies his discussions of selfishness and altruism.

Nevertheless, Ridley's case studies of animal behavior and primitive culture do raise provocative questions for those of us who look to organisms, human and subhuman, in order to understand life and death, self and others, personal existence and personal identity, values and virtues, actions and emotions. If Ridley has not found the basis of human morality, he has at any rate provided additional tools for its discovery. If he has not demonstrated the roots of men's hostility to individualism, he has demonstrated that philosophical and psychological explanations of such hostility need to rest on a foundation of biology and anthropology.

#### Amartya Kumar Sen

(born 3 November 1933) Indian economist, philosopher, and winner of the Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences (Nobel Prize for Economics) in 1998, "for his contributions to welfare economics" for his work on famine, human development theory, welfare economics, the underlying mechanisms of poverty, and political liberalism

**SOURCE:** Roger Donway, How Individualist is Human Nature? [http://www.objectivistcenter.org/cth--1679-1\\_Hum\\_Nature.aspx](http://www.objectivistcenter.org/cth--1679-1_Hum_Nature.aspx)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think about capitalism and morality? Describe ethics of the free market surrounding you? What do you think about human virtue and which values do you consider more important for existence and human stable development? Which is better for us: greed or generosity? What was the impact of the Stone Age on the human brain? What is the result of studies of evolutionary psychologists Leda Cosmides and John Tooby?
2. Do you agree with the theory of evolutionary psychologists that our thinking depends not on the conscious mind, but goes on subconsciously, with conclu-



sions generally appearing in mind only later? Do you think that there is a small place for logical argument in our minds? Find connections between the notions: 'natural selection', human instincts of survival and procreation, and the issue of human nature as individual nature. If everything depends on the instinct of survival, what is the place of cooperation and being kind to the strangers in human behavior? How would you answer the questions raised by the author? Was John Tierney right when he wrote: "selfishness is good, but we instinctively recoil from the thought"? Is the Stone Age mind that we carry in our modern skulls, thoroughly selfish, but at the same time, endowed with altruist sentiments? What are the roots of men's hostility to individualism?

### **ADDITIONAL READING:**

- The New Individualist March 2008, Roger Donway, [www.atlassociety.org/cth-42-2014-tni\\_mar08.aspx](http://www.atlassociety.org/cth-42-2014-tni_mar08.aspx)
- The Postmodern Assault on Reason, [http://www.objectivistcenter.org/ct-1917-S\\_hicks.aspx](http://www.objectivistcenter.org/ct-1917-S_hicks.aspx)
- How Individualist Is Human Nature? Roger Donway, [http://www.objectivistcenter.org/cth--1679-I\\_Hum\\_Nature.aspx](http://www.objectivistcenter.org/cth--1679-I_Hum_Nature.aspx)
- Markets and Morals, Roger Donway, PDF doc. <http://www.fee.org/pdf/the-free->

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## THOMAS MARTIN. ANARCHISM AND THE QUESTION OF HUMAN NATURE

Thomas Martin is a historian who writes and reviews regularly for the journal 'Social Anarchism'. His major works are: "The Psychology of War: Comprehending its Mystique and its Madness", "Twenty-First Century Anarchism", "In Defense of Anarchism", "Anarchism and the Question of Human Nature".

In these first years of the new century **anarchism**, as a philosophy and as an ongoing **praxis**, is faced with a number of disconcerting **adjustments**. Chief among these is the growing evidence that we, along with most other ideologies on the Left, have based our theory on a mistaken concept of human nature. We have learned over the years to distrust words like sociobiology, evolutionary psychology, cognitive science, and above all that dreaded buzzword, "hard-wired" - yet we can no longer ignore the fact that these sciences are probably right about human nature. It does exist; it has biological roots; and while it does enjoy a large measure of free will, its most basic drives and emotions are indeed hard-wired. The Left has long resisted and denied these facts, on the grounds that they might justify discrimination based on heredity, or that they militate against the possibility of radical social reform, or both. I hope to demonstrate that these fears are groundless.

The "hard-wired" concept is thoroughly anchored in evolutionary theory, and this is the first obstacle the Left runs up against when objecting to it. Evolution is a fact: we are animals, closely related to other primates and only a little more distantly to the rest of the mammals. We share many physical and emotional traits with them, and it is absurd to suppose that they are governed by instinct but that we are not. We don't know exactly how evolution works (in fact there are some serious alternatives even to Darwinism's most basic assumptions, like the central role of the gene); but it does work. Very few if any radicals or anarchists would disagree with that. But certain conclusions follow inevitably from that 'given,' and if we deny them, we put ourselves into very unsavory company. Biblical fundamentalists insist that we are a separate creation from the animals, our consciousness governed by a 'soul' which is in turn answerable to a 'God' - do any of us want that idea for a bedfellow? On the other hand, if we accept uncritically (as many on the Right do) the view of human nature suggested by today's neo-Darwinism, we wander into even more unsavory neighborhoods. The **notorious** Bell Curve is founded on those arguments, and so is **neo-Nazism** and other overtly racist movements.

This article is, in part, a response to the recent best-seller The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature (2002), by **Steven Pinker** of MIT. Pinker is that rare individual, a compassionate conservative (such creatures do exist, despite the oxymoronic nature of the phrase). He is neither racist nor sexist, and appears

### anarchism -

political philosophy encompassing theories and attitudes which reject compulsory government (the state) and support its elimination, often due to a wider rejection of involuntary or permanent authority

### praxis -

process of putting theoretical knowledge into practice

### adjustment -

small change; minor correction; modification

### notorious -

known widely and infamously

### neo-Nazism

(sometimes known as neo-National Socialism) post-World War II ideologies, political movements, and social movements seeking

### Steven Arthur Pinker

(born September 18, 1954) prominent Canadian-American experimental psychologist, cognitive scientist, and author of popular science. Pinker is known for his wide-ranging advocacy of evolutionary psychology and the computational theory of mind

to believe sincerely in human equality and freedom, though he does not think we need to abandon capitalism or authoritarianism to achieve those goals. Much of the book is aimed at demonstrating the sources and ongoing project of what he calls the “blank-slate” hypothesis. Classical anarchism, with its origins in the work of Godwin and Proudhon, in the tumults of the French Revolutionary era, and - indirectly - in socialism of various hues, has always assumed that human nature is almost infinitely malleable. It is an idea shared by most philosophies of the Left, and was developed into scientific respectability by such left-leaning anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists as Boas, Durkheim, Mead, Kroeber, Jung, Reich and Goodman. Pinker traces it back to Locke and Mill, at least in its modern form (the idea actually goes back to classical Greece). It is still the dominant view of human nature in academia, and has usually been accepted unquestioningly by anarchists. Unfortunately (and I do mean ‘unfortunately’), it is wrong.

The blank-slate hypothesis goes like this: humans, unlike all other animals, have evolved in such a way that we have almost entirely freed ourselves from the chains of instinct and biology. Very little, if any, of our behavior is hard-wired. We are essentially products of culture, which is not a biological phenomenon and is therefore capable of very wide variation. All differences among ethnic groups, so-called races, and even individuals are the result of nurture and life experience, not of genetic heritage. Consequently “social engineering” is possible: we can create a better world by manipulating culture. This conclusion has supported many experiments over the past century, ranging from the horrors of **Stalinism** to the liberal social welfare state, not to mention various anarchist communities. The “blank slate” is therefore associated with **liberalism** and **radicalism** generally - with civil rights, women’s liberation, environmentalism, anti-globalism and queer studies, to name a few. But in recent decades, the sciences - notably cognitive psychology, genetics and brain research - have established that, while the human mind is flexible and creative, it is far from being a blank slate. Much if not most of our everyday behavior is in fact “hard-wired.” (This term has become anathema to many academics on the Left.)

The evidence has given rise to several new fields of study, all of which have come under attack from the Left. The most notorious of these - known even to radicals who have no background at all in the sciences - is “sociobiology.” Why do radicals oppose sociobiology? Because they see it as a possible prop for **racist** and sexist ideologies. It can be, of course, but that is too narrow and facile an interpretation. The idea derives originally from the work of Edward O. Wilson, a Harvard entomologist who noticed similarities between the social behavior of ants and humans, and developed a full-blown thesis of animal behavior as a product of evolutionary pressures. In his *Sociobiology* (1975, updated and expanded in 2000 as *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*), Wilson argued that social behavior in all animals, including us, is primarily founded in our biology, which is in turn shaped by evolution. At no point does Wilson claim that nurture or environment play no part in human nature. Still, he and his followers have been attacked, not only in print but even physically in a few cases. In an attempt to bring these ideas more towards the political center, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides reformulated them as “evolutionary psychology,” which has tended to focus on gender differences. The controversy continues, despite the recent death of Wilson’s most prominent enemy, **Stephen Jay Gould**. The political problem with sociobiology is its association with neo-Darwinism, which has become a platform for many noisome reactionary academics like **Charles Murray**, **Francis Fukuyama**, and **Richard Dawkins**. The

#### **Stalinism -**

the political regime named after Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union from 1924-1953.

#### **liberalism -**

broad array of related ideas and theories of government that consider individual liberty to be the most important political goal

#### **radicalism -**

any of various radical social or political movements that aim at fundamental change in the structure of society

#### **racism -**

belief in the superiority of one nation or race over others

#### **Stephen Jay Gould -**

(September 10, 1941 – May 20, 2002) American paleontologist, evolutionary biologist, and historian of science

#### **Charles Murray -**

(born 1943) employed at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington, DC. He is perhaps best known for his book *The Bell Curve*, co-authored with the late Richard Herrnstein, which discusses the role of IQ in American society. “The Bell Curve” generated substantial controversy for its statements about race and IQ

#### **Francis Fukuyama -**

(born October 27, 1952) American philosopher, political economist, and author

#### **Clinton Richard Dawkins, FRS -**

(born March 26, 1941) British ethologist, evolutionary biologist and popular science writer

Right is certainly guilty of selective use of sociobiology's findings; but so is the Left, in its rejoinders. In his *A Darwinian Left: Politics, evolution and cooperation* (1999), **Peter Singer** attempted to find a middle ground, starting from a Left perspective; Pinker has done the same in *Blank Slate*, starting from the Right. Neither has entirely succeeded, probably because there is in fact no objective middle ground.[1]

Sociobiology challenges the idea that society or culture, the whole collection of human behaviors, is somehow disconnected from the human organisms which practice it. **Alfred Kroeber** (father of the anarchist novelist Ursula Leguin) once famously said, "Heredity cannot be allowed to have acted any part in history." (Degler, 1991, p. 84) I am a professional historian, and though I admire Kroeber, the fatuity of this statement astonishes me. Almost as soon as Wilson's book was published, the waters were **irretrievably** muddied by Gould, Waddington and other critics who linked him with such unpleasant doctrines as **eugenics** and Social Darwinism, not to mention racism. This was unfair, and took the debate off in an unprofitable direction. Matters were made worse by some of Wilson's supporters, like Richard Dawkins, **Thomas Sowell**, and the authors of *The Bell Curve*, all of whom have advanced selectively exaggerated versions of Wilson's ideas as backing for their own particular agendas. The end result has been to polarize the educated general public (which for the most part does not really understand the science involved) and to make them victims, in a sense, of an academic controversy (which, like all academic controversies, is really more political than intellectual). We in the West often laugh at Stalin's Soviet Union for wasting so much time and resources on Lysenko's crackpot theories - yet is this case so very different?

Sociobiology and its cognates depend for their scientific backing on neo-Darwinism, a set of facts and ideas represented in the popular press by the "selfish gene" metaphor. As the name suggests, this is only the latest version of mainstream evolutionary theory, which is itself still evolving. It pointedly rejects Kropotkin's claim that in evolution, cooperation is often a stronger driving force than competition. For this reason alone anarchists should question the motives of the neo-Darwinists. The fact that the sociobiological project is based on faulty (or at best, incomplete) biology does not necessarily invalidate its claims, but it does require us to look more carefully at the conclusions drawn from those claims.

No one with any sense really doubts that Darwin got the basics right. Evolution does happen; that is not a theory. But controversy still rages over the details of the process. The neo-Darwinists begin from a logical, reductionist and materialist standpoint. Their approach is sometimes called the "synthetic theory" because it combines Darwin's principles with the science of genetics founded by Mendel, a science that Darwin knew nothing about. The only possible selection is natural selection, and its mechanism is genetic. They are fundamentalists on this issue. The word "mechanism" is used advisedly.

Neo-Darwinism is essentially **Cartesian**, a late branch of that world-view born

**Peter Albert David Singer** -  
(born July 6, 1946 in  
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)  
Australian philosopher

**Alfred Louis Kroeber**  
(June 11, 1876–October  
5, 1960) one of the most  
influential figures in American  
anthropology in the first half  
of the twentieth century.  
Kroeber was born in Hoboken,  
New Jersey and attended  
Columbia College at the age of  
16, earning a B.A. in English in  
1896, and an M.A. in Romantic  
drama in 1897

**irretrievably** -  
irrecoverably

**eugenics** -  
social philosophy which  
advocates the improvement  
of human hereditary qualities  
through selective breeding

**Thomas Sowell** -  
Thomas Sowell (born  
June 30, 1930) American  
economist, political writer, and  
commentator

**Cartesian** -  
relating to the philosophy or  
methods of Descartes

in the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. Nothing is real if it cannot be seen, touched, measured, accounted for objectively. The universe and everything in it is “mechanical” in the sense that it obeys certain simple laws of chemistry and physics. Given enough time and knowledge, we can figure everything out without recourse to emotional, intuitive, spiritual (that is, “unscientific”) explanations. Moreover, this approach is reductionist: Darwin, but more so his followers, have believed that they can understand the world by examining minutely all the parts in isolation, and then putting them back together - not as they really are, in all their messy and illogical complexity, but in the form of a model that makes sense to the scientist. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the neo-Darwinists are as yet undisturbed by the implications of subatomic physics, chaos theory, general systems theory and the like. The best simple way to describe their basic error is that they do not think holistically.

Neo-Darwinism’s chief spokesman, Richard Dawkins, is unremittingly cold and “scientific” - in the negative sense of that word - when it comes to explaining what it means to be human. What it means is simply this: we are robots, mere machines built and programmed by genes whose only (and unconscious) goal is to replicate themselves. The genes, too, are machines, and therefore so is all of living nature. This extreme Cartesianism is at the heart of old-**paradigm** thinking, and a primary goal of post-Western science must be to hurry it off to its long-overdue grave. But, as Dawkins himself often points out, just because I can’t or won’t accept something as true, doesn’t mean it isn’t true. We cannot dismiss neo-Darwinism merely because it is unpleasant. We can, however, question the uses to which it is put.

Even if all other scientific proofs do not convince, this one should: our emotions, reflexes and senses all evolved in a world very different from the one we have made for ourselves, just in the last ten or twenty generations. This dissonance is no doubt the source of much of our malaise, psychological and physical. Fats and sweets taste good to us because, over several hundred millennia of scraping by on the African savannahs, we needed them to survive. Now, in a sedentary and over-technologized culture, they simply make us **obese** and diabetic. We evolved a “fight or flight” response to save us from predators; it now comes into play when we are stuck in traffic or on the carpet at work, and we turn it inward, causing ulcers and anxiety. If our slate were truly blank, we could fill it anew in every generation with responses and reflexes appropriate to the milieu, and everyone would be a great deal happier than they are now. The entire science of ecopsychology - an integral part of any post-Western paradigm - would be entirely unnecessary if we did not all have these deep-rooted evolutionary instincts.

It is no doubt true that genes ‘want’ to make more copies of themselves, and as many as possible. It does not follow that they ‘want’ to do so at the expense of other, dissimilar genes. This assumption goes back to one of Darwin’s original errors: that living entities must always compete for scarce resources. This is where the great anarchist scientist, **Peter Kropotkin**, comes in. To make a connection between ecology, evolution and anarchism was a stroke of genius, to say the least - in my opinion it makes Kropotkin one of the greatest thinkers of the past thousand years, right up there with **Aquinas**, Calvin, Marx and Einstein. As all anarchists (but not many others) know, Kropotkin accepted Darwin’s basic findings but disputed the Darwinist contention that competition rather than cooperation is the central mechanism of evolution. His Mutual Aid framed the idea, and it has been developed much further in the century since, with supporting input from general systems theory, the science of ecology, and other disciplines that Kropotkin himself did not live to see. Graham Purchase and **Murray**

**paradigm -**

system of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality

**obese -**

extremely overweight

**Prince Peter**

(Pyotr) Alexeyevich Kropotkin (Russian: Пётр Алексеевич Кропоткин) (9 December 1842 - 8 February 1921) one of Russia’s foremost anarchists and one of the first advocates of anarchist communism

**Saint Thomas Aquinas -**

O.P. ( c. 1225 – 7 March 1274) Italian Catholic priest in the Dominican Order, philosopher and theologian in the scholastic tradition

**Murray Bookchin -**

(January 14, 1921 – July 30, 2006) American libertarian socialist, political and social philosopher, speaker and writer

**Bookchin**, in different ways, have brought his theories up to date.

The other new field which has helped undermine the “blank slate” is usually called “**cognitive science**.” The name falls a bit short of desirability. Everything is “cognitive” in some sense, so the term is almost too vague to be useful. And the word “science” is tainted. But let’s leave that alone and move on.

The philosophical roots of cognitive science are not very long: they reach down through time only so far as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and John Dewey. Merleau-Ponty was influenced primarily by Kojève and Husserl. Dewey, of course, is one of the best-known educators and philosophers in American life. His simple but profound **epistemology**, which challenges the traditional boundary between the inner and outer worlds of experience, is the philosophical basis of cognitive science.

Put simply, cognitive science argues that the way we construct our reality - the world we are conscious of, as well as its extensive unconscious foundations - is a product of our sensor motor experience. The body interacts with its environment in certain ways that are severely restricted by its structure: we have two arms and two legs, eyes in the front of our heads, fronts and backs that are broader than our two sides, and so forth. We can see and hear only narrow frequencies of light and sound. Our eyes are a great deal more sensitive than our noses (we all realize that dogs smell the world much more than they see it). From birth, our bodies do certain things that produce certain more or less predictable results. This physical interaction with the world ‘out there’ establishes networks of neural connections that last a lifetime, and it is these same connections - not some disembodied ‘mind’ floating in the ether - that also generate our abstract ideas and our languages, that is, our culture. Every such interaction is unique, but they do fall into general patterns. When I push something I can expect it to move, unless it is too heavy or fixed in place. From this general truth I can formulate a definition of “push” that works over a wide span of time and space. All of these processes are more or less unconscious. But the conscious mind is very limited - it can concentrate only on a few things at a time, in a very small time/space region. Therefore it must oversimplify these patterns into metaphorical rules of logic that arise, but are disconnected, from the “real” world. Without this metaphoric ability, cognitive science argues, we could not learn or even function - each event or experience would be new, and we would have to start from scratch in reacting to it.

Currently the leaders in the field of cognitive science are George Lakoff and Mark Johnson of the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Oregon, respectively. Their short book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) is the best introduction to the concept, and their rather-too-long *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999) extends their findings into every discipline imaginable. Like Dewey and Merleau-Ponty, they start from the assumption, now pretty much proved by late-Western science, that there is no dichotomy between mind and body. In their words, these are the three central findings of cognitive science:

**cognitive science** -  
the scientific study either of  
mind or of intelligence

**epistemology** -  
the branch of philosophy  
dealing with the study  
of knowledge; theory of  
knowledge



The mind is inherently embodied.  
 Thought is mostly unconscious.  
 Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical.  
 (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 3)

The first and second points would now be accepted by all but the most retrogressive scientists, philosophers and psychologists, though they might argue about the meaning of certain terms like “mind” and “unconscious.” The third point makes a statement about the nature of language, and the ways in which it generates our realities.

The most prized possession of Western philosophy has always been Reason: that capacity we supposedly have to look at the world, marshal and analyze what we see according to certain simple rules, and come up with an accurate representation in our minds of what is “out there.” Cognitive science disposes of traditional “reason” rather easily, and undercuts the entire foundation of Western philosophy. The Western view, going back to the pre-Socratics and reinforced by Aristotle, Aquinas, **Descartes** and many others, is that “reason” is a **edifice** of thought - a set of rules for thinking - that exists quite independently of our physical selves. It goes on in our minds, but is not of our minds - this is another way of saying that the world is just as we **perceive** it to be, or that it would be just as it is now if we weren’t in it to perceive it. This view underlies the blank-slate theory. Cognitive theory says, on the contrary, that our reason is a byproduct of our neural, skeletal and muscular structures: we think the way we do because our bodies work the way they do. It is thus a product of evolution and is “universal” only in the sense that is shared by all human beings (and probably at least some other animals). Nearly all reasoning takes place at a subconscious level; all that comes to the surface is what we need for immediate action in a given situation. Because it is not conscious, it is **metaphorical** by definition: only a waking consciousness can think in concrete, explicit terms (and even then, only up to a point). And finally, cognitive science undoes the vast error of the **Enlightenment**, one we have suffered under for several centuries now: reason is not disembodied, following a set of universal rules ‘out there,’ but driven by the emotions and intuitions, just like everything else we do. As Lakoff and Johnson modestly point out, their theory brings down the whole structure of Western philosophy, with considerable collateral damage to science, psychology, sociology and history. This is not a bad thing. Of course, it also brings down anarchism as we have long understood it, but this is not a bad thing either: it gives us an opportunity to place our ideology on a sounder footing.

Reason as defined by Western philosophy is impossibility, as even a little reflection will reveal. It is pictured as a sort of computer or calculating machine, housed in a container that insulates it totally from the ‘real world’ - it is absolutely free and autonomous, not subject to any of the laws of nature, not even gravity or time. It is disconnected altogether from the lump of brain tissue it inhabits, yet somehow it can understand and exercise some control over the world outside its cocoon. Those readers who have some familiarity with formal Aristotelian logic will more easily get my point. This system of thought, while certainly very useful in limited areas, is a distillate of the whole vast idea of Reason into a small collection of rules for thinking. Formal logic - and even more so its latter-day mathematized descendants - is a world of absolutes, with no grey areas whatsoever. A is either B or it is not B, with no possibilities in between. We all know that the real world does not work like that. Worse, logic is never swayed by feelings or intuition: if all

**Descartes -**

French philosopher,  
 mathematician, scientist, and  
 writer

**edifice -**

building; structure

**perceive -**

see, be aware of, understand

**metaphorical -**

pertaining to or characterized  
 by a metaphor; figurative;  
 symbolic

**Enlightenment -**

17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century  
 philosophical movement in  
 European history emphasizing  
 rationalism



A is B, and all B is C, then all A is C, whether you like it or not. The new discipline known as “**fuzzy logic**” is just beginning to adjust the concept of reason to the findings of cognitive science, but it has a long way to go.

It should be clear by now that a fundamental cause of anarchism’s shaky foundation (a problem it shares with most other products of Western philosophy) is **dichotomization**. In order to get past this problem we must, first of all, reject certain false dichotomies that contribute to our “blank-slate” fetish. The most basic is that between “nature” and “nurture,” a dichotomy that goes back at least to **Plato** and **Aristotle**, but was first delineated in modern terms by John Locke and then developed to an absurd degree by psychologists and by philosophers interested in psychology. Dichotomy itself, as a concept, is a template example of why the nature/nurture binary is unsound. All human cultures have some notion of dichotomy, and it is easy to see why: the human body is **bilateral**. We have two eyes, two hands, two feet; a front and back; a left and right. Some basic dichotomies also exist in nature, such as night and day, or the somewhat different functions of the right and left brain hemispheres. It is therefore entirely natural to project other dichotomies onto the world around us, whether they are really there or not. In general, though, nature is not dichotomous, nor is the human mind. Cutting-edge physics, along with general systems and chaos theory, now posits that the world is a bewilderingly complicated network of interactions, in which everything is literally connected to everything else. Here is the way out of the conundrum set for us anarchists by cognitive science and evolutionary biology: because of the way our bodies and brains are organized, we see the world in a particular way (dichotomous, reified, logical), and this view has obvious survival benefits, otherwise we would not be here to talk about it. However, we project that model onto the world as a whole, onto vast regions of reality where it does not apply. This is the part of our behavior that is notes learning - and we have the freedom of choice to direct that evolution, at least within the limits set by physical nature. Evolution may indeed predispose me to favor the survival of my genes over the survival of yours; but I can choose otherwise. My bilateral symmetry may predispose me to dichotomize society as Left or Right; but I can choose otherwise, and be Out In Front instead. Hard-wired, and therefore, susceptible to learning and change. As **Gregory Bateson** said, evolution

So we have, for more than a century, built our ideological edifice on shifting sands. But the news is not altogether bad. Predictably, critics on the right interpret the new findings as evidence in favor of their agenda. I do not refer to the crudely racist and sexist uses to which the “hard-wired” model has been put in the past. The **conservative** mainstream has learned to be more subtle than that. Here is how Steven Pinker summarizes the “blank-slate” fears about these findings:

If people are innately different, oppression and discrimination would be justified.

If people are innately immoral, hopes to improve the human condition would

#### **fuzzy logic**

derived from fuzzy set theory dealing with reasoning that is approximate rather than precisely deduced from classical predicate logic. It can be thought of as the application side of fuzzy set theory dealing with well thought out real world expert values for a complex problem (Klir 1997).

#### **dichotomy**

any splitting of a whole into exactly two non-overlapping parts

#### **Plato; Aristotle –**

Greek philosophers

#### **bilateral -**

having two sides

#### **Gregory Bateson**

(9 May 1904 – 4 July 1980) was a British anthropologist, social scientist, linguist, and cyberneticist whose work intersected that of many other fields

#### **conservatism**

political philosophies that favor tradition and gradual change, where tradition refers to religious, cultural, or nationally defined beliefs and customs

be futile.

If people are products of biology, free will would be a myth and we could no longer hold people responsible for their actions.

If people are products of biology, life would have no higher meaning and purpose.  
(Pinker, Blank Slate, p. 139)

Therefore, Pinker says, scientists on the 'Left' reject the discoveries of evolutionary biology and genetics, all evidence to the contrary. From an anarchist perspective, we might reply that both sides are miss-stating the issue. Try this instead:

whether people are innately different or not, oppression and discrimination are not justified, and need not be an automatic consequence of innate differences. Different means different, not 'inferior' or 'superior.' Even the most hard-wired sociobiologist will admit that we have sufficient mental plasticity to make free choices about how we will deal with difference.

'Moral' and 'immoral' are value judgments, subjective in regard to time, place and culture; and again, we are plastic enough to "improve the human condition," regardless of whether our sense of right and wrong is biological in origin.

'Free will' and '**determinism**' are yet another false dichotomy. Even if our behavior is partly or even largely biologically determined, no one argues that it is 100% determined; we can choose to resist the **biological imperative**, and so of course people may be held responsible for their actions. The only question is what 'holding responsible' is to mean in terms of punishment or reprisal.

Whether people are products of biology or of culture is quite irrelevant to whether life has a "higher meaning and purpose." Aside from the subjectivity of that word "higher," life has the purpose and meaning we give it.

Let us look more closely at some of the social implications of the foregoing, especially as they relate to anarchism.

Recent studies of early childhood development seem to support the "hard-wired" theory, as indeed common sense tells us they should. Heredity establishes the basic personality: aggressive or shy; intelligent or not so bright. Socialization by the peer group is the main factor in how those basic traits are expressed: is the aggression played out on the football field, or in gang violence and rape? Is IQ developed to its full potential, or does it go to waste? Is attraction to the same sex (which nearly all children experience to some degree, at some stage in their development) suppressed, or encouraged by chance events and encounters to develop into homosexuality? The role of the parents is far less than most would like to think: they provide nurture and shelter (or they do not); they provide access to skills and knowledge, they have some part in choosing the peer group; it is largely up to them how 'secure' a child feels. But they do not seem to contribute much to the basic personality or intelligence, except through their genes. (Pinker, Blank Slate, ch. 19, esp. p. 392)

Is human nature essentially peaceful, or violent? Are we hard-wired to be aggressive? This is a crucial question for anarchists, because we are working towards a world in which artificial restraints are removed from human activity. If there is no government, no police, will we all (as one of my students recently wrote) "run wild and murder each other"? Every anarchist philosopher has addressed this issue. Almost all have assumed a blank-slate explanation for human nature: violence and aggression are learned, not innate. If we engineer our society in such a way that aggression is not rewarded, it will not happen. Peter Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread* outlines such a society; the State is an "apparatus of violence." Even Darwin suggested that the "struggle for existence" is not necessarily violent; "As the mistletoe is disseminated

#### **determinism**

(also called antiserendipity)  
philosophical proposition  
that every event, including  
human cognition and behavior,  
decision and action, is causally  
determined by an unbroken  
chain of prior occurrences

#### **biological imperatives**

the needs of living organisms  
required to perpetuate their  
existence

by birds, its existence depends on birds; and it may metaphorically be said to struggle with other fruit-bearing plants, in order to tempt birds to devour and thus disseminate its seeds rather than those of other plants.” (Darwin, *Origin of Species*, p. 63) Even **Georges Sorel** (who may or may not have been an anarchist, depending on whom you ask), in his *Reflections on Violence*, concluded that violence may be employed only to destroy violent institutions. (Sorel, *Reflections*, p. 195) What it comes down to is that we live in a dominative, patriarchal, hierarchic society in which violence is the chief instrument of policy, enshrined as an ideal in the schools and the media, studied extensively by scientists. Therefore we ‘see’ violence first; it is central to our consciousness; alternatives are rarely discussed or even thought about. (This is also, of course, why Darwinists ‘see’ competition in nature rather than ‘cooperation.’) We may in fact be hard-wired for violence, and we may have to accept that science has proved it. But we may also be hard-wired for many other behaviors and attitudes which have not been as well explored, because our science functions on behalf of our institutions of coercion. We do not need to accept the claim that, because violence is in our genes, we are therefore “violent beings.”

Here, fortunately, Pinker’s case is rather weak. In his chapter on violence, he gives many examples of apparently innate violent behavior, but all of them come either from our culture or from **indigenous** cultures under threat from Western civilization. The peaceful nature of most indigenous and matricentric peoples, before they ran up against the aggressive West, is well documented in the journals of early explorers and anthropologists. Still, recent studies do suggest that a tendency to violence and aggression is part of our biological heritage. This again is common sense: the most basic of all urges is that of self-preservation (including self-preservation through reproduction), and when faced with the classic “it’s either me or you” situation, we are all going to choose “me.” But that is an **oversimplification**, and oversimplification is one of the Right’s oldest tricks. Aggression towards other species (such as hunting and killing for food) does not automatically translate into aggression towards one’s own species, and violence in certain types of situation does not necessarily mean a ‘violent nature.’ Indeed the entire idea of ‘violence as natural’ is undermined by Kropotkin’s demonstration that cooperation is more fundamental to evolution than competition is. However, Kropotkin never denied that competition does exist in nature, and never suggested that it was anything other than ‘natural.’ It seems clear that some degree of aggression and violence is hard-wired into us. But biology is not destiny. The issue for anarchists should not be, “is violence innate?” but rather, “how is it directed?” In spite of what Pinker implies, we do not claim that violence is strictly a learned behavior. What we claim is that how we express our violent instincts is learned behavior.

A separate article would be required to explore the current status of ‘race’ as a concept, but let us try to dispose of it briefly here. The Nazi era made racism and its fellow travelers (such as eugenics) unacceptable, and science has striven for the past half-century to demonstrate that race is not a rational basis for discrimination. Just

**Georges Sorel -**

Georges Eugène Sorel (2 November 1847 – 29 August 1922) French philosopher and theorist of revolutionary syndicalism

**indigenous -**

born or engendered in, native to a land or region, especially before an intrusion

**oversimplification -**

explanation that excludes important information for the sake of brevity, or of making the explanation or presentation easy to understand

since the 1990s, evolutionary genetics has begun to prove that 'race' itself, as traditionally defined, does not even exist. Skin color, epicanthic eye folds and the like are very superficial and recent adjustments to environment, not in any way an essential part of what it means to be human. We are all very closely related, and the genealogical overlap among Africans, Europeans, Amerindians, and so forth is so extensive as to make any boundaries meaningless. Studies of DNA markers have produced some surprises: the Norwegians are not very closely related to the Danes; the Poles are more closely kin to many Pakistani tribes than they are to the Czechs next door; the predominant Irish Y chromosome has more in common with that of native Americans than it does with other European Y haplogroups. The closest relatives of today's Jews, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic, seem to be the Greeks.[1] These findings relate only to mitochondrial DNA (from your mother's mother and so on) or to the Y chromosome (father's father, etc.) and so do not even take into account the enormous mix that all of us can find in the other branches of our family tree. That being said, it must be added that race certainly does exist as an historical and social category, but that is not relevant to the present purpose.

But if much of our behavior is genetically rooted, and if differences can be shown in the genetic heritage of human groups, then scientifically-backed racial stereotyping is a real possibility. Here is Pinker's argument on stereotypes in a nutshell:

Categories and stereotypes may indeed be real, as long as we remember that 'real' is not a simple concept, but an interaction between our minds and the world, further complicated by the fact that our minds and the world are not independent entities. The bottom line is that it doesn't matter whether (for example) race and gender stereotypes are 'real' in some sense as opposed to socially constructed. What matters is that it is not moral or even logical to judge or rank individuals on the basis of membership in a category, or to judge or rank those categories themselves in some kind of value hierarchy based on our own admittedly subjective standards. It may be quite true, for example, that African-Americans as a group score lower on IQ tests than whites or Asian-Americans (leave aside, for the moment, the question of how valid the tests themselves are). It is probably even true that heredity plays a major role in IQ, though it is unlikely that this has much to do with race, as genetic diversity is greater within races than between races. It does not follow, in any case, that it is all right to discriminate against African-Americans because of IQ test results, or that all African-Americans are less intelligent than all whites or Asians. We cannot even replace all with some, since intelligence appears to be a strictly individual trait.

Pinker is right - but he doesn't go far enough. This analysis still emphasizes race (however defined) as a prime factor in human differences. What he neglects to consider is that in our culture, a hierarchy of power and privilege does determine many categories, and does rank those categories and stereotypes in a manner that legitimates discrimination. Race - given its usual definition some centuries ago, by privileged Europeans - has long been used as an excuse to cover up discrimination based on other criteria: gender, social status, and other hierarchic considerations. What we anarchists need to do is undermine that hierarchy, not just the categories themselves.

Many philosophers and scientists on the Left have condemned, sometimes on absurd and embarrassing grounds, the findings of cognitive science and evolutionary biology. Radical feminism, for example, sometimes goes to the extreme of arguing that all male/female differences are socially constructed. But even more moderate feminists sometimes ignore the scientific evidence. Countless studies have outlined differences in brain development, hormone balances, perception, and the like, most of

them beginning in the womb. Many of the researchers conducting these studies, if not most, are women. The bottom line: it is simply not a matter of culture that little boys like toy guns and little girls like dolls. The general public tends to conflate “feminism” with its radical extreme, though in fact many radical feminists choose to emphasize and celebrate male/female differences. True, radical feminism has made some silly mistakes due to its reliance on the blank slate. And anti-feminists like Christina Hoff Summers or Camille Paglia have made equally silly errors because they are brainwashed by the dominant patriarchal paradigm. Both sides often miss the point: it doesn’t really matter whether the differences between men and women are innate or imposed by culture. What matters is that we respect those differences (or deconstruct them, when appropriate) and refuse to use them as excuses for domination or discrimination. To his credit, Pinker recognizes this simple fact.

One brief article in one journal will not resolve this issue. But I hope that I have demonstrated the need for anarchists to take another look at the scientific evidence. We need not abandon Boas or Kroeber or the many other scientists and philosophers who have contributed to the anarchist stream of thought. But we do need to be critical when necessary, and we need to take cutting-edge science back from the right-wing ideologues that have commandeered it to their own uses. If there’s one good thing we have learned from modern science, going all the way back to Bacon and Galileo, it’s this: you can’t pick and choose your evidence to fit your preconceived opinion. You can, however, choose how to interpret that evidence.

Pinker is no doubt correct that we will never achieve **utopia**, and the reasons he lists are quite valid. However, we need not accept his conclusion that the only alternative is a free-market economy under an authoritarian government. Each of his points can be reconciled with anarchism and a free society. Let’s run through them:

“The primacy of family ties in all human societies and the consequent appeal of **nepotism** and **inheritance**.” What’s the appeal of nepotism when there is no power to bestow or of inheritance when there’s nothing to inherit? What’s to stop us from regarding the whole human race as our family?

“The limited scope of communal sharing in human groups, the more common **ethos** of reciprocity, and the resulting phenomena of social loafing and the collapse of contributions to public goods when reciprocity cannot be implemented.” This objection was answered by Kropotkin in chapter twelve of *The Conquest of Bread*: peer pressure, the innate need to be accepted by one’s group, is sufficient to enforce communal sharing. Reciprocity may be hard-wired; how we implement it is not.

“The universality of dominance and violence across human societies (including supposedly peaceable hunter-gatherers) and the existence of genetic and neurological mechanisms that underlie it.” We have overwhelming evidence that dominance is not universal, but is a byproduct of patriarchy. As for violence - yes, we are hard-wired to use it, against the plants and animals we eat to survive; but we use it against one another only when there is some tangible payoff, or when we are threatened. Take

**utopia -**

world in which everything and everyone works in perfect harmony

**nepotism -**

favoring of relatives or personal friends because of their relationship rather than because of their abilities

**inheritance -**

passing of title to an estate upon death

**ethos -**

character or fundamental values of a person, people, culture, or movement

away the payoff or the threat, and we are indeed peaceable. Pinker neglects to note that most indigenous people were in fact nonviolent before they were threatened by contact with aggressive, dominant cultures like ours.

“The universality of **ethnocentrism** and other forms of group-against-group hostility across societies, and the ease with which such hostility can be aroused in people within our own society.” Here Pinker, like most rightists, confuses human society with the artificially created state. Yes, we are tribal by nature, but not statist. Violence and hostility are aroused in us when we try to put the tribal mentality to the service of the artificial state. Ethnocentrism is not dangerous; state politics is.

“The partial heritability of intelligence, conscientiousness, and antisocial tendencies, implying that some degree of inequality will arise even in perfectly fair economic systems, and that we therefore face an inherent trade-off between equality and freedom.” This is a non-issue. We need not all be equal in all respects in order to agree that we all have equal rights. Inequality arises when we define certain characteristics as “superior,” and reward their possessors with authority of some kind. And of course there is a trade-off between equality and freedom: this is the definition of “human society,” and no anarchist denies it. What we deny is that we require some ‘authority’ to set the terms of the trade-off for us.

“The prevalence of defense mechanisms, self-serving biases, and cognitive dissonance reduction, by which people deceive themselves about their autonomy, wisdom, and integrity.” Another non-issue. Of course we deceive ourselves all the time; the problem is that our society of domination and hierarchy encourages those particular traits, whereas a just egalitarian society would not. We are not so hard-wired that we must reward self-serving or self-deceptive behavior.

“The biases of the human moral sense, including a preference for kin and friends, a susceptibility to a taboo mentality, and a tendency to confuse morality with conformity, rank, cleanliness, and beauty.”

We are all kin, and if we could get that through our heads, we could all be friends, as well. As for morality: this is learned behavior. The fact that we do not all agree on what is ‘moral’ proves that morality is not hard-wired. Many of us believe that conformity and rank are immoral, that lack of cleanliness is a byproduct of hierarchy, and that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

**ethnocentrism -**  
tendency to look at the world  
primarily from the perspective  
of one's own culture

**SOURCE:** Social Anarchism: Anarchism and the Question of Human Nature, Thomas Martin, [www.socialanarchism.org/mod/magazine/display/128/index.php](http://www.socialanarchism.org/mod/magazine/display/128/index.php)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Briefly summarize the text and determine the main ideas and key words of this text. What is anarchism? Why does the author think that scholars based their theory on a mistaken concept of human nature? The author thinks that sociology, evolutionary psychology and cognitive sciences have right ideas about human nature. What does he mean by this statement?
2. What are the views of the Lefts, Rights, and Biblical fundamentalists on the theory of evolution and on human nature? If evolution works, do we know how it works? The text states that: “Evolution is a fact: we are animals”... Do you agree? What are the main differences between human beings and animals?
3. Do you agree with the statement: “we are essentially products of culture”? If

yes, can we conclude that “social engineering” is possible: we can create a better world by manipulating culture. Do you think that Stalinism, liberal social welfare states, various anarchist communities, etc. are the results of social engineering or evolution theory? Why do some people oppose sociobiology? Is there a connection between racist and sexist ideologies and sociobiology? Why do some movements, like Right and Left, make politics based on the findings of Edward O. Wilson, a Harvard entomologist, who noticed similarities between the social behavior of ants and humans? What can you say about Lysenko’s crackpot theories known in the Soviet Union? Show the differences between Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism. Can we connect ecology, evolution and anarchism? Why is Kropotkin considered one of the greatest thinkers of the past thousand years like Aquinas, Calvin, Marx and Einstein? What is the most important or central mechanism of evolution according to Darwin: competition or cooperation? What do you think on the issue? What is the connection between epistemological debates (Maurice Merleau-Ponty and John Dewey, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson) and the issues of anarchism? What is the role of reason and cognitive theory in Western tradition and its connection to discussion on anarchism? Why does the author think that the main cause of anarchism’s shaky foundation is dichotomization (nature/nurture binary)? Why does the author blame Plato, Aristotle, and John Locke for it?

4. Is the world framed in a dichotomist way? Is there any order in it?
5. If we follow the conclusion of the author that the world is a complicated network of interactions, in which everything is connected to something else, do we have the freedom of choice to direct that evolution, at least within the limits set by physical nature? If so, is it grounds for anarchism?
6. Is there space for free will in the anarchist approach or is it just a basis for chaos?

#### COMPARISON QUESTIONS:

1. What is the correlation between different ideologists’ views on human nature? Which of these views are close to reality? Which concept has more space for human free will? How do different ideological movements use biological and scientific finding to justify the rightness of their ways? Are the Darwinian, Neo-Darwinian, Sociobiology theories closer to capitalist, but not to socialist, individualist, and anarchist systems of thinking?
2. What are the connections between the text on anarchism and the tale “Little Prince No-Father”? Why was the attitude towards the little boy different? What is necessary for acknowledgement?



**ADDITIONAL READING:**

- Darwin under the Black Flag, Historian Thomas Martin writes, in this issue of Social Anarchism, <http://lumiere.ens.fr/~alphapsy/blog/?2006/09/27/41-darwin-black-flag>
- Twenty-First Century Anarchism, Reviewed by Thomas Martin, <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SA/en/display/256>
- Bookchin, Murray, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. Palo Alto: Cheshire Books, 1982.
- Sorel, Georges, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. T.E. Hulme. London: Allen & Unwin, 1915.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SCIENCE AND HUMAN NATURE

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### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the reader gets an opportunity to explore the role of the intellect in human beings. Any reflection on this subject brings several questions to mind almost immediately. Is the intellect the most identifiable trait of humanity? Does our intellect distinguish us from the rest of the animal kingdom or is it a mere difference of degree? Where do we locate our intellect: in our mind, our instincts and habits, or in our very genes? Is intellect our best feature? Do we value our intellect above all our other characteristics? Or, is our intellect only a compensation mechanism for the lack of natural skills that other animals have? Perhaps the intellect is a sign of our weakness and not of our strength?

Charles Darwin opened the proverbial Pandora's Box when he claimed that humans share a common ancestor with apes. And he also noted in the excerpt given in this chapter that "the differences in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind." Our higher mental abilities, our self-consciousness for example, are probably "incidental results" of our advanced intellectual faculties which is most likely a natural progression of evolution in the animal kingdom. Does this mean that our sense of superiority over the rest of the animal world is an illusory one?

Analyzing the contemporary theories of human evolution, Charles T. Rubin critically examines the aspirations of some of our scientists who hope to design "better human beings by improving their biological system." In other words, aspiring and striving for "intelligence without bodies" has become the new target of some scientists. Rubin finds this perspective a "dangerous delusion" since it promotes human extinction through subordination to artificial intelligence. The belief that the human brain can be duplicated and perfected in machines thrives on the desire for immortality and is sustained by faith in science and technology.

Continuing the discourse, Larry Arnhart is confident that "biotechnology will be limited both in its technical means and in its moral ends." Arnhart examines the history of the debate between the supporters of technological manipulation of human nature and those that fear such manipulation. He does not find either argument sufficiently convincing since the basic premise, the capacity of human technology to bring about such change, is an exaggeration. Arnhart identifies the lack of replicable data in the belief that "soon parents will be able to increase the innate intelligence of their children by genetic engineering." Besides, there are many varieties of intelligence that all require the interaction of reason and emotion. Rational thought cannot be entirely separated from emotion in human beings.

Kai Wu concludes that "logical and knowledge flaws abound with current biological and evolutionary inquiries into human nature." He redirects our attention to our basic assumptions about ourselves and a better understanding of human history since that would be a better path to self-understanding. In other words, the study of history would reveal more about human nature than the various sciences that seek to decipher the human.

Readers have the unique opportunity in this chapter to compare the results of different disciplinary enquiries into human nature and draw their own conclusions. The prioritization of intelligence that drives science and technology to replicate human intelligence and the subordination of human bodies to it and the denigration of the human body and emotions is a fascinating development in contemporary intellectual history that is worth examining.



### SAADI SHEROZI THE GULISTON OR ROSE GARDEN

Sheikh Sa'di Sherozi (Muslih-ud-Din Mushrif-ibn-Abdullah, 1184-1291) is one of the major Persian poets of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He is recognized not only for the quality of his writing, but also for the depth of his social thought and didactic teaching. His works include *Bostan* (The Orchard) in 1257 and *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden) in 1258. His lyrics are to be found in *Ghazaliyat* (literally the lyrics) and his odes in *Qasa'id* (literally odes).

#### OF THE EFFECTS OF EDUCATION. TALE I.

A certain vizier had a stupid son, whom he sent to a learned man, desiring him to instruct him, in hopes that his capacity might improve. After having instructed him for some time, without any effect, he sent a person to the father with this message: Your son has no capacity, and has almost distracted me. When nature has a given capacity, instruction will make impression; but if iron is not of a proper temper, no polishing will make it good. Wash not a dog in the seven seas, for when he is wetted, he will only be dirtier. If the ass that carried Jesus Christ was to be taken to Mecca, at his return he would still be an ass.

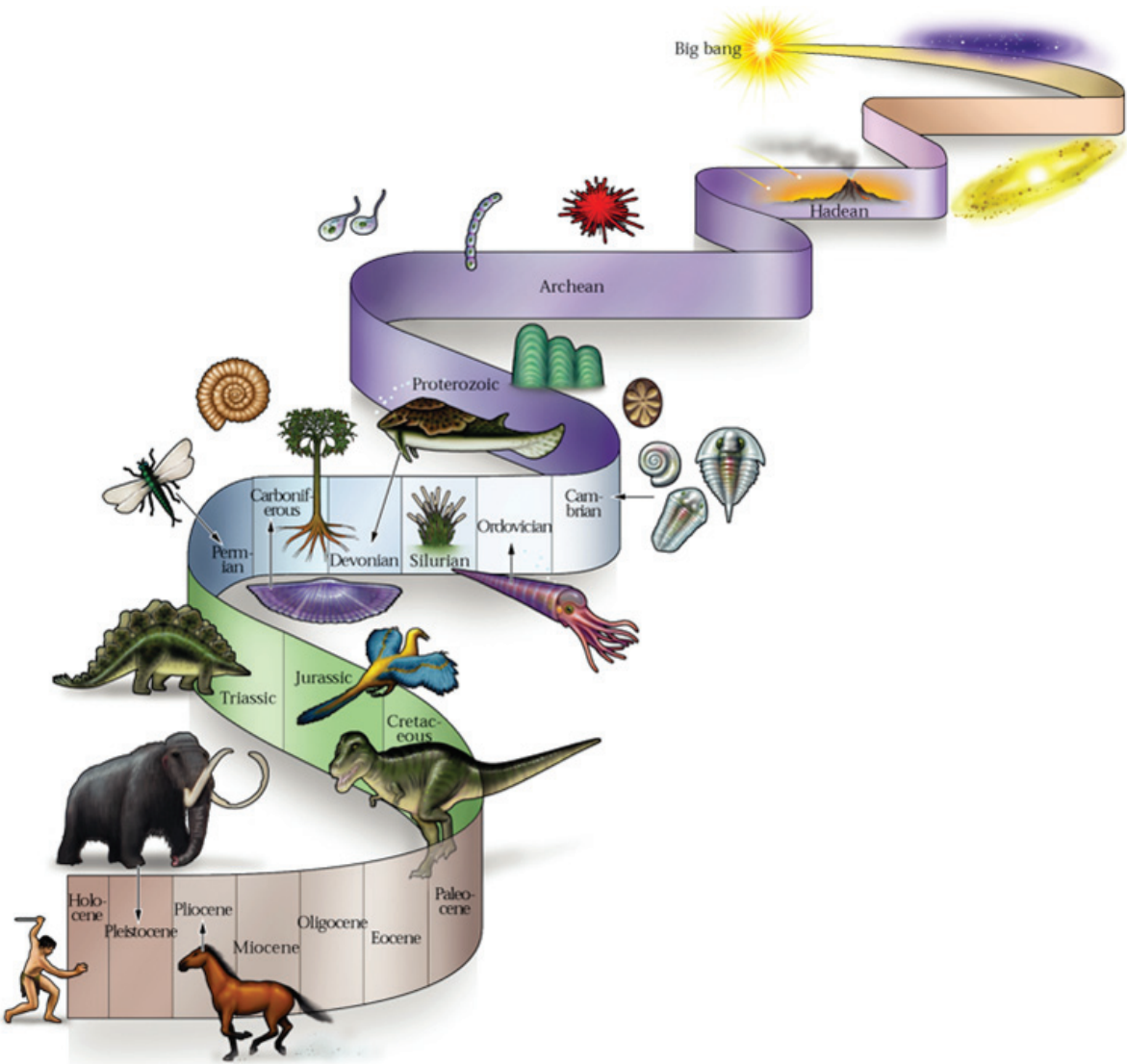
**SOURCE:** Shaikh Muslehu'd din Sa'di of Sheraz, *Gulistan or Rose Garden*, Chapter VII, Tale I, Translated from the original by Frances Gladwin, published by Al-Hoda, 76-78 Charing Cross Road, London, 2001 p. 192

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the vizier send his son to the educated person? What happened to him? Why was he uneducated? Can we say that his father was also uneducated?
2. How do you understand the statement "if the ass that carried Jesus Christ was to be taken to Mecca, at his return he would still be an ass." Does the statement relate to our reality?
3. According to Sa'di Sherozi, nature gave capacity to humans, do you agree with the idea? Bring your arguments.
4. Can you bring any example of natural capacity? Have you met anybody who had natural capacity? Are people born with capacity or do they gain it through education?

#### ADDITIONAL READING:

- Burton, Richard. *Tales from the Gulistan, or Rose-Garden*, London, 1928.
- Watson, Steven J. *The Reign of George III*, Oxford, 1960.
- Rehatsek, E. *Gulistan or Rose Garden*, India, 1888, reprint, M. H., Tasbihi. Tehran, 1346

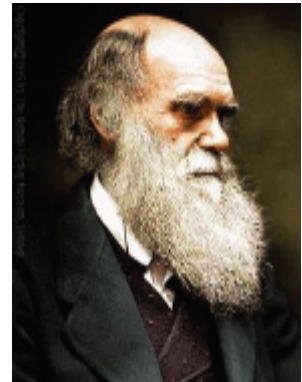


## CHARLES DARWIN THE DESCENT OF MAN

Charles Darwin was the British naturalist who became famous for his theories of evolution and natural selection. He was born on February 12, 1809 in Shrewsbury, England. Darwin, like several other scientists, believed that all life on earth developed over millions of years from a few common ancestors. In addition he believed in the idea of the evolution of species, rather than the idea that God created human beings.

Darwin's revolutionary views had profound implications for society, particularly for religious thinkers and believers who envisioned human beings as being distinct from all other living creatures. Darwin's scientific work disturbed many religious figures who denounced his ideas as groundless and contrary to scripture.

In the excerpts from the *Descent of Man*, Darwin compares the social behavior of man and various animals, in particular the primates. He demonstrates that the differences between humans and other primates are a matter of degree, not of type, and that behavior often characterized as uniquely human (selfishness, for example) can be observed in primates.



### COMPARISON OF THE MENTAL POWERS OF MAN AND THE LOWER ANIMALS

My object in this chapter is to show that there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties. Each division of the subject might have been extended into a separate essay, but must here be treated briefly. As no classification of the mental powers has been universally accepted, I shall arrange my remarks in the order most convenient for my purpose; and will select those facts which have **struck** me most, with the hope that they may produce some effect on the reader...

We will now turn to the more intellectual emotions and faculties, which are very important, as forming the basis for the development of the higher mental powers. Animals manifestly enjoy excitement, and suffer from ennui, as may be seen with dogs, and, according to Rengger, with monkeys. All animals feel *Wonder*, and many exhibit **antics** and thus attracts them; I have witnessed this with deer, and so it is with the **wary chamois**, and with some kinds of wild ducks. Brehm gives a curious account of the instinctive **dread** which his monkeys exhibited for snakes; but their curiosity was so great that they could not **desist** from occasionally **satiating** their horror in a most human fashion by lifting up the lid of the box in which the snakes were kept. I was so much surprised at this account that I took a stuffed and coiled-up snake into the monkey-house at the Zoological Gardens and the excitement thus caused was one of the most curious spectacles which I ever beheld. Three species of **Cercopithecus** were the most alarmed; they dashed about their cages, and uttered sharp signal cries of danger, which were understood by the other monkeys. A few young monkeys and one old **Anubis baboon** alone took no notice of the snake. I then placed the stuffed specimen on the ground in one of the larger compartments. After a time all the monkeys

**struck -**

to affect keenly or forcibly;  
impress

**antics -**

activity that diverts, amuses or  
stimulates

**wary -**

on guard; watchful

**chamois -**

extremely agile goat antelope  
of mountainous regions of  
Europe, having upright horns  
with backward-hooked tips

**dread -**

fearful or distasteful  
anticipation

**desist -**

to cease doing something;  
forbear

**satiating -**

fully satisfying

**Cercopithecus -**

genus of the family  
Cercopithecidae that includes  
slender long-tailed African  
monkeys comprising the  
guenons and related forms  
with cheek pouches and ischial  
callosities

**Anubis baboon -**

monkey with long tail and dog-  
like snout



- ludicrous** -  
laughable or hilarious because  
of obvious absurdity or  
incongruity
- affinities** -  
a natural attraction, liking, or  
feeling of kinship
- orang** -  
large long-armed ape of Borneo  
and Sumatra having arboreal  
habits
- savage** -  
person regarded as primitive or  
uncivilised
- morbid** -  
of, relating to, or caused  
by disease; pathological or  
diseased
- hemiplegic** -  
a person who is paralysed on  
one side of the body
- inflammation** -  
localized protective reaction  
of tissue to irritation, injury,  
or infection, characterized by  
pain, redness, swelling, and  
sometimes loss of function
- ascending** -  
moving, going, or growing  
upward
- mock** -  
scorn; scoff; deride
- jackal** -  
any of several doglike mammals  
of the genus *Canis* of Africa and  
southern Asia that are mainly  
foragers feeding on plants,  
small animals, and occasionally  
carrion
- de la Malle, Dureau** -  
1742-1807, French scholar
- suckled** -  
breast-fed, nursed

collected round it in a large circle, and staring intently, presented a most **ludicrous** appearance. They became extremely nervous; so that when a wooden ball, with which they were familiar as a plaything, was accidentally moved in the straw, under which it was partly hidden, they all instantly started away. These monkeys behaved very differently when a dead fish, a mouse,<sup>1</sup> a living turtle, and other new objects were placed in their cages; for though at first frightened, they soon approached, handled and examined them. I then placed a live snake in a paper bag, with the mouth loosely closed, in one of the larger compartments. One of the monkeys immediately approached, cautiously opened the bag a little, peeped in, and instantly dashed away. Then I witnessed what Brehm has described, for monkey after monkey, with head raised high and turned on one side, could not resist taking a momentary peep into the upright bag, at the dreadful object lying quietly at the bottom. It would almost appear as if monkeys had some notion of zoological **affinities**, for those kept by Brehm exhibited a strange, though mistaken, instinctive dread of innocent lizards and frogs. An **orang**, also, has been known to be much alarmed at the first sight of a turtle.<sup>2</sup>

The principle of Imitation is strong in man, and especially, as I have myself observed, with **savages**. In certain **morbid** states of the brain this tendency is exaggerated to an extraordinary degree: some **hemiplegic** patients and others, at the commencement of **inflammatory** softening of the brain, unconsciously imitate every word which is uttered, whether in their own or in a foreign language, and every gesture or action which is performed near them.<sup>3</sup> Desor<sup>4</sup> has remarked that no animal voluntarily imitates an action performed by man until in the **ascending** scale we come to monkeys, which are well known to be ridiculous **mockers**. Animals, however, sometimes imitate each other's actions: thus two species of wolves, which had been reared by dogs, learned to bark, as does sometimes the **jackal**,<sup>5</sup> but whether this can be called voluntary imitation is another question. Birds imitate the songs of their parents and sometimes of other birds; and parrots are notorious imitators of any sound which they often hear. **Dureau de la Malle** gives an account<sup>6</sup> of a dog reared by a cat, who learnt to imitate the well-known action of a cat licking her paws, and thus washing her ears and face; this was also witnessed by the celebrated naturalist Audouin. I have received several confirmatory accounts; in one of these, a dog had not been **suckled** by a cat, but had been brought up with one, together with kittens, and had thus acquired the above habit, which he ever afterwards practiced during his life of thirteen years. Dureau de la Malle's dog likewise learnt from the kittens to play with a ball by rolling it about with his fore paws, and springing on it. A correspondent assures me that a cat in his house used to put her paws into jugs of milk having too narrow a mouth for her head. A kitten of this cat soon learned the same trick, and practiced it ever afterwards, whenever there was an opportunity.

The parents of many animals, trusting to the principle of imitation in their young, and more especially to their instinctive or inherited tendencies, may be said to educate them. We see this when a cat brings a live mouse to her kittens; and Dureau de la Malle has given a curious account (in the paper above quoted) of his observations on hawks

1 I have given a short account of their behavior on this occasion in my *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, p. 43.

2 W. C. L. Martin, *Natural History of Mammalia*, 1841, p. 405.

3 Dr. Bateman, *On Aphasia*, 1870, p. 110.

4 Quoted by Vogt, *Memoire sur les Microcephales*, 1867, p. 168.

5 *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, vol. i., p. 27.

6 *Annales des Sciences Nat.*, (1st series), tom, xxii., p. 397.



which taught their young **dexterity**, as well as judgment of distances, by first dropping through the air dead mice and sparrows, which the young generally failed to catch, and then bringing them live birds and letting them loose.

Hardly any faculty is more important for the intellectual progress of man than Attention. Animals clearly manifest this power, as when a cat watches by a hole and prepares to spring on its **prey**. Wild animals sometimes become so absorbed when thus engaged, that they may be easily approached. Mr. Bartlett has given me a curious proof how variable this faculty is in monkeys. A man who trains monkeys to act in plays used to purchase common kinds from the Zoological Society at the price of five pounds for each; but he offered to give double the price if he might keep three or four of them for a few days in order to select one. When asked how he could possibly learn so soon whether a particular monkey would turn out a good actor, he answered that it all depended on their power of attention. If, when he was talking and explaining anything to a monkey, its attention was easily distracted, as by a fly on the wall or other **trifling** object, the case was hopeless. If he tried by punishment to make an inattentive monkey act, it turned **sulky**. On the other hand, a monkey which carefully attended to him could always be trained.

It is almost **superfluous** to state that animals have excellent Memories for persons and places. A baboon at the **Cape of Good Hope**, as I have been informed by Sir Andrew Smith, recognized him with joy after an absence of nine months. I had a dog who was savage and **averse** to all strangers, and I purposely tried his memory after an absence of five years and two days. I went near the stable where he lived, and shouted to him in my old manner; he showed no joy, but instantly followed me out walking, and obeyed me, exactly as if I had parted with him only half an hour before. A train of old associations, dormant during five years, had thus been **instantaneously** awakened in his mind. Even ants, as P. Huber<sup>7</sup> has clearly shown, recognized their fellow-ants belonging to the same community after a separation of four months. Animals can certainly by some means judge of the intervals of time between recurrent events.

The Imagination is one of the highest prerogatives of man. By this faculty he unites former images and ideas, independently of the will, and thus creates brilliant and novel results. A poet, as **Jean Paul Richter** remarks,<sup>8</sup> “who must reflect whether he shall make a character say yes or no to the devil with him; he is only a stupid corpse.” Dreaming gives us the best notion of this power; as Jean Paul again says, “The dream is an involuntary art of poetry.” The value of the products of our imagination depends of course on the number, accuracy, and clearness of our impressions, on our judgment and taste in selecting or rejecting the involuntary combinations, and to a certain extent on our power of voluntarily combining them. As dogs, cats, horses, and probably all the

**dexterity -**

skill and grace in physical movement

**prey -**

animal hunted or caught for food

**trifling -**

not worth considering

**sulky -**

sullen or moody

**superfluous -**

serving no useful purpose; having no excuse for being

**Cape of Good Hope -**

point of land in southwestern South Africa (south of Cape Town)

**averse -**

having a repugnance or opposition of mind; disliking; disinclined; unwilling; reluctant

**instantaneously -**

without any delay

**Richter, Jean Paul -**

German writer whose humorous and sentimental novels include *Titan* (1800-1803) and *Years of Indiscretion* (1804-1805)

<sup>7</sup> *Les Moeurs des Fourmis*, 1810, p. 150.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Dr. Maudsley's *Physiology and Pathology of Mind*, 1868, pp. 19, 220.

**utter -**

to send forth with the voice

**howl -**

to utter or emit a long, mournful, plaintive sound

**baying -**

uttering a deep, prolonged bark

**conjure -**

to call or bring to mind; evoke

**deliberate -**

to think carefully and often slowly, as about a choice to be made

**sledge -**

a vehicle mounted on low runners drawn by work animals, such as horses or dogs, and used for transporting loads across ice, snow, and rough ground

**Esquimaux -**

Eskimo (Inuit)

**conscience -**

the part of the superego in psychoanalysis that judges the ethical nature of one's actions and thoughts and then transmits such determinations to the ego for consideration

**imperious -**

arrogantly domineering or overbearing

**wondrous -**

remarkable or extraordinary; wonderful

**insinuation -**

an indirect (and usually malicious) implication

**solitude -**

the state or quality of being alone or remote from others

higher animals, even birds<sup>9</sup> have vivid dreams, and this is shown by their movements and the sounds **uttered**, we must admit that they possess some power of imagination. There must be something special which causes dogs to **howl** in the night, and especially during moonlight, in that remarkable and melancholy manner called **baying**. All dogs do not do so; and, according to Houzeau<sup>10</sup>, they do not then look at the moon, but at some fixed point near the horizon. Houzeau thinks that their imaginations are disturbed by the vague outlines of the surrounding objects, and **conjure** up before them fantastic images: if this be so, their feelings may almost be called superstitious.

Of all the faculties of the human mind it will, I presume, be admitted that *Reason* stands at the summit. Only a few persons now dispute that animals possess some power of reasoning. Animals may constantly be seen to pause, **deliberate**, and resolve. It is a significant fact, that the more the habits of any particular animal are studied by a naturalist, the more he attributes to reason and the less to unlearned instincts.<sup>11</sup> In future chapters we shall see that some animals extremely low in the scale apparently display a certain amount of reason. No doubt it is often difficult to distinguish between the power of reason and that of instinct. For instance, Dr. Hayes, in his work on *The Open Polar Sea*, repeatedly remarks that his dogs, instead of continuing to draw the **sledges** in a compact body, diverged and separated when they came to thin ice, so that their weight might be more evenly distributed. This was often the first warning which the travelers received that the ice was becoming thin and dangerous. Now, did the dogs act thus from the experience of each individual, or from the example of the older and wiser dogs, or from an inherited habit, that is from instinct? This instinct may possibly have arisen since the time, long ago, when dogs were first employed by the natives in drawing their sledges; or the arctic wolves, the parent-stock of the **Esquimaux** dog, may have acquired an instinct impelling them not to attack their prey in a close pack, when on thin ice.

## COMPARISON OF THE MENTAL POWERS OF MAN AND THE LOWER ANIMALS

I fully subscribe to the judgment of those writers who maintain that of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the moral sense or **conscience** is by far the most important. This sense, as Mackintosh<sup>12</sup> remarks, "has a rightful supremacy over every other principle of human action"; it is summed up in that short but **imperious** word ought, so full of high significance. It is the most noble of all the attributes of man, leading him without a moment's hesitation to risk his life for that of a fellow-creature; or after due deliberation, impelled simply by the deep feeling of right or duty, to sacrifice it in some great cause. Immanuel Kant exclaims, "Duty! **Wondrous** thought, that worketh (Editor's note: works) neither by fond **insinuation**, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience; before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel; whence thy original?"<sup>13</sup>...

*Man a Social Animal* – Every one will admit that man is a social being. We see this in his dislike of **solitude**, and in his wish for society beyond that of his own family. Solitary

9 Dr. Jerdon, *Birds of India*, vol. i., 1862, p. xxi. Houzeau says that his parakeets and canary-birds dreamt: *Etudes sur les Facultés Mentales des Animaux*, tom. ii., p. 136.

10 *ibid.*, 1872, tom. ii., p. 181.

11 See, for instance, on this subject, Quatrefages, *Unite de l'Espece Humaine*, 1861, p. 21, &c.

12 *Dissertation on Ethical Philosophy*, 1837, p. 231, &c.

13 *Metaphysics of Ethics* translated by J. W. Semple, Edinburgh, 1836, p. 136.

**confinement** is one of the severest punishments which can be inflicted. Some authors suppose that **primeval** man lived in single families; but at the present day, though single families, or only two or three together, roam the solitudes of some savage lands, they always, as far as I can discover, hold friendly relations with other families inhabiting the same district. Such families occasionally meet in council, and unite for their common defense. It is no argument against savage man being a social animal that the tribes inhabiting adjacent districts are almost always at war with each other; for the social instincts never extend to all the individuals of the same species. Judging from the analogy of the majority of the **Quadrumana**, it is probable that the early ape-like **progenitors** of man were likewise social; but this is not of much importance for us. Although man, as he now exists, has few special instincts, having lost any which his early progenitors may have possessed, this is no reason why he should not have retained from an extremely remote period some degree of instinctive love and sympathy for his fellows. We are indeed all conscious that we do possess such sympathetic feelings;<sup>14</sup> but our consciousness does not tell us whether they are instinctive, having originated long ago in the same manner as with the lower animals, or whether they have been acquired by each of us during our early years. As man is a social animal it is almost certain that he would inherit a tendency to be faithful to his comrades and obedient to the leader of his tribe; for these qualities are common to most social animals. He would consequently possess some capacity for self-command. He would from an inherited tendency be willing to defend, in concert with others, his fellow-men; and would be ready to aid them in any way which did not too greatly interfere with his own welfare or his own strong desires.

The social animals which stand at the bottom of the scale are guided almost **exclusively**, and those which stand higher in the scale are largely guided by special instincts in the aid which they give to the members of the same community; but they are likewise in part impelled by mutual love and sympathy, assisted apparently by some amount of reason. Although man, as just remarked, has no special instincts to tell him how to aid his fellow men, he still has the impulse, and with his improved intellectual faculties would naturally be much guided in this respect by reason and experience. Instinctive sympathy would also cause him to value highly the approbation of his fellows; for, as Mr. Bain has clearly shown,<sup>15</sup> the love of praise and the strong feeling of glory, and the still stronger horror of **scorn** and **infamy**, "are due to the workings of sympathy." Consequently man would be influenced in the highest degree by the wishes, approbation, and blame of his fellow-men, as expressed by their gestures and language. Thus the social instincts, which must have been acquired by man in a very rude state, and probably even by his early ape-like progenitors, still give the impulse to some of his best actions; but his

**confinement** -  
the act of confining or the state  
of being confined

**primevally** -  
in or from the earliest times;  
originally

**quadrumana** -  
division of the Primates  
comprising the apes and  
monkeys; so called because the  
hind foot is usually prehensile,  
and the great toe opposable  
somewhat like a thumb

**progenitor** -  
direct ancestor

**exclusively** -  
without any others being  
included or involved

**scorn** -  
and expression of contempt or  
disdain felt toward a person or  
object considered despicable  
or unworthy

**infamy** -  
evil fame or reputation

14 Hume remarks (*An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. of 1751, p. 132), "There seems a necessity for confessing that the happiness and misery of others are not spectacles altogether indifferent to us, but that the view of the former... communicates a secret joy; the appearance of the latter... throws a melancholy damp over the imagination."

15 *Mental and Moral Science*, 1868, p. 254.

actions are in a higher degree determined by the expressed wishes and judgment of his fellow men, and unfortunately very often by his own strong selfish desires. But as love, sympathy and self-command become strengthened by habit, and as the power of reasoning becomes clearer, so that man can value justly the judgments of his fellows, he will feel himself **impelled**, apart from any transitory pleasure or pain, to certain lines of conduct. He might then declare – not that any barbarian or uncultivated man could thus think – I am the supreme judge of my own conduct, and in the words of Kant, I will not in my own person violate the dignity of humanity.

### THE MORE ENDURING SOCIAL INSTINCTS CONQUER THE LESS PERSISTENT INSTINCTS

We have not, however, as yet considered the main point on which, from our present point of view, the whole question of the moral sense turns. Why should a man feel that he ought to obey one instinctive desire rather than another? Why is he bitterly regretful if he has yielded to a strong sense of self-preservation and has not risked his life to save that of a fellow creature? Or why does he regret having stolen food from hunger?

It is evident in the first place that with mankind the instinctive impulses have different degrees of strength; a savage will risk his own life to save that of a member of the same community, but will be wholly indifferent about a stranger: a young and timid mother urged by the maternal instinct will, without a moment's hesitation, run the greatest danger for her own infant, but not for a mere fellow creature. Nevertheless, many a civilized man, or even boy, who never before risked his life for another, but full of courage and sympathy, has disregarded the instinct of self-preservation, and plunged at once into a **torrent** to save a drowning man, though a stranger. In this case man is impelled by the same instinctive motive, which made the heroic little American monkey, formerly described, save his keeper, by attacking the great and dreaded baboon. Such actions as the above appear to be the simple result of the greater strength of the social or maternal instincts rather than that of any other instinct or motive; for they are performed too instantaneously for reflection, or for pleasure or pain to be felt at the time; though, if prevented by any cause, distress or even misery might be felt. In a timid man, on the other hand, the instinct of self preservation might be so strong, that he would be unable to force himself to run any such risk, perhaps not even for his own child.

I am aware that some persons maintain that actions performed impulsively, as in the above cases, do not come under the dominion of the moral sense, and cannot be called moral. They confine this term to actions done deliberately after a victory over opposing desires or when prompted by some **exalted** motive. But it appears scarcely possible to draw any clear line of distinction of this kind.<sup>16</sup> As far as exalted motives are concerned, many instances have been recorded of savages, **destitute** of any feeling of general **benevolence** towards mankind, and not guided by any religious motive, who have deliberately sacrificed their lives as prisoners,<sup>17</sup> rather than betray their comrades; and surely their conduct ought to be considered as moral. As far as deliberation and the victory over opposing motives are concerned, animals may be seen doubting between opposed instincts in rescuing their offspring or comrades from danger; yet their actions,

#### impel -

to urge to action through moral pressure; drive

#### torrent -

a turbulent, swift-flowing stream

#### exalt -

to raise in rank, character, or status; elevate

#### destitute -

lacking resources or the means of subsistence; completely impoverished

#### benevolence -

an inclination to perform kind, charitable acts

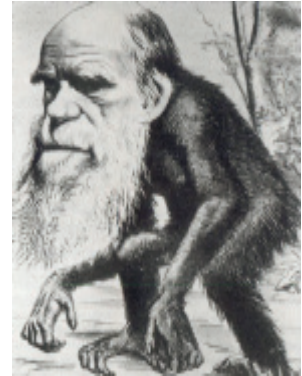
<sup>16</sup> I refer here to the distinction between what has been called material and formal morality. I am glad to find that Professor Huxley (*Critiques and Addresses*, 1873, p. 287) takes the same view on this subject as I do. Mr. Leslie Stephen remarks (*Essays on Free Thinking and Plain Speaking*, 1873, p. 83), "The metaphysical distinction between material and formal morality is as irrelevant as other such distinctions."

<sup>17</sup> I have given one such case, namely of three Patagonian Indians who preferred being shot, one after the other, to betraying the plans of their companions in war (*Journal of Researches*, 1845, p. 103).

though done for the good of others, are not called moral. Moreover, anything performed very often by us, will at last be done without deliberation or hesitation, and can then hardly be distinguished from an instinct; yet surely no one will pretend that such an action ceases to be moral. On the contrary, we all feel that an act cannot be considered as perfect, or as performed in the most noble manner, unless it be done impulsively, without deliberation or effort, in the same manner as by a man in whom the requisite qualities are innate. He who is forced to overcome his fear or want of sympathy before he acts deserves, however, in one way higher credit than the man whose innate disposition leads him to a good act without effort. As we cannot distinguish between motives, we rank all actions of a certain class as moral, if performed by a moral being. A moral being is one who is capable of comparing his past and future actions or motives, and of approving or disapproving of them. We have no reason to suppose that any of the lower animals have this capacity; therefore, when a Newfoundland dog drags a child out of the water, or a monkey faces danger to rescue its comrade, or takes charge of an orphan monkey, we do not call its conduct moral. But in the case of man, who alone can with certainty be ranked as a moral being, actions of a certain class are called moral, whether performed deliberately, after a struggle with opposing motives, or impulsively through instinct, or from the effects of slowly-gained habit.

But to return to our more immediate subject. Although some instincts are more powerful than others, and thus lead to corresponding actions, yet it is **untenable**, that in man the social instincts (including the love of praise and fear of blame) possess greater strength, or have, through long habit, acquired greater strength than the instincts of self-preservation, hunger, lust, vengeance, etc. Why then does man regret, even though trying to banish such regret, that he has followed the one natural impulse rather than the other; and why does he further feel that he ought to regret his conduct? Man in this respect differs profoundly from the lower animals. Nevertheless we can, I think, see with some degree of clearness the reason of this difference.

Man, from the activity of his mental faculties, cannot avoid reflection: past impressions and images are **incessantly** and clearly passing through his mind. Now with those animals which live permanently in a body, the social instincts are ever present and persistent. Such animals are always ready to utter the danger-signal, to defend the community, and to give aid to their fellows in accordance with their habits; they feel at all times, without the stimulus of any special passion or desire, some degree of love and sympathy for them; they are unhappy if long separated from them, and always happy to be again in their company. So it is with ourselves. Even when we are quite alone, how often do we think with pleasure or pain of what others think of us, of their imagined approbation or disapprobation? And this all follows from sympathy, a fundamental element of the social instincts. A man who possessed no trace of such instincts would be an unnatural monster. On the other hand, the desire to satisfy hunger, or any passion such as vengeance, is in its nature temporary, and can for a time be fully satisfied. Nor is it easy, perhaps hardly possible, to call up with complete **vividness** the feeling,



#### DARWIN AS AN APE

This was one of many cartoons suggesting that if Darwin's theories on evolution were correct, then the great scientist must be descended from apes

- untenable** -  
being such that defense or  
maintenance is impossible
- incessantly** -  
unceasingly; continually

for instance, of hunger; nor indeed, as has often been remarked, of any suffering. The instinct of self-preservation is not felt except in the presence of danger; and many a coward has thought himself brave until he has met his enemy face to face. The wish for another man's property is perhaps as persistent a desire as any that can be named; but even in this case the satisfaction of actual possession is generally a weaker feeling than the desire: many a thief, if not a habitual one, after success has wondered why he stole some article.<sup>18</sup>

A man cannot prevent past impressions often passing through his mind; he will thus be driven to make a comparison between the impressions of past hunger, vengeance satisfied, or danger **shunned** at other men's cost, with the almost ever-present instinct of sympathy, and with his early knowledge of what others consider as **praiseworthy** or **blameable**. This knowledge cannot be banished from his mind, and from instinctive sympathy is esteemed of great moment. He will then feel as if he had been **balked** in following a present instinct or habit, and this with all animals causes dissatisfaction, or even misery.

The above case of the swallow affords an illustration, though of a reversed nature, of a temporary though for the time strongly persistent instinct conquering another instinct, which is usually dominant over all others. At the proper season these birds seem all day long to be impressed with the desire to migrate; their habits change; they become restless, are noisy and congregate in flocks. Whilst the mother-bird is feeding, or brooding over her nestlings, the maternal instinct is probably stronger than the migratory; but the instinct which is the more persistent gains the victory, and at last, at a moment when her young ones are not in sight, she takes flight and deserts them. When arrived at the end of her long journey, and the migratory instinct has ceased to act, what an agony of **remorse** the bird would feel, if, from being endowed with great mental activity, she could not prevent the image constantly passing through her mind, of her young ones perishing in the **bleak** north from cold and hunger.

At the moment of action, man will no doubt be apt to follow the stronger impulse; and though this may occasionally prompt him to the noblest deeds, it will more commonly lead him to gratify his own desires at the expense of other men. But after their **gratification** when past and weaker impressions are judged by the ever-enduring social instinct, and by his deep regard for the good opinion of his fellows, retribution will surely come. He will then feel remorse, **repentance**, regret, or shame; this latter feeling, however, relates almost exclusively to the judgment of others. He will consequently resolve more or less firmly to act differently for the future; and this is conscience; for conscience looks backwards, and serves as a guide for the future.

The nature and strength of the feelings which we call regret, shame, repentance or remorse, depend apparently not only on the strength of the violated instinct, but

**vividness -**

true to the life; exhibiting the appearance of life or freshness; animated; spirited; bright; strong

**shun -**

to avoid deliberately; keep away from

**praiseworthy -**

meriting praise; highly commendable

**blameable -**

deserving blame; culpable

**balk -**

to refuse obstinately or abruptly

**remorse -**

moral anguish arising from repentance for past misdeeds; bitter regret

**bleak -**

gloomy and somber

**gratification -**

the act of pleasing either the mind, the taste, or the appetite

**repentance -**

remorse or contrition for past conduct or sin

**reverence -**

a feeling of profound awe and respect and often love; veneration

<sup>18</sup> Enmity or hatred seems also to be a highly persistent feeling, perhaps more so than any other that can be named. Envy is defined as hatred of another for some excellence or success; and Bacon insists (*Essay ix.*), "Of all other affections envy is the most importune and continual." Dogs are very apt to hate both strange men and strange dogs, especially if they live near at hand, but do not belong to the same family, tribe, or clan; this feeling would thus seem to be innate, and is certainly a most persistent one. It seems to be the complement and converse of the true social instinct. From what we hear of savages, it would appear that something of the same kind holds good with them. If this be so, it would be a small step in any one to transfer such feelings to any member of the same tribe if he had done him an injury and had become his enemy. Nor is it probable that the primitive conscience would reproach a man for injuring his enemy; rather it would reproach him, if he had not revenged himself. To do good in return for evil, to love your enemy, is a height of morality to which it may be doubted whether the social instincts would, by themselves, have ever led us. It is necessary that these instincts, together with sympathy, should have been highly cultivated and extended by the aid of reason, instruction, and the love or fear of God, before any such golden rule would ever be thought of and obeyed.



partly on the strength of the temptation, and often still more on the judgment of our fellows. How far each man values the appreciation of others depends on the strength of his innate or acquired feeling of sympathy; and on his own capacity for reasoning out the remote consequences of his acts. Another element is most important, although not necessary, the **reverence** or fear of the Gods, or Spirits believed in by each man: and this applies especially in cases of remorse. Several critics have objected that though some slight regret or repentance may be explained by the view advocated in this chapter, it is impossible thus to account for the soul-shaking feeling of remorse. But I can see little force in this objection. My critics do not define what they mean by remorse, and I can find no definition implying more than an overwhelming sense of repentance. Remorse seems to bear the same relation to repentance, as rage does to anger, or agony to pain. It is far from strange that an instinct so strong and so generally admired, as maternal love, should, if disobeyed, lead to the deepest misery, as soon as the impression of the past cause of disobedience is weakened. Even when an action is opposed to no special instinct, merely to know that our friends and equals despise us for it is enough to cause great misery. Who can doubt that the refusal to fight a duel through fear has caused many men an agony of shame? Many a **Hindu**, it is said, has been stirred to the bottom of his soul by having partaken of unclean food. Here is another case of what must, I think, be called remorse. Dr. Landor acted as a magistrate in West Australia and relates<sup>19</sup> that a native on his farm, after losing one of his wives from disease, came and said that, "He was going to a distant tribe to **spear** a woman, to satisfy his sense of duty to his wife. I told him that if he did so, I would send him to prison for life. He remained about the farm for some months, but got exceedingly thin, and complained that he could not rest or eat, that his wife's spirit was haunting him, because he had not taken a life for hers. I was **inexorable**, and assured him that nothing should save him if he did." Nevertheless the man disappeared for more than a year, and then returned in high condition; and his other wife told Dr. Landor that her husband had taken the life of a woman belonging to a distant tribe; but it was impossible to obtain legal evidence of the act. The breach of a rule held sacred by the tribe, will thus, as it seems, give rise to the deepest feelings, and this quite apart from the social instincts, excepting in so far as the rule is grounded on the judgment of the community. How so many strange superstitions have arisen throughout the world we know not; nor can we tell how some real and great crimes, such as incest, have come to be held in an **abhorrence** (which is not however quite universal) by the lowest savages. It is even doubtful whether in some tribes **incest** would be looked on with greater horror than would the marriage of a man with a woman bearing the same name, though not a relation. "To violate this law is a crime which the Australians hold in the greatest abhorrence, in this agreeing exactly with certain tribes of North America. When the question is put in either district, is

**Hindu -**

followers of the religion of most people in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal

**spear -**

to pierce with or as if with a spear

**inexorable -**

not capable of being persuaded by entreaty; relentless

**abhorrence -**

one that is disgusting, loathsome, or repellent

**incest -**

sexual relations between persons who are so closely related that their marriage is illegal or forbidden by custom

19 *Insanity in Relation to Law*, Ontario, United States, 1871, p. 1.



it worse to kill a girl of a foreign tribe, or to marry a girl of one's own, an answer just opposite to ours would be given without hesitation."<sup>20</sup> We may, therefore, reject the belief, lately insisted on by some writers, that the abhorrence of incest is due to our possessing a special God-implemented conscience. On the whole it is intelligible that a man urged by so powerful a sentiment as remorse, though arising as above explained, should be led to act in a manner, which he has been taught to believe serves as an expiation, such as delivering himself up to justice.

Man prompted by his conscience, will through long habit acquire such perfect self command, that his desires and passions will at last yield instantly and without a struggle to his social sympathies and instincts, including his feeling for the judgment of his fellows. The still hungry or the still revengeful man will not think of stealing food, or of wreaking his vengeance. It is possible, or as we shall hereafter see, even probable, that the habit of self-command may, like other habits, be inherited. Thus at last man comes to feel, through acquired and perhaps inherited habit, that it is best for him to obey his more persistent impulses. The imperious word ought seems merely to imply the consciousness of the existence of a rule of conduct, however it may have originated. Formerly it must have been often **vehemently** urged that an insulted gentleman ought to fight a duel. We even say that a pointer ought to point, and a retriever to retrieve game. If they fail to do so, they fail in their duty and act wrongly.

If any desire or instinct leading to an action opposed to the good of others still appears, when recalled to mind, as strong as, or stronger than, the social instinct, a man will feel no keen regret at having followed it; but he will be conscious that if his conduct were known to his fellows, it would meet with their disapprobation; and few are so destitute of sympathy as not to feel discomfort when this is realized. If he has no such sympathy, and if his desires leading to bad actions are at the time strong, and when recalled are not over-mastered by the persistent social instincts, and the judgment of others, then he is essentially a bad man;<sup>21</sup> and the sole restraining motive left is the fear of punishment, and the conviction that in the long run it would be best for his own selfish interests to regard the good of others rather than his own.

It is obvious that everyone may with an easy conscience gratify his own desires if they do not interfere with his social instincts, that is with the good of others; but in order to be quite free from self-reproach, or at least of anxiety, it is almost necessary for him to avoid the disapprobation, whether reasonable or not, of his fellow-men. Nor must he break through the fixed habits of his life, especially if these are supported by reason; for if he does, he will assuredly feel dissatisfaction. He must likewise avoid the reprobation of the one God or gods in whom, according to his knowledge or superstition, he may believe; but in this case the additional fear of divine punishment often supervenes.

### THE STRICTLY SOCIAL VIRTUES AT FIRST ALONE REGARDED

The above view of the origin and nature of the moral sense, which tells us what we ought to do, and of the conscience which reproves us if we disobey it, accords well with what we see of the early and undeveloped condition of this faculty in mankind. The virtues which must be practiced, at least generally, by rude men, so that they may associate in a body, are those which are still recognized as the most important. But

#### **vehemently -**

in a manner that is characterised by forcefulness of expression or intensity of emotion or conviction; fervid

<sup>20</sup> E. B. Tylor, in *Contemporary Review*, April, 1873, p. 707.

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Prosper Despine, in his *Psychologie Naturelle*, 1868 (tom. i., p. 243; tom. ii., p. 169) gives many curious cases of the worst criminals who apparently have been entirely destitute of conscience.

they are practiced almost exclusively in relation to the men of the same tribe; and their opposites are not regarded as crimes in relation to the men of other tribes. No tribe could hold together if murder, robbery, treachery, etc., were common; consequently such crimes within the limits of the same tribe “are branded with everlasting infamy”;<sup>22</sup> but excite no such sentiment beyond these limits. A North-American Indian is well pleased with himself and is honored by others, when he **scalps** a man of another tribe; and a **Dyak** cuts off the head of an unoffending person, and dries it as a trophy. The murder of infants has prevailed on the largest scale throughout the world,<sup>23</sup> and has met with no reproach; but **infanticide**, especially of females, has been thought to be good for the tribe, or at least not injurious. Suicide during former times was not generally considered as a crime,<sup>24</sup> but rather, from the courage displayed, as an honorable act; and it is still practiced by some semi-civilized and savage nations without reproach, for it does not obviously concern others of the tribe. It has been recorded that an Indian Thug conscientiously regretted that he had not robbed and strangled as many travelers as did his father before him. In a rude state of civilization the robbery of strangers is, indeed, generally considered as honorable.

Slavery, although in some ways beneficial during ancient times,<sup>25</sup> is a great crime; yet it was not so regarded until quite recently, even by the most civilized nations. And this was especially the case because the slaves belonged in general to a race different from that of their masters. As barbarians do not regard the opinion of their women, wives are commonly treated like slaves. Most savages are utterly indifferent to the sufferings of strangers, or even delight in witnessing them. It is well known that the women and children of the North American Indians aided in torturing their enemies. Some savages take a horrid pleasure in cruelty to animals,<sup>26</sup> and humanity is an unknown virtue. Nevertheless, besides the family affections, kindness is common, especially during sickness, between the members of the same tribe, and is sometimes extended beyond these limits. **Mungo Park’s** touching account of the kindness of the Negro women of the interior to him is well known. Many instances could be given of the noble **fidelity** of savages towards each other, but not to strangers; common experience justifies the maxim of the Spaniard, “Never, never trust an Indian.” There cannot be fidelity without truth; and this fundamental virtue is not rare between the members of the same tribe: thus Mungo Park heard the Negro women teaching their young children to love the

**scalp -**

to cut off the skin covering the top of the human head

**Dyak -**

the aboriginal and most numerous inhabitants of Borneo

**infanticide -**

the practice of killing newborn infants

**Park, Mungo -**

Scottish explorer in Africa known for his expeditions on the Niger River (1795-1796 and 1805)

**fidelity -**

faithfulness to obligations, duties, or observances

22 See an able article in the *North British Review*, 1867, p. 395. See also Mr. W. Bagehot’s articles on the “Importance of Obedience and Coherence to Primitive Man,” in the *Fortnightly Review*, 1867, p. 529, and 1868, p. 457, &c.

23 The fullest account which I have met with is by Dr. Gerland, in his *Ober den Aussterben der Naturvolker*, 1868: but I shall have to recur to the subject of infanticide in a future chapter.

24 See the very interesting discussion on suicide in Lecky’s *History of European Morals*, vol. i., 1869, p. 223. With respect to savages, Mr. Winwood Reade informs me that the Negroes of West Africa often commit suicide. It is well known how common it was amongst the miserable aborigines of South America after the Spanish conquest. For New Zealand, see *The Voyage of the Novara*, and for the Aleutian Islands, Muller, as quoted by Houzeau, *Les Facultes Mentales*, &c., tom. ii., p. 136.

25 See Mr. Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*, 1872, p. 72.

26 See, for instance, Mr. Hamilton’s account of the Kaffirs, *Anthropological Review*, 1870, p. xv.

truth. This, again, is one of the virtues which becomes so deeply rooted in the mind, that it is sometimes practiced by savages, even at a high cost, towards strangers; but to lie to your enemy has rarely been thought a sin, as the history of modern diplomacy too plainly shows. As soon as a tribe has a recognized leader, disobedience becomes a crime, and even **abject** submission is looked at as a sacred virtue.

As during rude times no man can be useful or faithful to his tribe without courage, this quality has universally been placed in the highest rank; and although in civilized countries a good yet timid man may be far more useful to the community than a brave one, we cannot help instinctively honoring the latter above a coward, however benevolent. **Prudence**, on the other hand, which does not concern the welfare of others, though a very useful virtue, has never been highly esteemed. As no man can practice the virtues necessary for the welfare of his tribe without self-sacrifice, self-command, and the power of endurance, these qualities have been at all times highly and most justly valued. The American savage voluntarily submits to the most horrid tortures without a **groan**, to prove and strengthen his fortitude and courage; and we cannot help admiring him, or even an Indian **Fakir**, who, from a foolish religious motive, swings suspended by a hook buried in his flesh.

The other so-called self-regarding virtues, which do not obviously, though they may really, affect the welfare of the tribe, have never been esteemed by savages, though now highly appreciated by civilized nations. The greatest intemperance is no reproach with savages. Utter **licentiousness** and unnatural crimes prevail to an **astounding** extent.<sup>27</sup> As soon, however, as marriage, whether **polygamous**, or monogamous, becomes common, jealousy will lead to the **inculcation** of female virtue; and this, being honored, will tend to spread to the unmarried females. How slowly it spreads to the male sex, we see at the present day. Chastity eminently requires self-command; therefore, it has been honored from a very early period in the moral history of civilized man. As a consequence of this, the senseless practice of celibacy has been ranked from a remote period as a virtue.<sup>28</sup> The hatred of **indecenty**, which appears to us so natural as to be thought **innate**, and which is so valuable an aid to chastity, is a modern virtue, appertaining exclusively, as Sir G. Staunton remarks,<sup>29</sup> to civilized life. This is shown by the ancient religious rites of various nations, by the drawings on the walls of Pompeii, and by the practices of many savages.

We have now seen that actions are regarded by savages, and were probably so regarded by primeval man, as good or bad, solely as they obviously affect the welfare of the tribe, not that of the species, nor that of an individual member of the tribe. This conclusion agrees well with the belief that the so-called moral sense is aboriginally derived from the social instincts, for both relate at first exclusively to the community.

The chief causes of the low morality of savages, as judged by our standard, are, firstly, the confinement of sympathy to the same tribe. Secondly, powers of reasoning insufficient to recognize the bearing of many virtues, especially of the self-regarding virtues, on the general welfare of the tribe. Savages, for instance, fail to trace the multiplied evils **consequent** on a want of **temperance**, chastity, etc. And, thirdly, weak power of self-command; for this power has not been strengthened through long continued perhaps inherited, habit, instruction and religion.

- abject** -  
brought low in condition or status
- prudence** -  
discretion in practical affairs; knowing how to avoid embarrassment or distress
- groan** -  
a deep cry of pain, grief, or disapproval
- Fakir** -  
Hindu ascetic or religious mendicant, especially one who performs feats of magic or endurance
- licentiousness** -  
the quality of being lewd and lascivious; dissolute indulgence in sensual pleasure
- astounding** -  
astonishing and bewildering
- polygamous** -  
having more than one mate at a time; used of relationships and individuals
- inculcation** -  
a teaching and impressing by frequent repetitions
- indecenty** -  
the state or quality of being unseemly or immodest
- innate** -  
possessed at birth; inborn
- consequent** -  
following as a natural effect, result, or conclusion
- temperance** -  
moderation and self-restraint, as in behavior or expression

<sup>27</sup> Mr. M'Lennan has given (*Primitive Marriage*, 1865, p. 176) a good collection of facts on this head.

<sup>28</sup> Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. i., 1869, p. 109.

<sup>29</sup> *Embassy to China*, vol. ii., p. 348.

I have entered into the above details on the immorality of savages<sup>30</sup> because some authors have recently taken a high view of their moral nature, or have attributed most of their crimes to mistaken benevolence.<sup>31</sup> These authors appear to rest their conclusion on savages possessing those virtues which are serviceable, or even necessary, for the existence of the family and of the tribe, qualities which they undoubtedly do possess, and often in a high degree.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

It was assumed formerly by philosophers of the **derivative**<sup>32</sup> school of morals that the foundation of morality lay in a form of Selfishness; but more recently the “Greatest happiness principle” has been brought prominently forward. It is, however, more correct to speak of the latter principle as the standard, and not as the motive of conduct. Nevertheless, all the authors whose works I have consulted, with a few exceptions,<sup>33</sup> write as if there must be a distinct motive for every action, and that this must be associated with some pleasure or displeasure. But man seems often to act impulsively, that is from instinct or long habit, without any consciousness of pleasure, in the same manner as does probably a bee or ant, when it blindly follows its instincts. Under circumstances of extreme **peril**, as during a fire, when a man endeavors to save a fellow creature without a moment’s hesitation, he can hardly feel pleasure; and still less has he time to reflect on the dissatisfaction which he might subsequently experience if he did not make the attempt. Should he afterwards reflect over his own conduct, he would feel that there lies within him an impulsive power widely different from a search after pleasure or happiness; and this seems to be the deeply planted social instinct.

In the case of the lower animals it seems much more appropriate to speak of their social instincts, as having been developed for the general good rather than for the general happiness of the species. The term, general good, may be defined as the rearing of the greatest number of individuals in full vigor and health, with all their faculties perfect, under the conditions to which they are subjected. As the social instincts both of man and the lower animals have no doubt been developed by nearly the same steps, it would

30 See on this subject copious evidence in chap. vii. of Sir J. Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation*, 1870.

31 For instance Lecky, *History of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 124.

32 This term is used in an able article in the Westminster Review, Oct., 1869, p. 498; For the “Greatest happiness principle,” see J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 448.

33 Mill recognises (*System of Logic*, vol. ii., p. 422) in the clearest manner, that actions may be performed through habit without the anticipation of pleasure. Mr. H. Sidgwick also, in his “Essay on Pleasure and Desire” (*The Contemporary Review*, April, 1872, p. 671), remarks: “To sum up, in contravention of the doctrine that our conscious active impulses are always directed towards the production of agreeable sensations in ourselves, I would maintain that we find everywhere in consciousness extra-regarding impulse, directed towards something that is not pleasure; that in many case the impulse is so far incompatible with the self regarding that the two do not easily co-exist in the same moment of consciousness.” A dim feeling that our impulses do not by any means always arise from any contemporaneous or anticipated pleasure, has, I cannot but think, been one chief cause of the acceptance of the intuitive theory of morality, and of the rejection of the utilitarian or “Greatest happiness” theory. With respect to the latter theory the standard and the motive of conduct have no doubt often been confused, but they are really in some degree blended.

**derivative -**

something obtained or produced by modification of something else

**peril -**

imminent danger

be advisable, if found practicable, to use the same definition in both cases, and to take as the standard of morality, the general good or welfare of the community, rather than the general happiness; but this definition would perhaps require some limitation on account of political ethics.

When a man risks his life to save that of a fellow creature, it seems also more correct to say that he acts for the general good, rather than for the general happiness of mankind. No doubt the welfare and the happiness of the individual usually coincide; and a contented, happy tribe will flourish better than one that is discontented and unhappy. We have seen that even at an early period in the history of man, the expressed wishes of the community will have naturally influenced to a large extent the conduct of each member; and as all wish for happiness, the “greatest happiness principle” will have become a most important secondary guide and object; the social instinct, however, together with sympathy (which leads to our regarding the approbation and disapprobation of others), having served as the primary impulse and guide. Thus the reproach is removed of laying the foundation of the noblest part of our nature in the base principle of selfishness; unless, indeed, the satisfaction which every animal feels, when it follows its proper instincts, and the dissatisfaction felt when prevented, be called selfish.

The wishes and opinions of the members of the same community expressed at first orally, but later by writing also, either form the sole guides of our conduct, or greatly reinforce the social instincts; such opinions, however, have sometimes a tendency directly opposed to these instincts. This latter fact is well exemplified by the Law of Honor, that is, the law of the opinion of our equals, and not of all our countrymen. The breach of this law, even when the breach is known to be strictly accordant with true morality, has caused many a man more agony than a real crime. We recognize the same influence in the burning sense of shame which most of us have felt, even after the interval of years, when calling to mind some accidental breach of a **trifling**, though fixed, rule of etiquette. The judgment of the community will generally be guided by some rude experience of what is best in the long run for all the members; but this judgment will not rarely err from ignorance and weak powers of reasoning. Hence the strangest customs and superstitions, in complete opposition to the true welfare and happiness of mankind, have become all powerful throughout the world. We see this in the horror felt by a Hindu who breaks his caste, and in many other such cases. It would be difficult to distinguish between the remorse felt by a Hindu who has yielded to the temptation of eating unclean food, from that felt after committing a theft; but the former would probably be the more severe.

How so many absurd rules of conduct, as well as so many absurd religious beliefs, have originated, we do not know; nor how it is that they have become, in all quarters of the world, so deeply impressed on the mind of men; but it is worthy of remark that a belief constantly inculcated during the early years of life, whilst the brain is **impressible**, appears to acquire almost the nature of an instinct; and the very essence of an instinct is that it is followed independently of reason. Neither can we say why certain admirable virtues, such as the love of truth, are much more highly appreciated by some savage tribes than by others;<sup>34</sup> nor, again, why similar differences prevail even amongst highly-civilized nations. Knowing how firmly fixed many strange customs and superstitions have become, we need feel no surprise that the self-regarding virtues, supported

**trifling -**

being of small value or importance; trivial; paltry

**impressible -**

easily impressed or influenced; malleable

34 Good instances are given by Mr. Wallace in *Scientific Opinion*, Sept. 15, 1869; and more fully in his *Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection*, 1870, p. 353.

as they are by reason, should now appear to us so natural as to be thought innate, although they were not valued by man in his early condition.

Notwithstanding many sources of doubt, man can generally and readily distinguish between the higher and lower moral rules. The higher are founded on the social instincts, and relate to the welfare of others. They are supported by the approbation of our fellowmen and by reason. The lower rules, though some of them when implying self-sacrifice hardly deserve to be called lower, relate chiefly to self, and arise from public opinion, matured by experience and cultivation; for they are not practiced by rude tribes.

As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races. If, indeed, such men are separated from him by great differences in appearance or habits, experience unfortunately shows us how long it is before we look at them as our fellow-creatures. Sympathy beyond the confines of man, that is, humanity to the lower animals, seems to be one of the latest moral acquisitions. It is apparently unfelt by savages, except towards their pets. How little the old Romans knew of it is shown by their abhorrent **gladiatorial** exhibitions. The very idea of humanity, as far as I could observe, was new to most of the **Gauchos** of the **Pampas**. This virtue, one of the noblest with which man is endowed, seems to arise incidentally from our sympathies becoming more tender and more widely diffused, until they are extended to all sentient beings. As soon as this virtue is honored and practiced by some few men, it spreads through instruction and example to the young, and eventually becomes incorporated in public opinion.

The highest possible stage in moral culture is when we recognize that we ought to control our thoughts, and “not even in inmost thought to think again the sins that made the past so pleasant to us.”<sup>35</sup> Whatever makes any bad action familiar to the mind renders its performance by so much the easier. As Marcus Aurelius long ago said, “Such as are thy habitual thoughts, such also will be the character of thy mind; for the soul is dyed by the thoughts.”<sup>36</sup>

Our great philosopher, Herbert Spencer, has recently explained his views on the moral sense. He says, “I believe that the experiences of utility organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition – certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility.” There is not the least inherent improbability, as it seems to me, in virtuous tendencies being

**gladiatorial** -  
pertaining to contests or  
combatants in general

**Gaucha** -  
cowboy of the South American  
pampas

**Pampas** -  
vast plain of south-central  
South America

35 Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*, p. 244.

36 Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Bk. V, sect. 16.



more or less strongly inherited; for, not to mention the various dispositions and habits transmitted by many of our domestic animals to their offspring, I have heard of authentic cases in which a desire to steal and a tendency to lie appeared to run in families of the upper ranks; and as stealing is a rare crime in the wealthy classes, we can hardly account by accidental coincidence for the tendency occurring in two or three members of the same family. If bad tendencies are transmitted, it is probable that good ones are likewise transmitted. That the state of the body by affecting the brain, has great influence on the moral tendencies is known to most of those who have suffered from chronic **derangements** of the digestion or liver. The same fact is likewise shown by the “perversion or destruction of the moral sense being often one of the earliest symptoms of mental derangement”;<sup>37</sup> and insanity is notoriously often inherited. Except through the principle of the transmission of moral tendencies, we cannot understand the differences believed to exist in this respect between the various races of mankind.

Even the partial transmission of virtuous tendencies would be an immense assistance to the primary impulse derived directly and indirectly from the social instincts. Admitting for a moment that virtuous tendencies are inherited, it appears probable, at least in such cases as chastity, temperance, humanity to animals, etc., that they become first impressed on the mental organization through habit, instruction and example, continued during several generations in the same family, and in a quite subordinate degree, or not at all, by the individuals possessing such virtues having succeeded best in the struggle for life. My chief source of doubt with respect to any such inheritance is that senseless customs, superstitions, and tastes, such as the horror of a Hindu for unclean food, ought on the same principle to be transmitted. I have not met with any evidence in support of the transmission of superstitious customs or senseless habits, although in itself it is perhaps not less probable than that animals should acquire inherited tastes for certain kinds of food or fear of certain foes.

Finally, the social instincts, which no doubt were acquired by man as by the lower animals for the good of the community, will from the first have given to him some wish to aid his fellows, some feeling of sympathy, and have compelled him to regard their approbation and disapprobation. Such impulses will have served him at a very early period as a rude rule of right and wrong. But as man gradually advanced in intellectual power, and was enabled to trace the more remote consequences of his actions; as he acquired sufficient knowledge to reject baneful customs and superstitions; as he regarded more and more, not only the welfare, but the happiness of his fellow-men; as from habit, following on beneficial experience, instruction and example, his sympathies became more tender and widely diffused, extending to men of all races, to the **imbecile**, **maimed**, and other useless members of society, and finally to the lower animals, so would the standard of his morality rise higher and higher. And it is admitted by moralists of the derivative school and by some intuitionists that the standard of morality has risen since an early period in the history of man.<sup>38</sup>

As a struggle may sometimes be seen going on between the various instincts of the lower animals, it is not surprising that there should be a struggle in man between his social instincts, with their derived virtues, and his lower, though momentarily stronger

**derangement** -  
disturbance of the regular  
order or arrangement of parts  
in a system

**imbecile** -  
a person whose mental acumen  
is well below par

**maimed** -  
badly injured, perhaps with  
amputation

<sup>37</sup> Maudsley, *Body and Mind*, 1870, p. 60.

<sup>38</sup> A writer in the *North British Review* (July, 1869, p. 531), well capable of forming a sound judgment, expresses himself strongly in favor of this conclusion. Mr. Lecky (*History of Morals*, vol. i., p. 143) seems to a certain extent to coincide therein.



impulses or desires. This, as Mr. Galton<sup>39</sup> has remarked, is all the less surprising, as man has emerged from a state of barbarism within a comparatively recent period. After having yielded to some temptation we feel a sense of dissatisfaction, shame, repentance, or remorse, analogous to the feelings caused by other powerful instincts or desires when left unsatisfied or balked. We compare the weakened impression of a past temptation with the ever present social instincts, or with habits gained in early youth and strengthened during our whole lives, until they have become almost as strong as instincts. If with the temptation still before us we do not yield, it is because either the social instinct or some custom is at the moment predominant, or because we have learnt that it will appear to us hereafter the stronger, when compared with the weakened impression of the temptation, and we realize that its violation would cause us suffering. Looking to future generations, there is no cause to fear that the social instincts will grow weaker, and we may expect that virtuous habits will grow stronger, becoming perhaps fixed by inheritance. In this case the struggle between our higher and lower impulses will be less severe, and virtue will be triumphant.

### SUMMARY OF THE LAST TWO CHAPTERS

There can be no doubt that the difference between the mind of the lowest man and that of the highest animal is immense. An **anthropomorphous** ape, if he could take a dispassionate view of his own case, would admit that though he could form an artful plan to plunder a garden – though he could use stones for fighting or for breaking open nuts, yet that the thought of fashioning a stone into a tool was quite beyond his scope. Still less, as he would admit, could he follow out a train of metaphysical reasoning, or solve a mathematical problem, or reflect on God, or admire a grand natural scene. Some apes, however, would probably declare that they could and did admire the beauty of the colored skin and fur of their partners in marriage. They would admit, that though they could make other apes understand by cries some of their perceptions and simpler wants, the notion of expressing definite ideas by definite sounds had never crossed their minds. They might insist that they were ready to aid their fellow-apes of the same troop in many ways, to risk their lives for them, and to take charge of their orphans; but they would be forced to acknowledge that disinterested love for all living creatures, the most noble attribute of man, was quite beyond their comprehension.

Nevertheless the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind. We have seen that the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, etc., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition, in the lower animals. They are also capable of some inherited improvement, as we see in the domestic dog compared with the wolf

39 See his remarkable work on *Hereditary Genius*, 1869, p. 349. The Duke of Argyll (*Primeval Man*, 1869, p. 188) has some good remarks on the contest in man's nature between right and wrong.

**anthropomorphous** -  
having or suggesting human  
form and appearance

**ennobling -**  
investing with dignity or  
honour

or jackal. If it could be proved that certain high mental powers, such as the formation of general concepts, self-consciousness, etc., were absolutely peculiar to man, which seems extremely doubtful, it is not improbable that these qualities are merely the incidental results of other highly-advanced intellectual faculties; and these again mainly the result of the continued use of a perfect language. At what age does the new-born infant possess the power of abstraction, or become self-conscious, and reflect on its own existence? We cannot answer; nor can we answer in regard to the ascending organic scale. The half-art, half-instinct of language still bears the stamp of its gradual evolution. The **ennobling** belief in God is not universal with man; and the belief in spiritual agencies naturally follows from other mental powers. The moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals; but I need say nothing on this head, as I have so lately endeavored to show that the social instincts – the prime principle of man's moral constitution<sup>40</sup> – with the aid of active intellectual powers and the effects of habit, naturally lead to the golden rule, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise"; and this lies at the foundation of morality.

In the next chapter I shall make some few remarks on the probable steps and means by which the several mental and moral faculties of man have been gradually evolved. That such evolution is at least possible, ought not to be denied, for we daily see these faculties developing in every infant; and we may trace a perfect gradation from the mind of an utter idiot, lower than that of an animal low in the scale, to the mind of a Newton.

**SOURCE:** Darwin, Charles. *The Descent of Man*. New York: Prometheus Books, 1998.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does Darwin state as his objective in this excerpt? How does he set about demonstrating this? What evidence does he use?
2. What word does Darwin use to refer to human beings living in non-industrial societies? What does this tell you about the attitudes towards indigenous peoples in Darwin's time?
3. What kind of animal is man defined as in the text? What trait does Darwin give as the most important difference between human beings and the lower animals?
4. Having noted this difference, how does Darwin define it? How does Darwin demonstrate his idea that the moral and spiritual faculties of man are not separate from the rest of the animal kingdom?
5. Based on your reading of the text, what objections do you think people would have had against Darwin's arguments? How does he anticipate and deal with these objections in the text?
6. Find an example of Darwin quoting from a philosopher. Why is it important for Darwin to use philosophy alongside scientific observation in his commentary on human and animal behavior?
7. Cite an example, from the text, of Darwin making an analogy between human and animal behavior? What does Darwin demonstrate by doing this? Do you find his method convincing? Why not?

<sup>40</sup> Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Bk. V, sect. 55.

8. What does Darwin say about the limits of selfless behavior in human communities? Why does he use communities of “savages” to state his case? Do you think that the argument could be equally well made citing examples from more “civilized” societies?
9. Can you remember what you first heard as a child concerning human origins? Was it evolution-based, or something else? When did you first hear of Darwin, and in what context? Have you ever witnessed or been involved in an argument or discussion of evolutionary theory?
10. What implications do Darwin’s ideas in these passages have for religious thought? Can you think of any places in which Darwin’s ideas might come into conflict with traditional religious beliefs? How is Darwin’s attempt to explore human nature different from those which you have read in previous lessons?

#### REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Four of the first five chapters of this book presented are Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian texts that many people would say present an understanding of the world characteristic of pre-industrial societies. Darwin bases his understanding of human nature in “science.” How does his approach differ from these earlier writers? Do similarities remain?
2. Can Darwin’s version of human nature be compatible with the religiously-inspired versions of human nature from the earlier chapters?
3. What are the consequences of accepting Darwin’s version of how human behavior is motivated for religion and social life? Has the work of Darwin and other 19<sup>th</sup> century writers made it impossible to go back to earlier understandings?

#### ADDITIONAL READING:

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## CHARLES T. RUBI

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Charles T. Rubin is a professor of political science at Duquesne University. An earlier version of this essay was presented at “The Ethical Dimensions of Biotechnology,” a conference organized by the Henry Salvatori Center for the Study of Individual Freedom in the Modern World, Claremont McKenna College.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HUMAN NATURE

What awaits is not **oblivion** but rather a future which, from our present vantage point, is best described by the words “post biological” or even “supernatural.” It is a world in which the human race has been swept away by a tide of cultural change, usurped by its own artificial **progeny**.

—Hans Moravec, *Mind Children*

We are dreaming a strange, waking dream; an inevitably brief **interlude** sandwiched between the long age of low-tech humanity on the one hand, and the age of human beings transcended on the other ... We will find our niche on Earth crowded out by a better and more competitive organism. Yet this is not the end of humanity, only its physical existence as a biological life form.

—Gregory Paul and Earl D. Cox, *Beyond Humanity*

The cutting edge of modern science and technology has moved, in its aim, beyond the relief of man’s estate to the **elimination** of human beings. Such fantasies of leaving behind the miseries of human life are of course not new; they have taken many different forms in both ancient and modern times. The chance of their success, in the hands of the new scientists, is anyone’s guess. The most familiar form of this vision in our times is genetic engineering: specifically, the prospect of designing better human beings by improving their biological systems. But even more dramatic are the proposals of a small, serious, and accomplished group of toilers in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics. Their goal, simply put, is a new age of post-biological life, a world of intelligence without bodies, immortal identity without the limitations of disease, death, and unfulfilled desire. Most remarkable is not their prediction that the end of humanity is coming but their wholehearted advocacy of that result. If we can understand why this fate is presented as both necessary and desirable, we might understand something of the confused state of thinking about human life at the dawn of this new century – and perhaps especially the ways in which modern science has shut itself off from serious reflection about the good life and good society.

**oblivion -**

the state of being completely forgotten or disregarded

**progeny -**

offspring or descendants; result of a creative effort

**interlude -**

intervening episode, etc.

**eliminate -**

get rid of; remove

## THE ROAD TO EXTINCTION

The story of how human beings will be replaced by intelligent machines goes something like this: As a long-term trend beginning with the **Big Bang**, the evolution of organized systems, of which animal life and human intelligence are relatively recent examples, increases in speed over time. Similarly, as a long-term trend beginning with the first mechanical calculators, the evolution of computing capacity increases in speed over time and decreases in cost. From biological evolution has sprung the human brain, an electro-chemical machine with a great but finite number of **complex** neuron connections, the product of which we call mind or consciousness. As an electro-chemical machine, the brain obeys the laws of physics; all of its functions can be understood and duplicated. And since computers already operate at far faster speeds than the brain, they soon will rival or **surpass** the brain in their capacity to store and process information. When that happens, the computer will, at the very least, be capable of responding to stimuli in ways that are indistinguishable from human responses. At that point, we would be justified in calling the machine intelligent; we would have the same evidence to call it conscious that we now have when giving such a label to any consciousness other than our own.

At the same time, the study of the human brain will allow us to duplicate its functions in machine **circuitry**. Advances in brain imaging will allow us to “map out” brain functions **synapse** by synapse, allowing individual minds to be duplicated in some combination of **hardware** and **software**. The result, once again, would be intelligent machines.

If this story is correct, then human **extinction** will result from some combination of transforming ourselves voluntarily into machines and losing out in the evolutionary competition with machines. Some humans may survive in zoo-like or reservation settings. We would be dealt with as parents by our machine children: old where they are new, imperfect where they are self-perfecting, contingent creatures where they are the product of intelligent design. The result will be a world that is remade and reconstructed at the atomic level through nanotechnology, a world whose organization will be shaped by an intelligence that **surpasses** all human comprehension.

Nearly all the elements of this story are problematic. They often involve near meta-physical speculation about the nature of the universe, or technical speculation about things that are currently not remotely possible, or philosophical speculation about matters, such as the nature of consciousness, that are topics of **perennial** dispute. One could raise specific questions about the future of Moore’s Law, or the mind-body problem, or the issue of evolution and organized complexity. Yet while it may be comforting to latch on to a particular scientific or technical reason to think that what is proposed is impossible, to do so is to bet that we understand the limits of human knowledge and **ingenuity**, which in fact we cannot know in advance. When it comes to the feasibility of what might be coming, the “extinctionists” and their critics are both speculating.

Nevertheless, the extinctionists do their best to claim that the “end of humanity ... as a biological life form” is not only possible but necessary. It is either an evolutionary **imperative** or an unavoidable result of the technological assumption that if “we” don’t engage in this effort, “they” will. Such arguments are obviously thin, and the case that human beings ought to assist **enthusiastically** in their own extinction makes little sense on evolutionary terms, let alone moral ones. The English novelist Samuel Butler, who considered the possibility that machines were indeed the next stage of evolution in his nineteenth-century novel *Erewhon* (“Nowhere”), saw an obvious response: his *Erewhonians* destroy most of their machines to preserve their humanity.

“Just saying no” may not be easy, especially if the majority of human beings come to desire the salvation that the extinctionist prophets claim to offer. But so long as

**Big Bang** -  
cosmological model  
hypothesizing that the universe  
began with a large explosion

**complex** -  
made up of multiple parts;  
intricate or detailed.

**circuitry** -  
a specific system of such  
circuits in a particular device;  
the design of such a system

**synapse** -  
the junction between the  
terminal of a neuron and either  
another neuron or a muscle  
or gland cell, over which nerve  
impulses pass

**hardware** -  
computer, its components, and  
its related equipment

**software** -  
encoded computer  
instructions, usually modifiable

**extinction** -  
the dying out of a plant or  
animal species; annihilation

**surpass** -  
to exceed, especially in a  
metaphoric or technical  
manner

**perennial** -  
active throughout the year, or  
all the time

**ingenuity** -  
the ability to solve difficult  
problems, often in original and  
creative ways

**imperative** -  
essential

**enthusiastically** -  
with zealous fervor; excited,  
motivated

saying no (or setting limits) is not impossible, it makes sense to inquire into the goods that would supposedly be achieved by human extinction rather than simply the mechanisms that may or may not make it possible. Putting aside the most outlandish of these proposals – or at least suspending disbelief about the feasibility of the science – it matters greatly whether or not we reject, on principle, the promised goods of post-human life. By examining the moral case for leaving biological life behind – the case for merging with and then becoming our machines – we will perhaps understand why someone might find this prospect appealing, and therefore discover the real source of the supposed imperative behind bringing it to pass.

### WRETCHED BODY, LIBERATED MIND

In their work *Beyond Humanity: Cyber Evolution and Future Minds*, evolutionary biologist **Gregory Paul** and artificial intelligence expert Earl D. Cox put the case for human extinction rather succinctly: “First we suffer, then we die. This is the great human **dilemma**.” As the extinctionists see it, the problem with human life is not simply suffering and death but the tyranny of desire: “I resent the fact,” says Carnegie Mellon University roboticist **Hans Moravec**, “that I have these very insistent drives which take an enormous amount of effort to satisfy and are never completely appeased.” Inventor **Ray Kurzweil** anticipates that by 2019 virtual sex, performed with the aid of various mechanisms providing complete sensory feedback, will be preferred for its ability “to enhance both experience and safety.” But this is clearly only the beginning of the story:

Group sex will take on new meaning in that more than one person can **simultaneously** share the experience of one partner ... (perhaps the one virtual body will reflect a consensus of the attempted movements of the multiple partners). A whole audience of people – who may be geographically dispersed – could share one virtual body while engaged in sexual experience with one performer.

Neither Moravec nor Kurzweil can be dismissed as mere cranks, even if their judgment can rightfully be called into question. Moravec has been a pioneer in the development of free-ranging mobile robots, particularly the software that allows such robots to interpret and navigate their surroundings. His work in this area is consistently supported both by the private sector and by government agencies like NASA, the Office of Naval Research, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. His 1988 book, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*, is perhaps the ur-text of “transhumanism,” the movement of those who actively seek our technology-driven evolution beyond humanity. Kurzweil is the 1999 National Medal of Technology winner, deservedly famous for his work developing optical character recognition systems. He invented the first text-to-speech systems for reading to the blind and created the first computer-based music synthesizer that could realistically recreate orchestral instruments.

Moravec and Kurzweil share a deep resentment of the human body: both the ills of fragile and failing flesh, and the limitations inherent to bodily life, including the inability to fulfill our own bodily desires. Even if we worked perfectly, in other words,

#### Gregory S. Paul -

(born 1954) freelance paleontologist, author and illustrator best known for his work and research on theropod dinosaurs, and his detailed illustrations, both live and skeletal

#### dilemma -

situation with two (or more) alternatives to choose from, and where all alternatives are unsatisfactory or undesirable

#### Hans Moravec -

(born November 30, 1948 in Austria) research professor at the Robotics Institute (Carnegie Mellon) of Carnegie Mellon University

#### Raymond Kurzweil -

(born February 12, 1948) inventor and futurist

#### simultaneously -

occurring at the same time



there are numerous ways in which that “working” can be seen as defective because we might have been better designed in the first place.

Take, for example, the human eye. Why is it made out of such insubstantial materials? Why is its output cabled in such a way as to interfere with our vision? Why is it limited to seeing such a narrow portion of the electro-magnetic spectrum? Of course, we think we know the answers to all such questions: this is the way the eye evolved. Again and again, chance circumstances favored some mutations over others until we have this particular (and doubtless transitory) configuration. Little wonder that it all seems rather cobbled together. But, the extinctionists claim, we have also evolved an intelligent capacity to guide evolution. Leaving aside all **metaphysical** speculation that such an outcome is the point of the process, we can at least see whether the ability to guide evolution will confer survival advantages or not. Having eyes, we do not walk around blindfolded. Having the ability to guide evolution, we might as well use it.

In short, if human beings are simply mechanisms that can be improved, if our parts are replaceable by others, then it matters little whether they are constructed biologically or otherwise. That much applies to the life of the body. But what about the life of the mind? Not only does that life arise from the biological mechanism of the brain, but what we experience through that mechanism is, the extinctionists argue, already **virtual** reality. We have no knowledge of the real world; we have only our brain’s processing of our body’s sensory inputs. Consciousness is radically subjective and essentially singular. We infer it in others (e.g., neighbors, pets, zoo animals) from outward signs that seemingly correspond to inward states we experience directly. Getting computers to show such outward signs has been the holy grail of artificial intelligence ever since Alan Turing invented his famous test of machine intelligence, which defines an intelligent machine as one that can fool a judge into thinking that he is talking to a human being.

Although subsequent thinkers may have developed a more sophisticated picture of when artificial life should be considered conscious, the guiding principle remains the same: there is no barrier to defining the life of the mind in a way that makes it virtually indistinguishable from the workings of computers. When all is said and done, human distinctiveness comes to be understood as nothing other than a particular biological configuration; it is, like all such configurations, a transitory event on an evolutionary scale. From this point of view it becomes difficult to justify any grave concern if the workings of evolution do to us what they have done to so many other species; it becomes rank “**speciesism**” to think that we deserve anything different.

## THE TEMPTATIONS OF ARTIFICIAL LIFE

Yet the extinctionists are not content to show why, like everything else, human beings will be replaced or why the world might be better off without us. They aim to show why human beings should be replaced. If we are troubled by limits and imperfection, decay and death, we can imagine a world where intelligence has power enough to create something better.

Central to the extinctionist project of perfecting – and thus replacing – human life as we know it is not only the belief that our bodies are nothing more than poorly designed machines, but that our identity is something that can exist independent of our given body. As Moravec describes it, the essence of a person is “the pattern and the process going on in my head and body, not the machinery supporting that process. If the pattern is preserved, I am preserved. The rest is jelly.” In a similar vein, Kurzweil paints a picture of how we will progressively live in closer communion with machine intelligence; how we will create “virtual avatars” that will allow us to “multitask”; how

### **metaphysical -**

immaterial, supersensual, not physical

### **virtual -**

in effect or essence, if not in fact or reality; imitated, simulated, substantial

### **speciesism -**

assigning different values or rights to beings on the basis of their species membership

the coming “age of spiritual machines” will allow us, among other things, to attend meetings and enjoy sexual encounters at the same time. From here it is a short step to the ultimate goal: scanning the brain, duplicating its circuitry in hardware and software, and translating ourselves into robotic form (with adequate backups, of course).

In this view, there is no reason why these post-human robots should have human form; actually, many reasons why they should not. Moravec imagines something he calls a “bush robot,” a collection of millions of sensory-manipulative arms ranging in size from huge to nano-scale. Imagine a hand where each of the fingers had fingers, and those fingers had fingers, scaled across many orders of magnitude from a micron to a meter:

A bush robot would be a marvel of surrealism to behold. Despite its structural resemblance to many living things, it would be unlike anything yet seen on earth. Its great intelligence, superb coordination, astronomical speed and enormous sensitivity to its environment would enable it to constantly do something surprising; at the same time maintaining a perpetual gracefulness ... A trillion-limbed device, with a brain to match, is an entirely different order of being. Add to this the ability to fragment into a cloud of coordinated tiny fliers, and the laws of physics will seem to melt in the face of intention and will. As with no magician that ever was, impossible things will simply happen around a robot bush.

This new age of (im) possibilities begins with the abolition of the body. As software, our progeny could combine with other downloaded brains, human and non-human. They could beam themselves at light speed around the universe, eventually creating a vast united network of intelligence. As Moravec imagines:

Our speculation ends in a super civilization, the synthesis of all solar system life, constantly improving and extending itself, spreading outward from the sun, converting nonlife into mind. Just possibly there are other such bubbles expanding from elsewhere. What happens if we meet one? A negotiated merger is a possibility, requiring only a translation scheme between the memory representations. This process, possibly occurring now elsewhere, might convert the entire universe into an extended thinking entity, a prelude to even greater things.

Thinking at the speed of light, manipulating matter at the atomic scale, liberating ourselves from the constraints of body, the networked successor of humanity will become the master of the universe. It will discover new ways to avert its own ultimate extinction. It will recreate lost worlds and **resurrect** the dead. It will close the gap between imagination and reality. And here we see the great temptation of artificial life: It offers both a critique of human limitations and a promise of future power. The limits create the desire for power; the promise of power makes the limits seem all the less acceptable.

The extinctionists are clearly the descendants of the founding thinkers of modern science, **Francis Bacon** and **René Descartes**, who saw the human condition as something to be improved and nature as simply a tool to improve it. There is surely a connection between Cartesian dualism – the beliefs that mind and body are distinct

**resurrect -**  
to rise from the dead

**Francis Bacon -**  
(22 January 1561 – 9 April 1626) English philosopher, statesman, and essayist also known as a proponent of the scientific revolution

**René Descartes -**  
(March 31, 1596 – February 11, 1650) highly-influential French philosopher, mathematician, scientist, and writer

phenomena – and the extinctionist notion that we should sever our individual minds and identities from our bodies entirely. Modern science, one might say, is finally showing its true colors: power over nature includes new powers over human life, and power over human life includes the power to transform, remake, and abolish everything human.

And yet, there would seem to be at least some distance to travel from Bacon's advocacy for "the relief of man's estate" to the elimination of human beings. This conceptual slope – from "improve human life" to "redesign human beings" to "the abolition of man" – is greased by an evolutionary faith that inspires greater **allegiance** to an imagined future than an imperfect present. While seeing man as the product of chance alone, the extinctionists believe that, in their hands, evolution might have a purpose after all; that we are nearing the **apex** of the ascent from pre-intelligent to super-intelligent life; that we are gaining, for the first time, the ability to control the evolutionary process in a conscious way.

With such faith in evolutionary progress, any constraints on the utopian elements that already exist in Bacon and Descartes disappear. Human beings are envisioned simply as a link in the chain that stretches from our chance beginnings with the Big Bang to a new age of intelligent life. If Moravec is right, eventually the robotic future will almost literally be able to redeem the past. Insofar as intelligence remains human, such reconciliation cannot take place, because human beings are the result of chance. But as "mind, all conquering mind" comes into its own-embodied in ways that it creates for itself – the universe will at last become purposeful.

## THEM AND US

On closer examination, this drama of technological redemption – from meaningless evolution to a salvific intelligence bred of evolution – falls apart. When Kurzweil says "we will be software [emphasis added]," he is making an unsupportable assertion about the continuity between humanity and robot. Indeed, the truth is not continuity but radical disjunction if one takes seriously the picture of the robot world offered by its defenders. Given this disjunction, two things follow: First, all that seems good on human terms about robot domination may have nothing to do with the good as the triumphant robots will understand it, making the superiority of their world over ours an open question. Second, it is hard to see any evolutionary justification for human beings willingly accepting and abetting their own extinction; the machines should at least be expected to prove their evolutionary superiority. Examining these problems more closely is the key to understanding why extinction, in the end, is neither desirable nor inevitable.

One must start with the problem that arises if human beings abandon their bodies in the pursuit of electronic immortality. Because of his belief in "pattern identity," Moravec speculates about an essentially seamless transition between "me" as a biological entity and "me" as a machine. Bodies are treated as a trivial component of personality; after all, they change dramatically over time and we do not lose our sense of identity as a result. But this argument is clearly a vast overstatement. Most (perhaps all) people's identities are sufficiently bound up with their bodies that such changes are humanly and morally significant. And anyone would have to admit that the "I" he was at 16 is not the same "I" that exists at 45, however much one may "still feel 16 inside" (which a real 16-year-old may have good reason to doubt). These changes obviously reflect the loss of physical **vigor** and the new **burdens** of age and illness; but they also involve a deeper transformation of our longings, our understanding of the world, and our duties that cannot be separated from our existence as embodied creatures. Given these psycho-physical realities, it seems amazing that extinctionists are so willing to write off the bodily component of who we are.

### **allegiance -**

loyalty to some cause, nation or ruler

### **apex -**

the highest point of something

### **disjunction -**

during meiosis, the separation of chromosomes

### **vigor -**

strength, energy or force

### **burden -**

source of great worry or stress

And so, it seems all too possible that the coming of post-biological life would mean the death of the self, not the immortality of the self. The robotic “I” will think far faster, dramatically affecting “my” subjective sense of time. Memory will be significantly expanded and its character changed. The robotic “I” will have access to more information and experience, and (accepting the conceit of these authors that my hardware and software will function perfectly) will never have to forget anything. Its sensory inputs will be different, as will the mechanisms by which they are processed. But the “I” who can do all the things that the virtual world makes possible is increasingly hard to understand from the point of view of the “I” that started out as an embodied and biological being. It would have radically different abilities, talents, and interests. If there is any likeness at all between the machine and its embodied precursor, the closest **analogy** to that relationship might be between adults and the babies they once were. It seems we have no readily **recoverable** memories of our infant period; I have only the word of others that that picture of a little baby really is a picture of me. From a subjective point of view, the relationship is highly **tenuous**.

If it is so hard to establish continuity between me and my re-creation as a machine, then any judgment about the superiority of the robot world to our own is going to be inherently misleading. For this future to be attractive, the extinctionists have to write about it in ways that look appealing to us, as human beings – in ways that seem to satisfy some good that we understand. But the new world will not be a human world. It strains credulity to think that the large-eyed lemur that is a distant human ancestor could have really imagined the shape of a good human life, and this when we probably share far more with that ancestor than our supposed machine progeny would share with us. Put that lemur or any distant human ancestor in our world, and he will react with the fear and confusion of a wild animal. Is this not how we would react were we to find ourselves in the extinctionist future?

In short, however attractive the world of artificial life might seem (at least to the scientists who envision it), we have no reason to believe that we can really understand the beings that would live there. Why expect them, for example, to “resurrect” dead humans even if they could? One can hardly count on the same love or curiosity that would tempt some of us to “clone” dead ancestors if we could; love and curiosity, after all, are human characteristics. The same is true for **compassion**, **benevolence**, **amusement**, or any other possible motive that we are capable of imagining. Once humanity is overcome, all bets are off and anything we might say about the post-biological future is merely a projection of our own biological nature. A corollary to Arthur C. Clarke’s law that “any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic” seems fitting: any sufficiently advanced benevolence may be indistinguishable from **malevolence**. If the future that the extinctionists imagine for “us” were to make its appearance tomorrow in the solar system, it is very hard to imagine how it would be good news.

**analogy -**

inference that if things agree in some respects they probably agree in others

**recoverable -**

capable of being regained or recovered

**tenuous -**

thin in substance or importance

**compassion -**

deep awareness of the suffering of another, coupled with the wish to relieve it

**benevolence -**

charitable kindness

**amusement -**

something entertaining

**malevolence -**

hostile attitude or feeling

Moravec offers a partial recognition of this problem when he admits that the immortality he offers is only a “temporary defense” against the “worst aspects of personal death.” As he explains:

In the long run, our survival will require changes that are not of our choosing. Parts of us will have to be discarded and replaced by new parts to keep in step with changing conditions and evolving competitors ... Though we are immortals, we must die bit by bit if we are to succeed in the qualifying event – continued survival. In time, each of us will be a completely changed being, shaped more by external challenges than by our own desires. Our present memories and interests, having lost their relevance, will at best end up in a dusty archive ... Viewed this way, personal immortality by mind transplant is a technique whose primary benefit is to temporarily coddle the sensibility and sentimentality of individual humans.

But one is left to wonder: To who do the pronouns “we” and “us” actually refer? Moravec rightly seems not to expect that “their” sensibilities will be “ours.” What might seem like immortality to human beings – and hence something greatly desired by many people – looks like an inconvenience to the post-human (or anti-human) beings with whom the extinctionists side. To embrace the extinctionist vision requires blinding ourselves to why humans might not want to live in a robot world; why robots will likely care little for “us”; and why there is really no “us” that will exist once our embodied lives become obsolete.

## HUMANITY'S LAST STAND

Perhaps these arguments overstate the gap between them and us. Given the human legacy that is imagined to exist in the “software” of these new beings, perhaps something with which we are familiar will be present in them (in the same way that some people believe the “reptilian brain” persists within humanity). Perhaps deep structures of human intelligence will continue to influence what they are.

But such an argument seems to ignore the supposed change from chance – based to consciously-directed evolution. If we have that **reptilian brain**, it is because of the **haphazard** way in which biological evolution builds new upon old. By contrast, the self-engineering beings of the future will be making their own decisions about what they will want to keep of the old, and the extinctionist arguments about the deficiencies of human life do not provide much reason for thinking that many of our favorite qualities will tempt those who succeed us. Even the human desires (immortality, perfect health, satisfaction without limits) that make robot life seem appealing are the product of biological limitations that robots will no longer have.

Perhaps the harmony between us and the future machines will depend on the fact that the robots will be our moral superiors, and that their self-conscious self-development will be morally superior to nature's survival of the fittest. In other words, maybe robots will be nice to us. This proposition is tempting, especially given the ease with which it is possible (particularly for scientists) to attribute so many human vices to our bodily existence. But Kurzweil knows better, estimating that roughly half the computing power of the robot world will be devoted to security – fending off viruses, fighting hostile nanotechnology, and so on. The immortality that is promised to “software beings” is based on the premise of adequate backup copies, not on the complete absence of deadly conflict. If the extinctionist future envisions good guys and bad guys, however unrecognizable to us, then the picture of universal intelligence begins to look more like battling gods. **Paradoxically**, the quest for the intelligent creation of a cosmic order, which nature has failed to provide us, seems to end in a kind of cyber-chaos, a new war of all against all.

### Reptilian brain or R-complex

is a part of the triune brain model ('tri', as in 3 part) proposed by Paul D. MacLean. This theory seeks to explain brain function through the evolution of existing structures of the human brain

### haphazard -

random; chaotic; incomplete; not thorough, constant or consistent

### paradoxically -

having self-contradictory properties

These arguments all assume some measure of choice in shaping the future. But part of the burden of the extinctionist argument is that the victory of robots is a matter of evolutionary necessity. Our species has developed a characteristic – the ability to guide evolution intelligently – which does not have ultimate survival value for itself, but which paves the way for the beings that will replace us. Whether or not today's humans are willing or able to “download” their brains into machines, there will come a time when all human beings will be surpassed by intelligent machines in the evolutionary struggle. What happens then?

Moravec expects that our “mind children” will treat us like parents, a picture that might already give pause to some unfortunate parents. But from an evolutionary point of view there seems to be little reason to expect this much comity. Why isn't “preying” a more likely label than “parent” for an unsuccessful evolutionary precursor and competitor? The moral constraints that human beings have developed to moderate the law of the jungle are relevant to our particular biological nature; beings who do not share that nature are unlikely to find such limits as compelling. As Butler's fictional author of the *Book of the Machines* notes, “I cannot think it will ever be safe to repose much trust in the moral sense of any machine.”

Shorn of the expectation that the world of robots will be an attractive world for humans, we are left with a future of evolutionary struggle. Why develop a capacity, in this case the capacity to guide evolution, if it has no benefit for us? We may or may not be able to win this struggle, but there is no reason to give up before it is fairly underway. Indeed, as Butler suggests, the time to act may be before the machines reveal their full capacities.

### AGAINST POST-BIOLOGICAL LIFE

To call the extinctionist project speculative is an understatement; most of it is presently science fiction – beyond even the conventional defense that we live in a world that would seem like “science fiction” to those who preceded us. For we live in a world that is at least still recognizably human. The moral lives of our ancestors still make sense to us. All the remarkable discoveries and inventions that shape the present age have not changed the fundamentals of human life (biological bodies, joy and suffering, birth and death) that the extinctionist vision seeks to overcome. To conclude by asking “what ought to be done” in the face of the extinctionist **challenge** may lead some readers to think that the author has lost all sense of proportion. Are we really to worry about the ideas of a small group of thinkers, whose highly speculative vision of the future seems at present to be flatly impossible? Surely there are far more pressing challenges to the human future.

Of course there are. But one is equally foolish to ignore the potential significance of the new science. Computer hardware will continue to get faster, cheaper, and more powerful. Computer software will increase in **sophistication**. Brain research will continue to explore the “mechanics” of consciousness. Nanotechnology will continue to develop. The milestones on the way to an age of conscious

#### challenge -

instigation or antagonization intended to convince a person to perform an action they otherwise would not; a difficult task

#### sophistication -

enlightenment or education; cultivated intellectual worldliness; savoir-faire



machines will in all likelihood not be realized in the way that their greatest enthusiasts claim. But it is a matter of faith to say that none of these technological achievements could ever be attained.

Second, there are powerful incentives – commercial, military, medical, and intellectual – that will drive many of the advances that the extinctionists desire, if for very different reasons. Much of the work in artificial intelligence and robotics is open to the same defense that is made on behalf of biotechnology: “if we don’t do it, they will” and “why suffer or be unhappy when some new agent or invention is available that will **alleviate** or cure the problem?”

Finally, we already accept significant artificial **augmentation** and replacement of natural body parts when those parts are missing or defective. Over time, such replacements are only likely to get more useful – and perhaps eventually indistinguishable from or “superior” to their biological counterparts – as they employ increasing computer processing power. Nor is there an obvious distinction between using manufactured chemicals to fight disease and using “smart” nanotechnology. The extinctionist project begins by offering new routes to fulfilling old promises about doing well for human beings. But it does not necessarily end there.

Under these circumstances, it is not absurd to think about how we might respond to the possibilities raised by extinctionists. And in practice, given that the position already has its advocates; it would be shortsighted not to provide at least some **rebuttal** beyond the obvious technical critiques.

In connection with machine intelligence, it does not seem very promising to try to limit the power or ability of computers. The danger (or promise) that computers might develop characteristics that lead some people to call them conscious – and that this age of intelligent machines would mean our extinction – seems remote when compared with their practical benefits. We already rely so heavily on computers that the **incentives** to make them easier to use and more powerful are very great. Computers already do a great many things better than we can, and there seems to be no natural place to enforce a stopping point to further abilities.

And yet, one could try to enrich people’s understanding of the distinct characteristics of human life, so that we might not be so easily seduced by the notion that our machines are “just like us” or “better.” Certainly mechanistic and reductionist assumptions about society, ethics, and psychology – the notion that we are merely atoms or animals, driven by chance or instinct – run deep in the present world. But there are deeper currents of longer standing that challenge these assumptions, and not only in the name of religious devotion or tradition. It is still possible to defend love and excellence, courage and charity, from those who imagine such real human experiences to be an illusion, and to accept that these virtues and experiences are inseparable from human finitude. Part of any battle against the extinctionists, as against the biotechnologists, is to recover and refine the human understanding of human things. What the future holds for such an understanding may not be settled, but we need not **cede** the field before the battle is truly joined. If, as Kurzweil suggests, we will know conscious machines when we see them, we can at least make sure that for all but the most **dogmatic** or **credulous**, the bar is raised to an appropriate height.

We must also refine and enlarge our understanding of what constitutes human progress. When the extinctionists speak of what “we” will become, for example, do they really have in mind a Chinese peasant or an African tribesman – or are such people simply irrelevant to the future? Will the world of computers and information technology generate so much

- alleviate** -  
make less severe (a pain or difficulty)
- augmentation** -  
adding to
- rebuttal** -  
the act of refuting something by making a contrary argument, or presenting contrary evidence
- incentive** -  
something that motivates, rouses, or encourages
- cede** -  
give up, give way, give away
- dogma** -  
established belief or doctrine held by a religion, ideology or any kind of organization, thought to be authoritative and not to be disputed, doubted or diverged from
- credulous** -  
excessively ready to believe things; gullible



wealth and automation that no one will have to work? And if so, is that really a desirable future? In a classic Jewish story, a pious carter dies and God grants his heartfelt desire to continue to be a carter in the World to Come. The extinctionists are wrong to think that failing bodies are our only problem and better minds our only aspiration – just as they are wrong to ignore the real human hardships that could be **ameliorated** by a truly human, rather than post-human, progress. At best, they foresee a world that people like themselves would like. It is a narrow vision of the human good.

Finally, we must confront evolution. As individual human beings must eventually die, so also humanity cannot count on being around forever. Biological (or astronomical) changes will see to that sooner or later. But nothing in evolutionary theory suggests that we have any obligation to commit suicide. Nothing says that we cannot continue to modify our environment for as long as we can to make it more conducive to our existence. Humanity is not only a matter of one abstract quality we call “intelligence,” so there is no reason to pursue, in the name of evolution, a course that claims to maximize this one quality (“all conquering mind”) at the expense of all the others. And while the distant possibility of our own extinction is indeed chilling, it is no reason to abandon our present posts or ignore the significance of living our human lives badly or well.

### FINITUDE AND DIGNITY

In the end, the extinctionist vision of the future is a dangerous delusion – promising things that will not be available to beings that will not be there to enjoy them. If the human world were purely or even on balance evil, there might be some reason to seek its end. But even then there is no reason to assume that the post-human world will be morally superior to our own.

Perhaps it is easy to understand the temptations of artificial life and the utopian narrative that accompanies them. Our combination of human limitations and human intelligence has given birth to a new human power (technology); and our new life as self-conscious machines would enable us to achieve what was once reserved for the gods alone (immortal life). This dream is promised not in the next world but in this one, and it depends not on being chosen but on choosing our own extinction and re-birth. Finite beings could, on their own, overcome their finitude. Imperfect beings could make themselves perfect.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the project is based on an eroded understanding of human life, and that the science that claims to make it possible only accelerates that erosion. Of course, part of being human includes the difficulty of reconciling ourselves to our finitude. There is certainly much to despair of in the world, and it is easy to imagine and hope for something better. But the extinctionists illustrate the hollowness of grand claims for new orders, and how easy it is, in their pursuit, to end up worse off than we are now.

**SOURCE:** Charles T. Rubin, “Artificial Intelligence and Human Nature,” *The New Atlantis*, Number 1, Spring 2003, pp. 88-10

**ameliorate -**

make better, to improve; to  
heal or solve a problem

**finitude -**

limitation, finiteness.

**dignity -**

worth; worthiness; the state  
of being worthy of respect or  
esteem

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Artificial Intelligence and Human Nature: do you think that this is a real problem for modern discussions about human beings? Before reading the article, present some general ideas on artificial intelligence. Can you bring any historical evidence?
2. Do you agree with the author who says that extinction will be the result of some combination of our transformation into machines and our inability to win in the competition between us and machines?
3. Why do extinctionists claim that the “end of mankind ... as a biological life form” is not only possible but necessary? Can you bring evidence and facts used in their theory?
4. What do you think about Kurzweil’s anticipation of that by 2019 virtual sex performed by various mechanisms and providing sensory perception, will be preferred for its ability “to enhance both experience and safety”?
5. What do you think about extinctionists’ claim that we have also evolved an intelligent capacity to guide evolution? Is it possible to be a part of evolution and to guide it? Are there contradictions in extinctionalist approaches to human nature?
6. How different are the religious and scientific approaches to the future of human life and human nature? Will a human be able to change his/her body in the future? What do you think about new scientific discoveries such as: cloning, biotechnology, nanotechnology etc.? Can scientific technologies be limited by any religious, ethical or cultural values in case they bring negative results and damage to our civilization?

**ADDITIONAL READING:**

- Meaning-Based Natural Intelligence Vs. Information-Based Artificial Intelligence, <http://star.tau.ac.il/~eshel/papers/meaning%20based.pdf>

## LARRY ARNHART

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Larry Arnhart is a professor in the Department of Political Science at Northern Illinois University. He is the author of *Darwinian Natural Right: The Biological Ethics of Human Nature*.

## HUMAN NATURE IS HERE TO STAY

The power of **biotechnology** for changing human nature has been **exaggerated**. The most fervent advocates of biotechnology welcome the prospect of using it to transform our nature to make us superhuman. The most fervent critics of biotechnology warn us that its power for transforming our nature will seduce us into a **Faustian bargain** that will dehumanize us. Both sides agree that biotechnology is leading us to a “post human future.” But this assumption is false. It ignores how **evolution** has shaped the adaptive complexity of our human nature – our bodies, our brains, and our desires – in ways that resist technological **manipulation**. A Darwinian view of human nature – one truer to the facts of human biology and human experience – reveals the limits of biotechnology, so that we can reject both the redemptive hopes of its advocates and the **apocalyptic** fears of its critics.

Biotechnology will be limited both in its technical means and in its moral ends. It will be limited in its technical means because complex behavioral traits are rooted in the intricate interplay of many genes, which interact with developmental contingencies and unique life histories to form brains that respond flexibly to changing circumstances. Consequently, precise technological manipulation of human nature to enhance desirable traits while avoiding undesirable side effects will be very difficult if not impossible. Biotechnology will also be limited in its moral ends, because the motivation for biotechnological manipulations will come from the same natural desires that have always characterized human nature.

## Bodies, Brains, and Evolution

In the first issue of *The New Atlantis*, **Leon Kass** suggests that if biotechnology were to transform human nature, it would do so to satisfy the human dream of physical and mental perfection – “ageless bodies, happy souls.” But how likely is that? As an indication of what he foresees, Kass says that with drugs, “we can eliminate psychic distress, we can produce states of transient **euphoria**, and we can engineer more permanent conditions of good cheer, optimism, and contentment.” He refers to those “powerful yet seemingly safe anti-depressant and mood

**biotechnology -**

technology based on biology, especially as used in agriculture, food science, and medicine

**exaggerate -**

to overstate; to describe more than is fact

**Faust -**

Faust abandoned values in order to pursue knowledge

**bargain -**

agreement or stipulation; mutual pledge

**evolution -**

change in the genetic composition of a population over successive generations

**manipulation -**

exerting an influence in the way one wants something to go

**apocalyptic -**

portending future disaster, devastation and doom

**Leon Kass -**

(born February 12, 1939)  
American bioethicist, best known as a leader in the effort to stop human embryonic stem cell and cloning research as former chair of the President's Council on Bioethics from 2002–2005

**euphoria -**

state of very intense happiness and feelings of well-being

- prozac** -  
tradenname for an infamous antidepressant drug
- Eeyore** -  
depressive donkey in the Winnie the Pooh books by A.A. Milne
- Mary Poppins** -  
cheerful and vain nanny in the books by P. L. Travers
- Peter Kramer** -  
American psychiatrist, former Marshall Scholar and faculty member of Brown Medical School specializing in the area of depression
- ebullient** -  
zestfully enthusiastic; joyously unrestrained
- Garrison Keillor** -  
(born Gary Edward Keillor on August 7, 1942 in Anoka, Minnesota) American author, storyteller, humorist, columnist, musician, satirist, and radio personality.
- psychopharmacology** -  
the study of drug-induced changes in mood, sensation, thinking, and behavior
- serotonin** -  
indoleamine neurotransmitter that is involved in depression, appetite etc.
- overabundance** -  
excess of that which is needed or is appropriate
- placebo** -  
substance containing no medication and prescribed or given to reinforce a patient's expectation to get well
- numb** -  
without the power of sensation and motion
- warrant** -  
authorization or certification; sanction, as given by a superior

brighteners like **Prozac**, capable in some people of utterly changing their outlook on life from that of Eeyore to that of **Mary Poppins**." Similarly, psychiatrist **Peter Kramer** – in his best-selling book *Listening to Prozac* – described patients using Prozac who were not just cured of depression but so transformed in their personalities as to be “better than well.” Shy, quiet people were apparently turned into **ebullient** and socially engaging people. “Like **Garrison Keillor’s** marvelous Powdermilk biscuits,” Kramer observed, “Prozac gives these patients the courage to do what needs to be done.” This was the beginning, he concluded, of “cosmetic **psychopharmacology**,” by which people could use chemicals to take on whatever personality they might prefer.

But as even Kramer has conceded, this chemical transformation in personality appears to work well in only a minority of the people taking Prozac. And in recent years, there have been increasing reports of many harmful side effects. This is to be expected, because like all psychotropic drugs, Prozac disrupts the normal functioning of the brain, and the brain responds by countering the effect of the drug, which then induces harmful distortions in the neural system. Specifically, Prozac blocks the normal removal of the neurotransmitter **serotonin** from the space between nerve cells. This creates an **overabundance** of serotonin, and the brain responds either by reducing receptivity to serotonin or by reducing the production of serotonin. As a result, the brain creates an imbalance in response to the disruption of the drug and cannot function normally. There is also growing evidence that Prozac does not really cure depression. Many studies have shown that the antidepressant effects of taking Prozac are not much greater than what occurs when people take a **placebo** pill.

But the most fundamental problem with Prozac is one that it shares with all psychotropic drugs (including old-fashioned ones like alcohol). Emotional suffering is a capacity of human nature shaped by evolutionary history for an adaptive purpose. Emotional suffering is almost always a signal that something is wrong in our lives. It alerts us that there is some problem either in our internal lives, in our social relationships, or in our external circumstances. A psychotropic drug does not help us to understand or solve the problem. Rather, the drug deadens the emotional response of our brain without changing the problem that provoked the emotional response in the first place. When we feel bad because of a problem in our lives, taking a psychotropic drug to make us feel better is evasive and self-defeating. As mature adults, we can understand this in the case of old drugs like alcohol; the same lesson applies to even the newest drugs of the mind like Prozac. But even if critics like Kass are wrong to suggest that psychotropic drugs could change human nature, they are right to worry about the bad effects of such drugs on people who use them to “**numb**” the sharp edges of reality, if only temporarily. And they are **warranted** to question a biotechnological approach to life that sacrifices truthfulness in favor of dulling “psychic distress.” In the end, however, these critics overestimate just how effective – and how desirable – such drugs really are or will become.

Just as the biotechnological quest for “happy souls” is limited by the adaptive complexity of the brain, so is the biotechnological quest for “ageless bodies” limited by the adaptive complexity of the body. The success of modern public health and modern medicine in extending life expectancy might suggest that if we continue in this direction, eventually we can conquer death completely. But while we have increased the average length of life, we have not increased the maximum length of life. Compared with populations in previous centuries, more of us are living into

our 80s and 90s. And yet by age 100, 99 percent of us will be dead; and by age 120, we will all be dead. The maximum lifespan is the same today as it has been for thousands of years. This confirms the wisdom of God's declaration in the Bible: "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Genesis 6:3).

Senescence – the process of bodily **decay** at older ages – is probably so deeply rooted in the adaptive complexity of our bodies that it cannot be abolished by biotechnological changes. It is likely that aging is controlled by so many genes interacting in such complex ways that it would be hard to eliminate the genetic mechanisms for aging, and thus to greatly lengthen the lifespan, without disrupting other beneficial mechanisms.

Last year, Scientific American published a statement by 51 leading researchers in the science of aging who declared that there was "no truth to the fountain of youth." They reasoned that "it is **inescapable** biological reality that once the engine of life switches on, the body **inevitably** sows the seeds of its own destruction." Since there is no scientifically proven way to stop the process of aging, "the prospect of humans living forever is as unlikely today as it has always been."

One plausible evolutionary explanation for senescence has been offered by biologist **George Williams**. Genes commonly have more than one effect. A gene might confer great benefits at young ages but have such harmful effects in old age that few people could live past 100. In the environments of evolutionary history, most people probably died (from accidents and other causes) long before they could even get close to age 100. In these conditions, this gene would spread by natural selection because people would enjoy its beneficial effects in youth, in ways that would enhance their reproductive fitness, while few people would live long enough to experience the gene's bad effects. The accumulation over evolutionary history of such genes that are beneficial in youth but harmful in old age might explain the aging process. The general idea is that the evolutionary economy of nature works on the principle of trade-offs between costs and benefits. To get youthful energy, we must accept senescent decline. Williams suggests that we should find consolation in the thought that "**senescence** is the price we pay for **vigor** in youth." Instead of longing to live forever, we might desire to live the life we have as fully as we can until we reach our completion.

### Our Natural Desires

The desire for a complete life is one of many desires that belong to our biological human nature. As I argued more fully in my book *Darwinian Natural Right*, natural selection has shaped human nature to express at least twenty natural desires that are **manifested** in diverse ways in all human societies throughout history. Human

#### decay -

deteriorate, get worse, lose strength or health, decline in quality

#### inescapable -

cannot be avoided

#### inevitably -

in a manner that is impossible to avoid or prevent

#### Professor George Christopher Williams -

(b. May 12, 1926) American evolutionary biologist

#### senescence -

the state or process of ageing, esp. in humans; old age

#### vigor -

strength, energy or force

#### manifest -

clearly apparent to the sight or understanding; obvious

beings generally desire a complete life, parental care, sexual identity, sexual mating, familial bonding, friendship, social ranking, and justice as reciprocity, political rule, war, health, beauty, wealth, speech, practical habituation, practical reasoning, practical arts, **aesthetic** pleasure, religious understanding, and intellectual understanding.

To illustrate what I mean, consider the first two desires on my list – a complete life and parental care. Human beings generally desire life. Like other animals, they pass through a life cycle from birth to **maturity** to death. Every human society is organized to manage the changing desires associated with this life cycle, which passes through distinct stages such as infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Children, adults, and the elderly have different desires, and to satisfy those desires they must fill different roles in society. Human beings will risk their lives for a good cause. And yet they generally agree that to be fully happy one must live out one's natural lifespan.

Human beings also generally desire to care for children. Human life would be impossible without parental care of the young. A large portion of the activity and resources of every human society is devoted to parental care and familial life generally. Children desire the care of adults. And although parental care giving is often **onerous**, most human adults desire to provide such care, especially for those children to whom they have some **affiliative** bond – either those to whom they are related by kinship or those to whom they have developed some adoptive attachment.

Such desires are so deeply woven into the adaptive complexity of human nature that they are not likely to be radically changed by biotechnology. On the contrary, we should expect that biotechnology – as well as all forms of technology – will be used to satisfy those natural human desires: to preserve life, to assist parental care, to improve one's sexual chances, and so on. Since our natural desires provide our ultimate motivations for action, it is hard to see why we would use biotechnology to abolish them.

Biotechnology is also an expression of our natural desire for practical arts. Every human society depends on making and using tools to control natural resources for human benefit. Some of the basic tools – such as cutters, ponders levers, containers, and weapons such as projectiles – are universal. Some tools are made in uniform patterns of artistic style. As animals naturally adapted for craft and artifice, human beings enjoy producing and seeing products of practical skill. Technology and engineering express this natural desire. Throughout the history of the human species, human beings have artificially manipulated plants and animals to adapt them to human desires. We can see this in the human breeding of plants and animals to create forms of life that would not have existed without such human manipulation. Modern biotechnology is a more technically advanced form of this older biotechnology.

The view that biotechnology is embedded within, and thus limited by, our natural human desires – desires shaped by Darwinian evolution – stands in opposition to the exaggerated **optimism** of some proponents of biotechnology and the exaggerated **pessimism** of some critics. Both the optimists and the pessimists assume that biotechnology will abolish human nature in the quest for a “post human” condition. **Francis Bacon's** “New Atlantis” is a classic text of exaggerated optimism; **Aldous Huxley's** “Brave New World” is a classic text of exaggerated pessimism; both shed light on how exaggerated hopes and fears continue to confuse the contemporary debate over biotechnology.

**aesthetic -**

concerning the appreciation of beauty or good taste

**maturity -**

adulthood

**onerous -**

burdensome; difficult; wearing; tiring

**affiliative -**

tending to promote social cohesion

**optimism -**

tendency to expect the best, or at least, a favourable outcome

**pessimism -**

general belief that bad things will happen

**Francis Bacon -**

(22 January 1561 – 9 April 1626) English philosopher, statesman, and essayist

**Aldous Huxley -**

26 July 1894 – 22 November 1963) English writer and one of the most prominent members of the famous Huxley family

**misguide -**

poorly or incorrectly guide

### Misguided Optimism

The title of this journal reminds us of the importance of Bacon's "New Atlantis" as the first depiction of a society governed by the use of modern science and technology to conquer nature for human benefit. "New Atlantis" (first published in 1627) is the utopian story of some European sailors who discover the island of Bensalem in the South Pacific. The people of Bensalem seem completely happy. This is due primarily to the science and technology that come from "Salomon's House," which we today would recognize as a scientific research institute.

The Father of Salomon's House describes the extensive scientific projects undertaken there for the experimental study of the physical and living world around them. He declares the purpose of this work to be twofold – "the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible." The first aim is theoretical – the understanding of natural causes for its own sake. The second is practical – the use of the scientific understanding of natural causes for ruling over nature. Although Bacon emphasizes the practical power of scientific knowledge, he also affirms the worth of theoretical understanding as an end in itself. He begins his Essays by insisting that the pursuit of truth for its own sake is "the sovereign good of human nature."

The social, economic, religious, and political aspects of life in Bensalem are all organized to sustain and benefit from the scientific knowledge and technological power provided by Salomon's House. The inventions coming from Salomon's House include flying machines, boats that move underwater, robotic mechanisms, medicinal drugs, powerful weapons of destruction, and artificially designed plants and animals. Many of the inventions are for preserving bodily health, curing diseases, and prolonging life. The technological mastery of nature has managed to make life in Bensalem free, healthy, pleasurable, and peaceful.

Bacon wrote "New Atlantis" to make Bensalem look like an earthly paradise. And yet any careful reader notices intimations of a darker side to life on this island. Although the Bensalemites appear to be peaceful, they have fought wars in the past, and their scientific technologists develop destructive weapons, suggesting that they must always be prepared for war. The people of Bensalem cooperate freely, and yet there is a social and political **hierarchy** in which higher ranked people give commands to lower ranked people, which implies **coercive** authority. People talk about a king who never appears. And generally the government operates behind the scenes. Their economic prosperity seems to arise from a well-organized system of labor, management, investment, and commerce; and yet Bacon tells us nothing about how economic conflicts are resolved. Those in Salomon's House are under an oath of secrecy, and they meet to decide which experiments and inventions will be made public and which not. Bensalem cannot be a completely free and open society.

#### **hierarchy -**

a system of ranking and organizing things or people, where each element of the system (except for the top element) is a subordinate to a single other element

#### **coercive -**

using force or authority to make a person do something against his or her will



Moreover, the power of technology over nature in Bensalem has not brought about any radical change in human nature. The people in Bensalem are moved by all of the natural human desires that have always moved human beings. For example, the natural desires for sexual mating, parental care, and familial bonding are satisfied in monogamous marriages and **patriarchal** families. The natural desire for social ranking is satisfied by a hierarchy of authority and recognition that honors people for their public service. Even the most successful inventors in Salomon's House are rewarded with statues honoring their work. The natural desire for religious understanding is satisfied by a religious life rooted in the Jewish and Christian traditions of the Bible. The many references to Solomon remind us of the Biblical king of Israel whose wisdom included a scientific knowledge of nature and a technological expertise manifested in the building of a great temple and palace. And the natural desire for intellectual understanding is satisfied most fully by those scientists in Salomon's House who seek the knowledge of causes.

The talk about inventions for prolonging life and the silence about death suggest to some readers that the Bensalemites have changed human nature in at least one crucial respect: they have achieved bodily immortality. But there are many hints in "New Atlantis" that although Salomon's House has been at work for over 1,900 years, there has been no extension of the human lifespan. Some people are much older than others. Special drinks are brewed for the pleasure of the old. And, apparently, those statues of great inventors in Salomon's House are images of the dead. In Bacon's essay "Of Death," he observes that there is no natural necessity for human beings to fear death. After all, many passions prompt us to risk our lives with no fear of death. And generally what we fear about death is not death itself but the pains often associated with it. Bacon concludes, "it is as natural to die as to be born."

So even in Bacon's optimistic vision of how the technological conquest of nature could transform the human condition, we see no essential change in those natural human desires that constitute the core of human nature. Bacon himself seemed to understand this fact, even as he helped lay the groundwork for a new science aimed precisely at reconstituting man's understanding of and powers over the natural world, including the workings of man himself. And yet, three hundred years later, Aldous Huxley's darker vision of a scientific society suggested that the technological power for changing human nature might turn out to be much greater than Bacon had imagined.

### Misguided Pessimism

In the first issue of this journal, the phrase "Brave New World" appears nine times. This reminds us of the remarkable influence of Huxley's novel in the continuing debate over the moral implications of science and technology.

Brave New World (first published in 1932) is a novel about an imaginary World State in the future where a combination of genetic manipulation and social conditioning has produced a stable industrialized society governed by the political slogan that "everyone belongs to everyone else." Human eggs are fertilized in laboratories and then incubated under varying conditions for the mass production of people who are shaped to fill their social caste roles as Alphas, Betas, Gammas, Deltas, or Epsilons. Some people have been cloned from the same fertilized egg, so that they are genetically identical. The higher castes fill managerial roles, and a few of these become

**patriarchal** -  
system run by males (not  
females)

Controllers ruling over the World State. The lower castes fill menial roles. There are no parental or familial attachments. The idea of being born to a mother after developing in her **womb** is considered obscene and primitive. People are free from the emotional conflicts of family life. Since everyone is conditioned to fill an assigned role, they all feel happy doing what they do, and there is no class conflict. There are many amusements to keep people satisfied and entertained, including the “Feelies,” movies that arouse audiences not only visually and audibly but also tactilely. Sexual promiscuity is a social duty, and people derive recreational pleasure from having hundreds of sexual partners over their life. Anyone who might feel a little anxious or sad takes the drug “soma,” which induces blissful euphoria and allows people to “escape from reality” for long periods without any painful aftereffects. There is no interest in traditional art or religion, because people have never felt the intense suffering or conflicts that awaken the aesthetic or religious impulse.

A few individuals **rebel** against this social conformity and emotional shallowness, and they desire the intense emotions of romantic love, art, religion, or pure science. If they become too **disruptive**, they can be exiled to distant islands. One of the rebels is John the Savage, who was born “naturally” to a woman and raised on an Indian Reservation in New Mexico before being brought to London. The Savage has educated himself by reading Shakespeare’s plays, which give him poetic language to express his deep longings. The Savage meets Mustapha Mond, the World Controller for Western Europe. Mond shares the Savage’s interest in art and religion. Mond has also been moved by a love of pure science for its own sake that cannot be satisfied by the applied science and technology promoted in the World State. As a young man, Mond could have been exiled to an island for rebels, but he decided to sacrifice his personal happiness to become a Controller who would rule for the greater happiness of the World State.

Huxley’s novel is a satirical depiction of the sort of scientific **utopias** that were predicted by people like **H. G. Wells** and **J. B. S. Haldane** at the beginning of the twentieth century. The novel arouses disgust in its readers because most of the people in this Huxleyan world have been dehumanized into “happy slaves.” In his 1958 collection of essays *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley said that the world described in his novel was contrary to “man’s biological nature,” because it treated human beings as if they were social insects rather than **mammals**. Social insects such as bees, ants, and **termites** naturally cooperate for the good of the social whole as greater than its individual members. But mammals are only “moderately gregarious,” Huxley observed, in that they can cooperate with one another, but they will never subordinate their individual interests totally to the community. In social insect colonies, reproduction is communal (through the queen), so that most of the insects do not reproduce and thus do not feel any personal attachment to offspring. Among mammals, however, individuals produce offspring directly and feel a parental attachment to them. As big-brained mammals, human beings must devise social ar-

**womb -**

the major female reproductive organ of most mammals, including humans

**rebel -**

person who resists an established authority, often violently

**disruptive -**

causing unrest

**utopia -**

fictional world in which everything and everyone works in perfect harmony

**H.G.Wells -**

English writer most famous today for his science fiction novels *The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The Invisible Man*, *The First Men in the Moon* and *The Island of Dr Moreau*

**J.B.S. Haldane -**

British geneticist and evolutionary biologist. He was one of the founders (along with Ronald Fisher and Sewall Wright) of population genetics

**mammal -**

animal of the class Mammalia, characterized by being warm-blooded, having hair and feeding milk to its young

**termite -**

white-bodied, wood consuming insect of the order Isoptera

**intimiation -**

announcement; declaration

**Lee Silver -**

Lee M. Silver (born 1952)  
 professor at Princeton  
 University in the Department  
 of Molecular Biology and the  
 Woodrow Wilson School of  
 Public and International Affairs

**Gregory Stock -**

biophysicist, best-selling author,  
 biotech entrepreneur, and  
 former director of the Program  
 on Medicine, Technology and  
 Society at UCLA's School of  
 Medicine

**Leon Kass -**

(born February 12, 1939)  
 American bioethicist, best  
 known as a leader in the effort  
 to stop human embryonic stem  
 cell and cloning research as  
 former chair of the President's  
 Council on Bioethics from  
 2002–2005

**Yoshihiro Francis Fukuyama -**

(born October 27, 1952)  
 American philosopher, political  
 economist, and author

**William Kristol -**

(born December 23, 1952 in  
 New York City) American  
 Republican pundit, analyst, and  
 strategist

**Bill McKibben -**

American environmentalist  
 and writer who frequently  
 writes about global warming,  
 alternative energy, and the  
 need for more localized  
 economies

**Jeremy Rifkin -**

(born 1943, Denver, Colorado),  
 founder and president of the  
 Foundation on Economic  
 Trends (FOET), American  
 economist, writer, and public  
 speaker

**rhetoric -**

art of using language, especially  
 public speaking, as a means to  
 persuade

rangements for balancing social order and individual freedom. Brave New World shows how dehumanizing it would be for human beings to be so designed that they gave up individual freedom for the stable order of a social insect colony.

The very fact that people in Brave New World need soma as an “escape from reality” indicates that the World State has not succeeded in abolishing their mammalian nature and turning them into social insects. Taking too much soma shortens their life expectancy. And although no one shows the debilitating effects of aging, everyone dies. So from infancy, people have to be conditioned not to fear death.

Any careful reader of Huxley's novel can see **intimations** of all those natural desires that distinguish the human species, most clearly expressed in the many individuals who have to be sent into exile on remote islands. Even a World Controller like Mond feels those desires, which leaves us wondering why he would take a ruling office that makes him unhappy. (In this respect, he is like the philosopher-king in Plato's Republic, who must sacrifice his love for the philosophic life to rule for the public good.)

In the end, the idea that biotechnology is leading us to Huxley's brave new world is implausible, because it is hard to see how social arrangements so contrary to human nature could ever succeed. Why would human beings choose to turn themselves into social insects?

## The Current Debate

The contrast between Bacon's optimism and Huxley's pessimism continues to dominate today's moral debate over biotechnology. The Baconian optimists are led by libertarians like **Lee Silver**, **Gregory Stock**, and Ronald Bailey. The Huxleyan pessimists are led by neoconservatives like **Leon Kass**, **Francis Fukuyama**, and **William Kristol**, and by environmentalists like **Bill McKibben** and **Jeremy Rifkin**. Both sides make the exaggerated claim that biotechnology is heading us towards the abolition of human nature.

As suggested by the title of his book *Remaking Eden*, Lee Silver foresees that biotechnology will soon give us the god-like power to recreate ourselves into whatever form we might want. He makes the libertarian argument that if we respect individual freedom of choice, then we must allow people to use reproductive technology in any way they choose, as long as they do not directly harm anyone else. This would allow parents to produce “designer children” with the traits of body and mind that the parents desire.

But when Silver speaks of the power of biotechnology for changing human nature, he exaggerates both the technical possibilities and the moral ends that would motivate people to use biotechnology in the first place. With respect to the technical means, the following comment from Silver is typical: “Some of the ideas proposed here may ultimately be technically impossible or exceedingly difficult to implement. On the other hand, there are sure to be technological breakthroughs that no one can imagine now.” Well, maybe. Or, maybe not. This is the **rhetoric** of hand-waving: it's not possible now, but surely sometime in the future there will be “technological breakthroughs” to make it possible. This kind of rhetorical move allows an author to spin out imaginative scenarios based on purely speculative assumptions about the future.

Silver also exaggerates in suggesting that the basic motivations for human behavior will be completely remade. Indeed, the plausibility of Silver's argument depends on the assumption that the new reproductive technology will be guided

by the same natural desires of the human animal that have always moved human beings. He repeatedly speaks of the “desire to have a child” as a “natural instinct” or “essential human desire” that has been shaped by evolutionary history as an enduring trait of human nature. Although biotechnology will provide us with new means to satisfy this desire, the end is still set by our parental desire to produce and care for our children in ways that **enhance** their health and happiness. The technological means should be judged good, Silver argues, as long as they serve naturally good ends. The implication of this argument should be clear: When Silver speaks of biotechnology as giving us “the power to change the nature of human-kind,” he does not really mean what he says, because he assumes that the human desire to care for one’s own children will continue to direct human reproduction and child-rearing just as it has throughout human history.

Gregory Stock, another prominent figure in the biotechnology debate, agrees with Silver in defending a libertarian attitude toward human reproductive biotechnology. And just like Silver, he exaggerates. In his book *Redesigning Humans*, Stock declares that “the arrival of safe, reliable germ line technology will signal the beginning of human self-design.” He admits, however, that “our biology might prove too complex to rework.” He concedes that “no present genetic intervention is worth doing in a healthy individual, and no present technology is capable of effecting an intervention safely anyway.” He acknowledges that many biologists believe that the genetic propensities underlying complex behavioral traits, such as personality and intelligence, are so intricate that we could never intervene to change these mechanisms without producing undesirable side effects. He also recognizes that these genetic propensities always interact in unpredictable ways with chance events and life history to produce unique individuals who cannot be controlled or manufactured by genetic technology. “Even for highly heritable traits,” he observes, “it will be uncertain what a child’s unique **amalgam** of potential and experience will bring. A vision of parents sitting before a catalog and picking out the personality of their future ‘designer child’ is false.”

But just when it seems that he has given up on the idea of “human self-design” through genetic technology, Stock suggests that the “technological barriers soon may fall.” We might someday develop an artificial human chromosome and thus find a way to use our new mastery of genetics to change the complex behavioral traits of our children. In describing these technological novelties of the future, he uses words such as “may,” “might,” “probably,” and “ideally” in almost every paragraph of his writing. He writes: “At this time, human **germ** line manipulation is not **feasible** or safe. A decade from now, it still won’t be. Two or three decades hence, however, the story may be different.” So in 30 years, we might be able to do what today is impossible. Well, maybe. Or, maybe not. As with Silver, it’s hard to know how to respond to Stock’s speculative scenarios, except to identify them as nothing more than speculative scenarios.

**enhance -**

augment or make something greater; to improve something by adding features

**amalgam -**

combination of different things

**germ -**

small mass of cells from which a new organism develops; a seed, bud or spore

**feasible -**

possible; capable of being done

Stock also suggests that “redesigning humans” through genetic manipulation will include redesigning their fundamental motivations. But then he pulls back from this exaggerated assertion, and argues instead that choices about using reproductive technology to change the human germ line will be made by parents moved by the same natural desires that have always been part of human nature. He writes: “To figure out which traits we will want for our children once we have the power to make such choices, we must think long and hard about whom we are. Our evolutionary past speaks to us through our biology and fashions our underlying desires and drives.” He then lists some of the “desires and drives” instilled in us by Darwinian evolution. The list includes sexual mating, parental care, familial bonding, status, power, wealth, and beauty – the same natural desires, rooted in our Darwinian human nature, described above.

In the end, the persuasiveness of Stock’s argument depends on his implicit claim that while parents will sometimes make mistakes in how they use new reproductive technologies, we can generally rely on their good judgment and common sense, because they will be guided by the same natural desires that have always constituted the ground for moral experience. If modification of the human germ line arises from parental choice, Stock tells us, and then we can trust that such changes or enhancements will fall “within the range of normal human performance.” But if so, then the project for “redesigning humans” has not abolished human nature after all. As long as the human beings using biotechnology do so in the service of their natural desires, their technical means might be new, but their moral ends will be rooted in the enduring desires of human nature.

Bill McKibben would seem to be radically opposed to the positions of Silver and Stock. In his recent book *Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age*, McKibben argues that we need to limit our technological power over human life by deciding that we already have “enough.” If we don’t set limits – now, not later – then our growing biotechnological power will soon destroy our human identity. We will become like robots, and life will be meaningless.

And yet the urgency of McKibben’s argument depends precisely on his agreeing with those who celebrate the possibility of biotechnology to transform human nature. In much of his book, he simply paraphrases or quotes from Silver, Stock, and others who think technology is moving us into post humanity. He then concludes: “The techno prophets have made a persuasive case that we will soon be able to leave humanness behind.” He naïvely reports that scientists “are already hot on the trail of a human ‘happiness gene,’” and that “it’s not particularly far out to imagine genetic engineering designed to make our children happier.” But scientifically, this is nonsense.

As is common for those who foresee the use of biotechnology to produce “designer babies,” McKibben ignores the adaptive complexity of mental traits that arise from many interacting and unpredictable causes and that are not **amenable** to precise genetic manipulation. For example, McKibben predicts that soon parents will be able to increase the innate intelligence of their children by genetic engineering. He cites the work of psychologist **Robert Plomin**, who announced in a 1998 article that differences in a gene on chromosome 6 could account for two percent of the difference between a group of children with high IQ scores and another group with lower scores. McKibben fails, however, to tell his readers that Plomin’s finding has never been replicated by any other researchers. Furthermore, in the fall of 2002, Plomin retracted his 1998 report, because he had failed to replicate

#### amenable -

willing to respond to  
persuasion or suggestions

#### Robert Plomin -

American psychologist best  
known for his work in twin  
studies and behavior genetics

it himself. Recently, Plomin has admitted that in searching for genes that influence intelligence, “the track record for replicating candidate gene associations is not good.” Plomin has also conceded that intelligence is controlled by so many genes, each of which exerts such a small effect, that it might never be possible to identify exactly the genetic basis of intelligence.

Even if we could explain exactly the multiple genetic causes of intelligence, we would still have to explain how those genes influence neural activity and how genetic propensities and neural activity interact with environmental contingencies in the unique life histories of particular human beings. And all of this would presuppose that we could agree on how to define and measure “intelligence,” even though both scientific research and common-sense experience suggest that there are different kinds of intelligence (e.g., analytic intelligence, verbal intelligence, practical intelligence, musical intelligence, and **kinesthetic** intelligence). Moreover, since our intellectual activity requires a subtle interaction of reason and emotion, we cannot explain intelligence without also explaining emotion. We should expect such complexity in the workings of human intelligence, because we have been endowed by natural selection with a cognitive flexibility that allows us to monitor and respond appropriately to the intricate and ever-changing physical and social circumstances of human life. The rhetorical power of McKibben’s **jeremiad** requires that he ignore all of these complications. He claims to defend human nature, but only by ignoring its biological complexity.

Like McKibben, neoconservatives like Francis Fukuyama accept the biotechnological **prophecies** of people such as Silver and Stock. In his book *Our Post human Future*, Fukuyama admits, “we do not today have the ability to modify human nature in any significant way, and it may turn out that the human race will never achieve this ability.” He then adds, however, that genetic engineering to change human nature might become possible in a hundred years. Well, maybe. Or, maybe not.

Fukuyama insists that we can regulate biotechnology by appealing to human nature – to promote what is desirable and **discourage** what is unnatural. He rejects the idea that human nature is constituted by a **discernible** number of natural desires. “Such lists,” he claims, “are likely to be controversial; they tend either to be too short and general, or overly specific and lacking in universality.” What we need to know, he says, is the “Factor X” that makes human beings unique in a way that gives them moral dignity. He then goes through a list of possible traits that would qualify as “Factor X”: reason, language, consciousness, moral choice, human emotions, and other factors. He finally concludes that what is decisive is not any one of these traits but the full gamut of traits that constitute “the human whole.” In the end, this gamut of traits resembles the very Darwinian natural desires described above – the desire to care for children, for social recognition, for political rule, and so on. On this point, Fukuyama and I seem to agree. The major difference is whether one believes that biotechnology can change these natural desires or not.

**kinesthetic -**

sensation or perception of motion

**jeremiad -**

long speech or prose work that bitterly laments the state of society and its morals, and often contains a prophecy of its coming downfall

**prophecy -**

prediction, especially one made under divine inspiration

**discourage -**

take away or reduce the courage of

**discern -**

detect with the senses, especially with the eyes



To believe that we are heading for a “post human” future – where human nature as we know it will be abolished or transformed – one must accept the **premise** that our own biotechnical inventions are powerful enough and subtle enough to transform the complex biological natures that define who we are and what we desire. But these natural desires, which Fukuyama is correct to recognize, are more lasting and deeply rooted than he admits. The new biotechnology (like all new technologies) might allow us to bring misery and confusion into individual lives in new ways. People can try to **revolt** against their own true nature. But in the end, there is no reason to believe that biotechnology will allow us to become different beings altogether with different desires. Human nature, despite what the bio-optimists and bio-pessimists both want us to believe, is not so easily altered.

### The Magic of the Extreme

If I am right that the biotechnological manipulation of human life will always be limited in its technical means and moral ends by the adaptive complexity of human nature, then one must wonder why so many people are forecasting the biotechnological abolition of humanity. The answer, I think, is that it stirs a **Nietzschean** excitement that has seduced many of us for the past century. Friedrich Nietzsche declared: “The spell that fights on our behalf, the eye of Venus that charms and blinds even our opponents, is the magic of the extreme, the seduction that everything extreme exercises: we immoralists – we are the most extreme.”

The extremism of Nietzsche’s immoralism was in his proclaiming that morality could no longer be rooted in human nature, because in the future human nature would be transformed, if not abolished altogether. The consequence of this would be either a collapse down to the subhuman **hedonism** of the “last man” or an elevation up to the superhuman heroism of the “superman.” In the debate over biotechnology, the Baconian optimists await with hope the coming of the “superman,” while the Huxleyan pessimists await with fear the coming of the “last man.” Both sides have been seduced by Nietzschean prophecies that have no ground in observable experience or scientific reality.

Fukuyama speaks about the “human moral sense” rooted in human nature. But then he observes: “It may be the case that, as Nietzsche predicted, we are fated to move beyond this moral sense. But if so, we need to accept the consequences of the abandonment of natural standards for right and wrong forthrightly and recognize, as Nietzsche did, that this may lead us into territory that many of us don’t want to visit.”

I have never seen any proof in Nietzsche’s writing that we are “fated” to move towards “the abandonment of natural standards for right and wrong.” Those under Nietzsche’s magical spell of extremism see biotechnology as confirming his prediction. But if we could break free of that spell, we could see that biotechnology is not likely to bring radical changes in the human condition. If we could give up both our exaggerated hopes and our exaggerated fears, we could begin a more sober deliberation about how we might put our new technological powers into the service of our natural desires.

**SOURCE:** Larry Arnhart, “Human Nature is Here to Stay,” *The New Atlantis*, Number 2, Summer 2003, pp. 65-78.

**premise -**  
something previously stated or assumed as the basis of further argument

**revolt -**  
to rebel, particularly against authority

**Friedrich Nietzsche -**  
(October 15, 1844 – August 25, 1900) nineteenth-century German philologist and philosopher

**hedonism -**  
the philosophy that pleasure is of ultimate importance, the most important pursuit



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Explain how you understand the first paragraph. Can you determine the advocates' and critics' ideas of biotechnology and human nature? Can you find any similarities between their ideas? What is the position of the author?
2. How will biotechnology be limited by technical means and moral values according to the author? What is the position of Leon Kass?
3. What are emotional suffering and psychotropic agents according to the author? Which of them can help us to solve real social problems?
4. Explain what, according to the author, desire is. What did the author write about desire? The author says that "human beings have a desire to live". What do you think about it? Do you agree with the statement? Present your arguments.
5. What are the differences or similarities between human desire and animal desire? What did the author emphasize speaking about human desire? Can biotechnology change our desire? What can you say about the following statement: "Biotechnology is also an expression of our natural desire for practical arts?" Do we use biotechnology in order to abolish our desires?
6. How do you understand such notions as: exaggerated optimism and exaggerated pessimism? Does the author agree with Frances Bacon ("New Atlantis")? Why did he consider "New Atlantis" to be utopian? Explain the main points presented in the text.
7. When was "Brave New World" published? What is this work about? Are there any pessimistic ideas in it? What is the author's idea on life in "Brave New World"?
8. What is the author's idea on Bacon's optimism and Huxley's pessimism? How do you understand Silver's theory of biotechnology? Can you find similarity between Silver's and Stock's ideas? What ideas does Frances Fukuyama adhere to? Does he accept the ideas of Silver and Stock?
9. How do you understand the following expression of Fukuyama: "human moral sense is rooted in human nature" and of Nietzsche: "we are fated to move beyond this moral sense"?
10. What are the main ideas of the author? Do the issues discussed in the text correspond to our reality? Can you bring any examples from real life?

**REVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Analyze the concepts presented in this chapter. What similarities and differences are there in the texts of Charles Darwin, Charles Rubin and Larry Arnhart? How do the authors interpret the role of science and scientific approaches to human nature?
2. Do you accept the deterministic approach towards human nature? Present your arguments. How can education and culture influence human behavior?
3. Write an argumentative essay on the role of education, culture, religion, ethics, science and technology in human development. What is your attitude towards the progress of civilization (optimistic or pessimistic)?

**ADDITIONAL READING:**

- Darwinian Conservatism by Larry Arnhart,  
<http://darwinianconservatism.blogspot.com/>
- Professor of Political Science in Northern Illinois University,  
<http://darwinianconservatism.blogspot.com/2005/09/about-author.html>
- Human Nature is Here to Stay, Larry Arnhart,  
[www.thenewatlantis.com/archive/2/TNA02-Arnhart.pdf](http://www.thenewatlantis.com/archive/2/TNA02-Arnhart.pdf)
- What biology can and cannot tell us., Larry Arnhart,  
[www.springerlink.com/index/N06Q54X34489649Q.pdf](http://www.springerlink.com/index/N06Q54X34489649Q.pdf)

Kai Wu was editor in chief of the SciTech from its founding until last May, when the college adventure ended. He's now a wage-slave in New York City, where his Cornell degree is used to edit science books and chide academics for their lack of clarity and concision. Nevertheless, he reminds our faithful readers that, as was mentioned, no slave society endures forever.

## OUT OF CONTEXT, OUT OF CONTENT: SCIENCE AND HUMAN NATURE

The social and behavioral sciences should be seriously studied, not only for their **intrinsic** interest, but so that the student can be made quite aware of exactly how little they have to say about the problems of man and society that really matter.

-Noam Chomsky

Every mature field of science has its unifying idea, yet some unifying ideas are so powerful that they extend their influence beyond their field of origin. Evolution is such an idea, and second only to atomic theory in importance. Darwin's **seminal** work not only revolutionized biology, but affected almost all spheres of human thought. To use the terminology of the late philosopher **Thomas Kuhn**, evolution brought about one of the greatest **paradigm** shifts in human history. The other great scientific achievement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Maxwell's equations, pales by comparison of its direct impact on humanity.

Evolution dealt a particularly powerful blow to the religions, philosophies and world-views of many societies around the globe. No longer was it tenable to view humanity as separate or superior to the natural world. The geological and physiological evidence for our primate origins was very strong in Darwin's time, and with the advances of molecular biology, anthropology, and astronomy a century later, our **humble** origins have been firmly established. We are but one young branch in the wondrous and ancient tree of life.

What, then, can evolutionary theory tell us about ourselves, surely one of the most interesting and urgent questions? Since the mind is seated in the brain, and the brain is physical and organic, it must have been subject to the same overall processes of natural selection as any other product of evolution, i.e. its present form developed as an adaptation to the environment. It must have aided in our ancestor's ability to survive to have **endured** through the ages. Thus some biologists and social scientists, representing **hybrid** fields such as sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, hold that we can fruitfully analyze human behavior within the framework of evolutionary principles, as is done for other animals.

E.O. Wilson, the famed naturalist and writer of the controversial and definitive books *Sociobiology* and *On Human Nature*, greatly expounded the sociobiological **approach** to understanding humanity. He begins the latter work with a discussion of biological attributes

**intrinsic** -  
innate, inherent, inseparable  
from the thing itself, essential

**seminal** -  
highly influential, especially  
in some original way, and  
providing a basis for future  
development or research

**Thomas Kuhn** -  
(July 18, 1922 – June 17,  
1996) American intellectual  
who wrote extensively on  
the history of science and  
developed several important  
notions in the philosophy of  
science

**paradigm** -  
example serving as a model or  
pattern

**humble** -  
low in rank, quality, or station

**endure** -  
continue or carry on with  
something, despite obstacles or  
hardships

**hybrid** -  
offspring resulting from cross-  
breeding different entities

**approach** -  
a way of dealing with a matter

and behaviors common to all human beings and societies (such as language acquisition and incest taboos), along with evidence for genetically transmitted tendencies in behavior, as revealed through twin studies. Explanations for what we observe are correlated with what we know about early prehistoric human existence, and by their evolutionary fitness value. So, for example, we find that most cultures have an **insular** and self-important view of themselves, readily dividing the world into friends and enemies; a result consistent with the localized social structure of hunter-gatherers, by far the oldest social organization for humans. Another example would be how the superiority in strength and speed of males versus females, on average, is reflected in social roles adopted, even in some remarkably **egalitarian** cultures such as the !Kung bushmen of the Kalahari, who raise their male and female children in identical manners. Without any significant differences in upbringing, sex roles still emerge in time: men tend to hunt and roam afar, while women take responsibility for more **sedentary** tasks.

After considerable discussion of the biological heritage and corresponding biological constraints on individuals and society, Wilson goes on to analyze four significant features of humanity: aggression, sex, **altruism**, and religion, using supposedly universal traits to deduce what our ultimate nature might be. Perhaps in a depressingly predictable fashion, he observes that we are innately aggressive, sexually selfish, limited in our altruism, and practice religion for social stability and individual **gratification**.

Throughout Wilson's book and in similar works by others, two principal questions are raised. What is human nature, as evolutionary biology dictates it? And, how far can our nature be changed? But it is interesting to ask if these questions are even appropriate, as several factors complicate the analysis of human beings that do not significantly complicate the analysis of animals and their social structures. Two of these are culture and social context.

The development of human language and consequently culture is among the most significant in the history of life on Earth, for it permitted a new channel for learned behaviors and knowledge to be transmitted from generation to generation. With culture, the social structure of humanity could be modified at incredible speed. Unlike the glacially slow and uncertain manner of Darwinian evolution, cultural change takes place in a Lamarckian fashion whereby changes (or knowledge) can be immediately transmitted to the next generation.

Sociobiologists argue that "...the genes hold culture on a leash." (Wilson, "On Human Nature"). Culture is not infinitely **malleable**, and we can indeed find many common traits in a global survey. But specifying the constraints still leaves enormous regions of uncharted territory where Darwinian evolution can shed no light on human behavior or society. Phenomena such as the economy, complex political structures, the arts, and mass movements such as revolutions do not yield to analyses of their genetic fitness. The many phenomena of culture and advanced civilization are beyond the realms of biology to sensibly explain or predict.

In his famous work *The Two Cultures*, C.P. Snow observed that the physical sciences possess an internal discipline lacking in the social sciences and humanities, even if the latter use the tools of the former. The physical and natural sciences have Nature as both taskmaster and fixed subject matter, and it is difficult to propagate experimental error for very long before other scientists take notice. The social sciences often have no such discipline and thus are inherently less rigorous in weeding out falsities; ideas that are popular or enjoy the **patronage** of society's powerful can survive regardless of their factual merit or lack thereof. Unpopular ideas, no matter their merit, are more easily ignored than in the physical sciences, where concrete consequences result. You cannot design a rocket without accounting for gravity, but you can run an economy or propose an ideology without accounting for reality or even historical facts (such as the lack of a single historical example of a country developing successfully through free trade). Without a reality or context check by an agent outside of human existence, there is much greater margin for biased and incomplete sampling in the social sciences.

**insular** -  
inward looking; separate or  
isolated from its surroundings

**egalitarian** -  
characterized by social equality  
and equal rights for all people

**sedentary** -  
not moving; staying in the  
vicinity

**altruism** -  
regard for others, both natural  
and moral; devotion to the  
interests of others; brotherly  
kindness

**gratification** -  
that which affords pleasure;  
satisfaction; enjoyment;  
fruition; delight

**malleable** -  
flexible, liable to change

**patronage** -  
the act of providing approval  
and support; backing;  
championship

Analyzing the analyses of sociobiologists reveals this tendency rather clearly. Wilson did not, for example, try to explain friendship or popular struggles in evolutionary terms. Why make friends at all in the social calculus of human relations, when it would clearly benefit our genes' **perpetuation** to **ally** with family and relatives alone? Why is there a persistent, undying tendency for human beings to assert their independence and win their freedom, despite seemingly hopeless odds and **vicious** oppression? No slave society has lasted long before internal corruption, as Wilson notes in his book, yet he does not dwell on this fascinating and inspiring human trait to be free. Furthermore, why art, music, literature? Of what benefit are they to genetic fitness? Creativity is in fact very useful to survival, but again it is seldom in the samples of the sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists.

In this light, it is not surprising that so much of what passes for objective and scientific analysis of human society are little more than justifications and **alibis** for the existing social structures and institutions. Society did not always have as its canon individual material gain at the expense of community, but we can always interpret human nature as demanding nothing else in life, if we wish to. To focus on aggression, sex, and selfish altruism is convenient, but neither complete nor honest. In Wilson's book alone, Marxism, communism and socialism are all seen as counter to "human nature", but it is never asked if our own system of predatory industrial-state capitalism is **congruent** with human nature.

Other logical and knowledge flaws abound with current biological and evolutionary inquiries into human nature. **Stephen Jay Gould**, for example, points out that if aggression is really an innate feature of humanity, we should always see it expressed as continually warlike behavior. But, in fact, cultures change in their attitudes towards violence, sometimes dramatically in as short a time as a single generation. Our understanding of evolution is also far from complete, for there is much evidence to support the importance of cooperative, not competitive, evolutionary mechanisms, particularly in symbiotic relationships. The modern cell is an aggregate of older units that once lived independently (the cellular organelles mitochondria have separate DNA, for example), and it seems that complex multicellular life could not have arisen if simpler units had not joined forces. If and when cooperation is given its rightful importance in evolution, we can expect the focus of "human nature" studies to shift accordingly to more optimistic visions.

Biology may be ready to take the first steps at defining "human nature," but little more. Too often, the analyses fail to examine the depth and variety of humanity and, while making the pretense of objective analysis, slip into producing alibis for the prevailing culture. Meanwhile, the problems of man and society that matter, such as the fair and efficient distribution of resources, sustainable development, and the creation of just and meaningful work and societies, can find no solution in simplistic evolutionary analyses. We should cease rationalizing and begin questioning our assumptions of ourselves, and a more complete knowledge of history would be a prerequisite to self-inquiry. To understand our own nature might never be an easy endeavor, but with immense global problems of poverty and pollution already present and growing, it may very well be essential to our survival.

**perpetuation -**

the act of prolonging existence, of keeping something alive or active

**ally -**

unite

**vicious -**

evil, immoral or depraved

**alibi -**

plea or mode of defense under which a person on trial for a crime proves or attempts to prove that he was in another place when the alleged act was committed

**congruent -**

corresponding in character

**Stephen Jay Gould -**

(September 10, 1941 – May 20, 2002) American paleontologist, evolutionary biologist, and historian of science

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you determine the great scientific achievements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that had an impact upon mankind and human nature in general?
2. Explain the first statement by Noam Chomsky? Does science have a negative impact on human nature?
3. What do you think about the author's point that every scientific sphere combines different theories? What can you say about evolution? Can you explain the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution on the system of thought? Can the theory of evolution tell us about our history?
4. What is Wilson's book "Sociobiology and On Human Nature" about? What can you say about his discussion on the biological heritage?
5. Describe and explain four significant features of humanity which were analyzed by Wilson? What are the main questions raised by Wilson and other scientists?
6. What is a new channel for knowledge to be imparted to the next generation? Which aspect could modify the social structure with incredible speed?
7. How do you understand Wilson's statement about Human Nature: "genes hold culture on a leash"? What is the role of culture according to Wilson and other sociobiologists?
8. What is the Snow's main argument in his famous work "Two Cultures"? How did he compare the natural sciences and social sciences?
9. How do you understand Gould's ideas? How does he describe culture? Do you agree with him? Present your arguments.
10. What are the main arguments of sociobiologists about human nature? Do you agree with them?

**COMPARISON QUESTIONS:**

1. Find the similarities and differences in the texts presented in this chapter. In all of them the scientific approach to human nature is described. What can you say about each particular text? What method of teaching do you find more realistic and applicable? What arguments on human nature do sociobiologists bring?
2. Do you agree with the main ideas presented in the chapter? Present your own arguments. Which ideas do you accept and why?
3. What is a weak point of the 'scientific approach' towards human nature?

**ADDITIONAL READING:**

- Science and Human Nature, Kai Wu, <http://www.rso.cornell.edu/scitech/archive/96fal/scihu.html>
- Chinese Science and Medicine, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~nsivin/ropp.html>
- Blast Furnaces in Song Yuan China, Kai Wu, exploitation of the work of Nature, [www.staff.hum.ku.dk/dbwagner/SongBF/SongBF.pdf](http://www.staff.hum.ku.dk/dbwagner/SongBF/SongBF.pdf)
- Kai Wu, Professor of Physical Chemistry, <http://www.chem.pku.edu.cn/wuk/eindex.html>

## CHAPTER SIX: PSYCHE AND HUMAN NATURE

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### INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the human ego or identity. In other words, the authors look at individuals, their experience of life, and their understanding of themselves. The in-depth examination of individual behavior and experience in this chapter affords a great opportunity for introspection by the readers. All the readings in this chapter in one form or another coalesce around the concept of character or conscience. The readers are urged to analyze the role of character or conscience in human activities.

For instance, Sigmund Freud defines the development of the human conscience from its inception in a child to its full development in an adult. Subsumed under the super-ego of the Freudian system, the conscience is the seat of moral restraint or the “ideal” for the individual and society at large. For Freud, the enlargement and strengthening of the role of the ego is the necessary outcome of psycho-analysis. Human nature is therefore malleable and is subject to development, modification and reform.

Developing this theory further, Erich Fromm argues that character may be understood as a “substitute for missing animal instincts” and is “man’s second nature.” Further, he describes character as a “non-instinctual” expressive system by which humans relate to their habitat. Character, therefore, is determined to a great degree by thought and will that is generated by confrontation with one’s own self and the ‘other than self’. Thus, Fromm finds a double human nature: one based in instinct and the second in character.

In contrast, Nawal El Saadawi questions the creation, definition and the designation of identities which are assigned on the basis of color of skin, big power politics, and/or culture. In analyzing one’s own identity, one encounters the many aspirations, connections and obstacles on the path to self-identification. As a staunch feminist, Saadawi adds to the list of identity issues concerns related to gendered definitions. Gendered definitions complicate already existing identity confusion. Saadawi appeals for bridging dichotomies, diversities, and identities through collaboration in “joint ventures, writing, research,” etc.

Recording the history of his times, Abul Hasan Ali Al-Masudi writes about the many Abbasid caliphs whose character is revealed through their speech and actions. This unveiling of character, conscience, and conflicting desires of the Abbasid caliphs provides an insight into the human psyche and nature. The readers can judge for themselves whether human nature has changed, evolved or developed over the centuries.



Can we shrug off poor or bad behavior as merely an expression of human nature, or can we hold each individual accountable for their actions as well as identify those actions as individual character flaws? If it is the latter then what is the role of human nature in human expression and action?

### OBAN'S MYTHS & LEGENDS: WHY BAT HAS NO FRIENDS

Based on a Native American Indian Legend - retold by Agor

The selected story is based on a Native American Indian Legend taken from Oban's Myths and Legends. People often perceive bat as an unusual or ambiguous creature. Scientists have puzzled for centuries whether bats are avians, or flying mice, monkeys, or something else, but today bats are considered as flying animals in the order of Chiroptera. In the story the ambiguous nature of the bat transformed into duplicity in its character. Human beings in their turn are pushed into a situation where they end up acting duplicitously. The following story continues the 'nature' and nurture, 'hard wired' and 'blank slate' discussion. At the same time it focuses on the somewhat new theme as to whether there is a relationship between personality and outer appearance. As you read, think about the moral of the story and consider personality, human nature, conflicting situations etc.

Many years ago there was a great war between the birds and the animals.

No-one knows why. It just happened.

The creatures with wings flew to the battle site and made their camp. Those who had legs walked there.

Bat joined the birds. "Hey, I've got wings. So I must be a bird. And there are more of us, so we should win!"

The first battle was long and hard, but gradually slashing claws and tearing teeth began to win over beaks and wings.

Bat could see that the birds were losing so he hid behind a bush.

When the battle was over the animals walked back towards their camp.

"Man, did we kick those birds' butts or what?" said Buffalo, spitting out a few feathers.

"Yeah! We kicked their butts" cried Bat in his high pitched voice

The animals stopped. "What are you doing with us?" shouted Beaver, slapping the ground hard with his big, flat tail. "You've got wings. You're with the other side."

"Yeah, that's right" growled Bear. "And I'm going to eat you!"

"Guys! Guys! Get Real!" said Bat, pointing into his mouth. "When have you ever seen a bird with teeth? Of course I'm one of you!"

"I suppose so," grumbled Bear.

The next day there was to be another battle and Bat walked to the site with the animals. "Let's rip their beaks off!" he yelled.

This time the birds flew as an army with the sun behind them, its bright light blinding the animals. Tearing talons and flapping wings tore into furry bodies. The birds were winning. Again Bat hid behind a bush.

When it was all over and the birds started to fly back to their camp, Bat silently joined them.

"That was a good victory today", said Eagle. "Yeah! We kicked their butts" shouted

Bat. "Hold on" said Crow. "You were with the other side."

"Guys! Guys! Get Real" said Bat. "When have you ever seen an animal with wings like mine? Of course I'm one of you." He flapped his wings vigorously.

"I suppose so", said Eagle.

And that's how it was in each battle.

When Bat saw that the side he was on was going to lose, he pretended he was on the other side.

Eventually the birds and animals got tired of fighting each other. They all came together while their Chiefs held a council of truce to decide how things would be settled.

It was very difficult for Bat to pretend that he belonged to both sides. The Chiefs knew what he had done.

"Friends should always help each other and not pretend to be one thing when they are another" they said.

"Bat has wings, but he is not a bird. He has teeth, but he is not an animal. From now on, Bat will only fly at night when other birds are asleep and the animals are hunting."

All the creatures nodded in agreement.

"You will always be alone, Bat. You will never have a friend among the creatures that fly or from those that walk!"

And that's why Bat always flies at night and doesn't have any friends

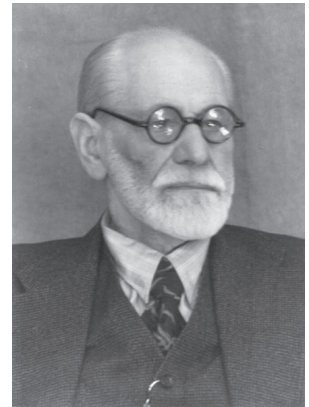
SOURCE : By Word Design Interactive Pty Ltd, <http://www.planetozkids.com/oban/whybat2.htm>

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is there a relationship between personality and the outer appearance of human being? Does outer appearance influence personality?
2. What do you understand by 'a duplicitous action'?
3. Do you think people are born deceptive or that they learn cheating through their life experience?
4. Do you think people cheat to overcome certain situations or cheating for them is an inherited behavior that is transmitted from a mother to a child?
5. How can you better judge the bat's action? Does acting this way depend greatly on the situation, on its personality or might it be on its outer appearance?
6. In what situations do human beings normally cheat?
7. What would you suggest to people in the kind of situation that the Bat was in?
8. Do you think the bat was really not able to decide which side it was on or was it simply trying to cheat? What would the bat have gained if the two sides had not revealed the bat's cheating?
9. Which kinds of traits are acquired and which are inherited by human beings?

## SIGMUND FREUD THE EGO AND THE ID<sup>1</sup>

Sigmund Freud was born on 6 May 1856 in the small town of Freiberg in what is now the Czech Republic, which was at that moment a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and died on 23 September 1939. The status of Sigmund Freud as the father of psychoanalysis is based on his achievement in presenting a radically new vision of the workings of the human mind. Freud created a method for investigating the unconscious mind – all the things that happen in our heads of which we are not aware – via the technique of “free association,” a method of simply giving an immediate response to a word or phrase, without thinking. For Freud, psychoanalysis was based on the “talking cure,” where a patient would be cured through discussions with the psychoanalyst, leading to self-understanding. Freud first used the term “psychoanalysis” to describe this process in 1896. He soon began to publish monographs on various aspects of the human mind and behavior: *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1899]; *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* [1901]; *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* [1905], and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* [1905]. Freud continued to explore the philosophical and sociological aspects of the psychoanalytic approach that he had created. He wrote such works as *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* [1910], *Totem and Taboo* [1913], *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920], *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* [1921] and *The Ego and the Id* [1923], *Civilisation and its Discontents* [1929], and *Moses and Monotheism* [1939].



**Pathological** research has directed our interest too exclusively to the repressed. We should like to learn more about the ego, now that we know that it, too, can be unconscious in the proper sense of the word. Hitherto the only guide we have had during our investigations has been the distinguishing mark of being **conscious** (Cs.) or unconscious (Ucs.); we have finally come to see how **ambiguous** this can be.

Now all our knowledge is **invariably** bound up with consciousness. We can come to know even the Ucs. only by making it conscious. But stop, how is that possible? What does it mean when we say ‘making something conscious’? How can that come about?

We already know the point from which we have to start in this connection. We have said that consciousness is the *surface* of the mental apparatus; that is, we have ascribed it as a function to a system which is **spatially** the first one reached from the external world – and spatially not only in the functional sense but, on this occasion, also in the sense of anatomical **dissection**. Our investigations, too, must take this perceiving surface as a starting-point.

All perceptions which are received from without (sense-perceptions) and from within, what we call sensations and feelings – are Cs. from the start. But what about those internal processes which we may – roughly and inexactly – sum up under the

**pathological -**

of, relating to, or manifesting behaviour that is habitual, maladaptive, and compulsive

**conscious -**

having an awareness of one's environment and one's own existence, sensations, and thoughts

**ambiguous -**

open to more than one interpretation

**invariably -**

in a constant, not changing manner

**spatially -**

of, relating to, involving, or having the nature of space

**dissection -**

detailed examination or analysis

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Germany by Joan Riviere, revised and edited by James Strachey, W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London, 1989.

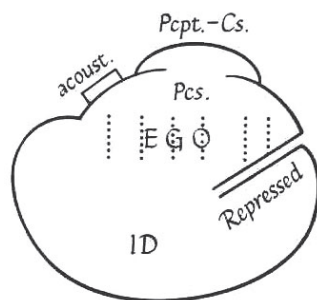


Fig. 1.

name of thought processes? They represent displacements of mental energy which are effected somewhere in the interior of the apparatus as this energy proceeds on its way towards action. Do they advance to the surface, which causes consciousness to be generated? Or does consciousness make its way to them? This is clearly one of the difficulties that arise when one begins to take the spatial or 'topographical' idea of mental life seriously. Both these possibilities are equally unimaginable; there must be a third alternative.

I have already, in another place, suggested that the real difference between a Ucs. and a preconscious (Pcs.) idea (thought) consists in this: that the former is carried out on some material which remains unknown, whereas the latter (the Pcs.) is in addition brought into connection with word-presentations. This is the first attempt to indicate distinguishing marks for the two systems, the Pcs. and the Ucs., other than their relation to consciousness. The question, 'How does a thing become conscious?' would thus be more advantageously stated: 'How does a thing become preconscious?' And the answer would be: 'Through becoming connected with the word-presentations corresponding to it.'

These word-presentations are residues of memories; they were at one time perceptions, and like all **mnemic** residues they can become conscious again. Before we concern ourselves further with their nature, it dawns upon us like a new discovery that only something which has once been a Cs. perception can become conscious, and that anything arising from within (apart from feelings) that seeks to become conscious must try to transform itself into external perceptions (*Pcpt.*): this becomes possible by means of memory-traces.

We think of the mnemic residues as being contained in systems which are directly adjacent to the system *Pcpt.-Cs.*, so that the **cathexes** of those residues can readily extend from within on to the elements of the latter system. We immediately think here of **hallucinations**, and of the fact that the most vivid memory is always distinguishable both from a hallucination and from an external perception; but it will also occur to us at once that when a memory is revived the cathexis remains in the mnemic system, whereas a hallucination, which is not distinguishable from a perception, can arise when the cathexis does not merely spread over from the memory-trace on to the *Pcpt.* element, but passes over to it *entirely*.

Verbal residues are derived primarily from auditory perceptions, so that the system *Pcs.* has, as it were, a special sensory source. The visual components of word-presentations are secondary, acquired through reading, and may, to begin with, be left on one side; so may the motor images of words, which, except with deaf-mutes, play the part of auxiliary indications. In essence a word is, after all, the mnemic residue of a word that has been heard.

We must not be led, in the interests of simplification perhaps, to forget the importance of optical mnemic residues, when they are of *things*, or to deny that it is possible for thought-processes to become conscious through a reversion to visual residues, and that in many people this seems to be the favoured method. The study of dreams and of preconscious fantasies as shown in Varendonck's observations can give us an idea of the special character of this visual thinking. We learn that what becomes conscious in it is as a rule only the concrete subject-matter of the thought, and that the relations between the various elements of this subject-matter, which is what specially characterizes thoughts, cannot be given visual expression. Thinking in pictures is, therefore, only a very incomplete form of becoming conscious. In some way, too, it stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words, and it is unquestionably older than the latter both **ontogenetically** and **phylogenetically**.

#### **mnemic -**

related to memory

#### **cathexis -**

concentration of emotional energy on an object or idea

#### **hallucination -**

perception of visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory experiences without an external stimulus and with a compelling sense of their reality, usually resulting from a mental disorder or as a response to a drug

#### **ontogenetically -**

of or pertaining to the origin and development of an individual organism from embryo to adult

#### **phylogenetically -**

relating to evolutionary development or the race history of a type of organism

To return to our argument: if, therefore, this is the way in which something that is in itself unconscious becomes preconscious, the question how we make something that is repressed (pre)conscious would be answered as follows. It is done by supplying *Pcs.* intermediate links through the work of analysis. Consciousness remains where it is, therefore; but, on the other hand, the *Ucs.* do not rise into the *Cs.*

Whereas the relation of *external* perceptions to the ego is quite **perspicuous**, that of *internal* perceptions to the ego requires special investigation. It gives rise once more to a doubt whether we are really right in referring the whole of consciousness to the single superficial system *Pcpt-Cs.*

Internal perceptions yield sensations of processes arising in the most diverse and certainly also in the deepest **strata** of the mental apparatus. Very little is known about these sensations and feelings; those belonging to the pleasure-displeasure series may still be regarded as the best examples of them. They are more **primordial**, more elementary, than perceptions arising externally and they can come about even when consciousness is clouded. I have elsewhere expressed my views about their greater economic significance and the metapsychological reasons for this. These sensations are **multilocular**, like external perceptions; they may come from different places simultaneously and may thus have different or even opposite qualities.

Sensations of a pleasurable nature have not anything inherently **impelling** about them, whereas non-pleasurable ones have it in the highest degree. The latter impel towards change, towards discharge, and that is why we interpret displeasure as implying a heightening and pleasure a lowering of energetic cathexis. Let us call what becomes conscious as pleasure and displeasure a quantitative and qualitative 'something' in the course of mental events; the question then is whether this 'something' can become conscious in the place where it is, or whether it must first be transmitted to the system *Pcpt.*

Clinical experience decides for the latter. It shows us that this 'something' behaves like a repressed impulse. It can exert driving force without the ego noticing the **compulsion**. Not until there is resistance to the compulsion, a hold-up in the discharge reaction, does the 'something' at once become conscious as displeasure. In the same way that tensions arising from physical needs can remain unconscious, so also can pain – a thing intermediate between external and internal perception, which behaves like an internal perception even when its source is in the external world. It remains true, therefore, that sensations and feelings, too, only become conscious through reaching the system *Pcpt.*; if the way forward is barred, they do not come into being as sensations, although the 'something' that corresponds to them in the course of excitation is the same as if they did. We then come to speak, in a condensed and not entirely correct manner, of 'unconscious feelings', keeping up an analogy with unconscious ideas which is not altogether justifiable. Actually the difference is that, whereas with *Ucs. ideas* connecting links must be created before



**THE KISS**

Auguste Rodin, 1886-98, marble

- perspicuous** -  
clearly expressed or presented;  
easy to understand
- strata** -  
few of a number of layers,  
levels, or divisions in an  
organized system
- primordial** -  
primary or fundamental
- multilocular** -  
having or consisting of many  
small compartments or cavities
- impel** -  
drive forward; propel
- compulsion** -  
an irresistible impulse to act,  
regardless of the rationality of  
the motivation

they can be brought into the *Cs.*, with *feelings*, which are themselves transmitted directly, this does not occur. In other words: the distinction between *Cs.* and *Pcs.* has no meaning where feelings are concerned; the *Pcs.* here drops out – and feelings are either conscious or unconscious. Even when they are attached to word-presentations, their becoming conscious is not due to that circumstance, but they become so directly.

The part played by word-presentations now becomes perfectly clear. By their **interposition** internal thought-processes are made into perceptions. It is like a demonstration of the theorem that all knowledge has its origin in external perception. When a **hypercathexis** of the process of thinking takes place, thoughts are *actually* perceived – as if they came from without – and are consequently held to be true.

After this clarifying of the relations between external and internal perception and the superficial system *Pcpt-Cs.*, we can go on to work out our idea of the ego. It starts out, as we see, from the system *Pcpt.*, which is its nucleus, and begins by embracing the *Pcs.*, which is adjacent to the mnemonic residues. But, as we have learnt, the ego is also unconscious.

Now I think we shall gain a great deal by following the suggestion of a writer who, from personal motives, vainly asserts that he has nothing to do with the **rigors** of pure science. I am speaking of **Georg Groddeck**, who is never tired of insisting that what we call our ego behaves essentially passively in life, and that, as he expresses it, we are 'lived' by unknown and uncontrollable forces. We have all had impressions of the same kind, even though they may not have overwhelmed us to the exclusion of all others, and we need feel no hesitation in finding a place for Groddeck's discovery in the structure of science. I propose to take it into account by calling the entity which starts out from the system *Pcpt.* and begins by being *Pcs.* the 'ego', and by following Groddeck in calling the other part of the mind, into which this entity extends and which behaves as though it were *Ucs.*, the 'id'.<sup>2</sup>

We shall soon see whether we can derive any advantage from this view for purposes either of description or of understanding. We shall now look upon an individual as a psychical id, unknown and unconscious, upon whose surface rests the ego, developed from its nucleus the *Pcpt.* system. If we make an effort to represent this **pictorially**, we may add that the ego does not completely envelop the id, but only does so to the extent to which the system *Pcpt.* forms its [the ego's] surface, more or less as the **germinal** disc rests upon the **ovum**. The ego is not sharply separated from the id; its lower portion merges into it.

But the repressed merges into the id as well, and is merely a part of it. The repressed is only cut off sharply from the ego by the resistances of repression; it can communicate with the ego through the id. We at once realize that almost all the lines of **demarcation** we have drawn at the instigation of pathology relate only to the superficial strata of the mental apparatus – the only ones known to us. The state of things which we have been describing can be represented diagrammatically; though it must be remarked that the form chosen has no pretensions to any special applicability, but is merely intended to serve for purposes of exposition.

We might add, perhaps, that the ego wears a 'cap of hearing' – on one side only, as we learn from cerebral anatomy. It might be said to wear it awry.

It is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the

**interposition -**

the action of interjecting an action or remark that interrupts

**hypercathexis -**

in psychoanalysis, an individual's excessive investment of libido or interest in an object, person, or idea

**rigours -**

allowing no deviation from a standard

**Groddeck, Georg -**

1866–1934, German psychoanalyst, regarded as Freudian dissident

**pictorially -**

illustrated by pictures; forming pictures; representing with the clearness of a picture

**germinal -**

of, relating to, or having the nature of a germ cell

**ovum -**

the female reproductive cell or gamete of animals; egg

<sup>2</sup> Groddeck himself no doubt followed the example of Nietzsche, who habitually used this grammatical term for whatever in our nature is impersonal and, so to speak, subject to natural law.



direct influence of the external world through the medium of the *Pcpt-Cs.*; in a sense it is an extension of the surface-differentiation. Moreover, the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavors to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions. All this falls into line with popular distinctions which we are all familiar with; at the same time, however, it is only to be regarded as holding good on the average or 'ideally'.

The functional importance of the ego is manifested in the fact that normally control over the approaches to **motility** devolves upon it. Thus, in its relation to the id, it is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed forces. The analogy may be carried a little further. Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own.

Another factor, besides the influence of the system *Pcpt.*, seems to have played a part in bringing about the formation of the ego and its differentiation from the id. A person's own body, and above all its surface, is a place from which both external and internal perceptions may spring. It is seen like any other object, but to the *touch* it yields two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal perception. Psycho-physiology has fully discussed the manner in which a person's own body attains its special position among other objects in the world of perception. Pain, too, seems to play a part in the process, and the way in which we gain new knowledge of our organs during painful illnesses is perhaps a model of the way by which in general we arrive at the idea of our body.

The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface. If we wish to find an anatomical analogy for it we can best identify it with the '**cortical homunculus**' of the anatomists, which stands on its head in the cortex, sticks up its heels, faces backwards and, as we know, has its speech-area on the left-hand side.

The relation of the ego to consciousness has been entered into repeatedly; yet there are some important facts in this connection which remain to be described here. Accustomed as we are to taking our social or ethical scale of values along with us wherever we go, we feel no surprise at hearing that the scene of the activities of the lower passions is in the unconscious; we expect, moreover, that the higher any mental function ranks in our scale of values the more easily it will find access to consciousness assured to it. Here, however, psycho-analytic experience disappoints us. On the one hand, we have evidence that even subtle and difficult intellectual operations which ordinarily require strenuous reflection can equally be carried out pre-consciously

**demarcation -**

a separation; a distinction

**motility -**

of or relating to mental imagery that arises primarily from sensations of bodily movement and position rather than from visual or auditory sensations

**cortical -**

of, or relating, to the outer layer of an internal organ or body structure, as of the kidney or adrenal gland, or the outer layer of gray matter that covers the surface of the cerebral hemisphere

**homunculus -**

a miniature adult that in the theory of preformation was held to inhabit the germ cell and to produce a mature individual merely by an increase in size

and without coming into consciousness. Instances of this are quite incontestable; they may occur, for example, during the state of sleep, as is shown when someone finds, immediately after waking, that he knows the solution to a difficult mathematical or other problem with which he had been wrestling in vain the day before.

There is another phenomenon, however, which is far stranger. In our analyses we discover that there are people in whom the faculties of self-criticism and conscience – mental activities, that is, that rank as extremely high ones – are unconscious and unconsciously produce effects of the greatest importance; the example of resistance remaining unconscious during analysis is therefore by no means unique. But this new discovery, which compels us, in spite of our better critical judgment, to speak of an ‘unconscious sense of guilt’, **bewilders** us far more than the other and sets us fresh problems, especially when we gradually come to see that in a great number of neuroses an unconscious sense of guilt of this kind plays a decisive economic part and puts the most powerful obstacles in the way of recovery. If we come back once more to our scale of values, we shall have to say that not only what is lowest but also what is highest in the ego can be unconscious. It is as if we were thus supplied with a proof of what we have just asserted of the conscious ego: that it is first and foremost a body-ego.

## THE DISSECTION OF THE PSYCHICAL PERSONALITY

The situation in which we find ourselves at the beginning of our enquiry may be expected itself to point the way for us. We wish to make the ego the matter of our enquiry, our very own ego. But is that possible? After all, the ego is in its very essence a subject; how can it be made into an object? Well, there is no doubt that it can be. The ego can take itself as an object, can treat itself like other objects, can observe itself, criticize itself, and do Heaven knows what with itself. In this, one part of the ego is setting itself over against the rest. So the ego can be split; it splits itself during a number of its functions – temporarily at least. Its parts can come together again afterwards. That is not exactly a novelty, though it may perhaps be putting an unusual emphasis on what is generally known. On the other hand, we are familiar with the notion that pathology, by making things larger and coarser, can draw our attention to normal conditions which would otherwise have escaped us. Where it points to a breach or a rent, there may normally be an articulation present. If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes apart along its lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal’s structure. Mental patients are split and broken structures of this same kind. Even we cannot withhold from them something of the **reverential awe** which peoples of the past felt for the insane. They have turned away from external reality, but for that very reason they know more about internal, psychical reality and can reveal a number of things to us that would otherwise be inaccessible to us. We describe one group of these patients as suffering from **delusions** of being observed. They complain to us that **perpetually**, and down to their most intimate actions, they are being molested by the observation of unknown powers – presumably persons – and that in hallucinations they hear these persons reporting the outcome of their observation: ‘now he’s going to say this, now he’s dressing to go out’ and so on. Observation of this sort is not yet the same thing as persecution, but it is not far from it; it presupposes that people

- bewilder** -  
to lead into perplexity or  
confusion
- reverential** -  
feeling or manifesting  
veneration
- awe** -  
the emotion inspired by  
something dreadful and sublime
- delusion** -  
a false belief or opinion
- perpetually** -  
seemingly uninterrupted

distrust them, and expect to catch them carrying out forbidden actions for which they would be punished. How would it be if these insane people were right, if in each of us there is present in his ego an agency like this which observes and threatens to punish, and which in them has merely become sharply divided from their ego and mistakenly displaced into external reality?

I cannot tell whether the same thing will happen to you as to me. Ever since, under the powerful impression of this clinical picture, I formed the idea that the separation of the observing agency from the rest of the ego might be a regular feature of the ego's structure, that idea has never left me, and I was driven to investigate the further characteristics and connections of the agency which was thus separated off. The next step is quickly taken. The content of the delusions of being observed already suggests that the observing is only a preparation for judging and punishing, and we accordingly guess that another function of this agency must be what we call our conscience. There is scarcely anything else in us that we so regularly separate from our ego and so easily set over against it as precisely our conscience. I feel an inclination to do something that I think will give me pleasure, but I abandon it on the ground that my conscience does not allow it. Or I have let myself be persuaded by too great an expectation of pleasure into doing something to which the voice of conscience has objected and after the deed my conscience punishes me with distressing reproaches and causes me to feel remorse for the deed, I might simply say that the special agency which I am beginning to distinguish in the ego is conscience. But it is more prudent to keep the agency as something independent and to suppose that conscience is one of its functions and that self-observation, which is an essential preliminary to the judging activity of conscience, is another of them. And since when we recognize that something has a separate existence we give it a name of its own, from this time forward I will describe this agency in the ego as the '*super-ego*'.

I am now prepared to hear you ask me **scornfully** whether our ego-psychology comes down to nothing more than taking commonly used abstractions literally and in a crude sense, and transforming them from concepts into things – by which not much would be gained. To this I would reply that in ego-psychology it will be difficult to escape what is universally known; it will rather be a question of new ways of looking at things and new ways of arranging them than of new discoveries. So hold to your **contemptuous** criticism for the time being and await further explanations. The facts of pathology give our efforts a background that you would look for in vain in popular psychology. So I will proceed.

Hardly have we familiarized ourselves with the idea of a super-ego like this which enjoys a certain degree of autonomy, follows its own intentions and is independent of the ego for its supply of energy, than a clinical picture forces itself on our notice which throws a striking light on the **severity** of this agency and indeed its cruelty, and on its changing relations to the ego. I am thinking of the condition of **melancholia**, or, more precisely, of melancholic attacks, which you too will have heard plenty about, even if

**scornfully -**

full of contempt or disdain  
felt toward a person or object  
considered despicable or  
unworthy

**contemptuous -**

expressing extreme feeling or  
attitude of regarding someone  
or something as inferior, base,  
or worthless

**severity -**

excessive sternness

**melancholia -**

mental disorder characterised  
by severe depression, guilt,  
hopelessness, and withdrawal

you are not psychiatrists. The most striking feature of this illness, of whose causation and mechanism we know much too little, is the way in which the super-ego – ‘conscience’, you may call it, quietly – treats the ego. While a melancholic can, like other people, show a greater or lesser degree of severity to himself in his healthy periods, during a melancholic attack his super-ego becomes over-severe, abuses the poor ego, humiliates it and ill-treats it, threatens it with the direst punishments, reproaches it for actions in the remotest past which had been taken lightly at the time – as though it had spent the whole interval in collecting accusations and had only been waiting for its present access of strength in order to bring them up and make a **condemnatory** judgment on their basis. The super-ego applies the strictest moral standard to the helpless ego which is at its mercy; in general it represents the claims of morality, and we realize all at once that our moral sense of guilt is the expression of the tension between the ego and the super-ego. It is a most remarkable experience to see morality, which is supposed to have been given us by God and thus deeply implanted in us, functioning [in these patients] as a periodic phenomenon. For after a certain number of months the whole moral **fuss** is over, the criticism of the super-ego is silent, the ego is rehabilitated and again enjoys all the rights of man till the next attack. In some forms of the disease, indeed, something of a contrary sort occurs in the intervals, the ego finds itself in a blissful state of **intoxication**, it celebrates a triumph, as though the super-ego had lost all its strength or had melted into the ego; and this liberated, manic ego permits itself a truly uninhibited satisfaction of all its appetites. Here are happenings rich in unsolved riddles!

No doubt you will expect me to give you more than a mere illustration when I inform you that we have found out all kinds of things about the formation of the superego – that is to say, about the origin of conscience. Following a well-known pronouncement of Kant’s which couples the conscience within us with the **starry** Heavens, a pious man might well be tempted to honor these two things as the masterpieces of creation. The stars are indeed magnificent, but as regards conscience God has done an uneven and careless piece of work, for a large majority of men have brought along with them only a modest amount of it or scarcely enough to be worth mentioning. We are far from overlooking the portion of psychological truth that is contained in the **assertion** that conscience is of divine origin; but the thesis needs interpretation. Even if conscience is something ‘within us’, yet it is not so from the first. In this it is a real contrast to sexual life, which is in fact there from the beginning of life and not only a later addition. But, as is well known, young children are amoral and possess no internal **inhibitions** against their impulses striving for pleasure. The part which is later taken on by the super-ego is played, to begin with, by an external power, by parental authority. Parental influence governs the child by offering proofs of love and by threatening punishments which are signs to the child of loss of love and are bound to be feared on their own account. This realistic anxiety is the **precursor** of the later moral anxiety. So long as it is dominant there is no need to talk of a super-ego and of a conscience. It is only subsequently that the secondary situation develops (which we are all too ready to regard as the normal one), where the external restraint is internalized and the super-ego takes the place of the parental agency and observes, directs and threatens the ego in exactly the same way as earlier the parents did with the child....

But let us return to the super-ego. We have **allotted** it the functions of self-observation, of conscience and of [maintaining] the ideal. It follows from what we have said about its origin that it presupposes an immensely important biological fact and a fateful psychological one: namely, the human child’s long dependence on its parents

- condemnatory** -  
express strong disapproval of
- fuss** -  
needlessly nervous or useless activity; commotion
- intoxication** -  
stupefaction or excitement by the action of a chemical substance
- starry** -  
marked or set with stars or star-like objects
- assertion** -  
something declared or stated positively, often with no support or attempt at proof
- inhibition** -  
the conscious or unconscious restraint of a behavioral process, a desire, or an impulse
- precursor** -  
one that precedes another
- allotted** -  
given as a task

and the Oedipus complex, both of which, again, are intimately interconnected. The super-ego is the representative for us of every moral restriction, the advocate of a striving towards perfection – it is, in short, as much as we have been able to grasp psychologically of what is described as the higher side of human life. Since it itself goes back to the influence of parents, educators and so on, we learn still more of its significance if we turn to those who are its sources. As a rule parents and authorities analogous to them follow the precepts of their own super-egos in educating children. Whatever understanding their ego may have come to with their super-ego, they are severe and exacting in educating children. They have forgotten the difficulties of their own childhood and they are glad to be able now to identify themselves fully with their own parents who in the past laid such severe restrictions upon them. Thus a child's super-ego is in fact constructed on the model not of its parents but of its parents' super-ego; the contents which fill it are the same and it becomes the vehicle of tradition and of all the time-resisting judgments of value, which have propagated themselves in this manner from generation to generation. You may easily guess what important assistance taking the superego into account will give us in our understanding of the social behavior of mankind – in the problem of **delinquency**, for instance – and perhaps even what practical hints on education. It seems likely that what are known as materialistic views of history sin in under-estimating this factor. They brush it aside with the remark that human 'ideologies' are nothing other than the product and superstructure of their contemporary economic conditions. That is true, but very probably not the whole truth. Mankind never lives entirely in the present. The past, the tradition of the race and of the people, lives on in the ideologies of the super-ego, and yields only slowly to the influences of the present and to new changes; and so long as it operates through the super-ego it plays a powerful part in human life, independently of economic conditions....

There is no need to discuss what is to be called conscious: it is removed from all doubt. The oldest and best meaning of the word 'unconscious' is the descriptive one; we call a psychical process unconscious whose existence we are obliged to assume – for some such reason as that we infer it from its effects – but of which we know nothing. In that case we have the same relation to it as we have to a psychical process in another person, except that it is in fact one of our own. If we want to be still more correct, we shall **modify** our assertion by saying that we call a process unconscious if we are obliged to assume that it is being activated *at the moment*, though *at the moment* we know nothing about it. This qualification makes us reflect that the majority of conscious processes are conscious only for a short time; very soon they become *latent*, but can easily become conscious again. We might also say that they had become unconscious, if it were at all certain that in the condition of **latency** they are still something psychical. So far we should have learnt nothing new; nor should we have acquired the right to introduce the concept of an unconscious into psychology. But then comes the new observation that we were already able to make in **parapraxes**. In order to explain a slip of the tongue,

**delinquency -**

failure to do what law or duty requires.

**modify -**

to change in form or character; alter

**latency -**

the state or quality of being present or potential but not evident or active

**parapraxes -**

minor errors, such as a slip of the tongue, thought to reveal a repressed motive.

for instance, we find ourselves obliged to assume that the intention to make a particular remark was present in the subject. We infer it with certainty from the interference with his remark which has occurred; but the intention did not put itself through and, was thus unconscious. If, when we subsequently put it before the speaker, he recognizes it as one familiar to him, then it was only temporarily unconscious to him; but if he repudiates it as something foreign to him, then it was permanently unconscious. From this experience we **retrospectively** obtain the right also to pronounce as something unconscious what had been described as latent. A consideration of these dynamic relations permits us now to distinguish two kinds of unconscious – one which is easily, under frequently occurring circumstances, transformed into something conscious, and another with which this transformation is difficult and takes place only subject to a considerable expenditure of effort or possibly never at all. In order to escape the ambiguity as to whether we mean the one or the other unconscious, whether we are using the word in the descriptive or in the dynamic sense, we make use of a **permissible** and simple way out. We call the unconscious which is only latent, and thus easily becomes conscious, the ‘preconscious’ and retain the term ‘unconscious’ for the other. We now have three terms, ‘conscious’, ‘preconscious’ and ‘unconscious’, with which we can get along in our description of mental phenomena. Once again: the preconscious is also unconscious in the purely descriptive sense, but we do not give it that name, except in talking loosely or when we have to make a defense of the existence in mental life of unconscious processes in general.

You will admit, I hope, that so far that is not too bad and allows of convenient handling. Yes, but unluckily the work of psycho-analysis has found itself compelled to use the word ‘unconscious’ in yet another, third, sense, and this may, to be sure, have led to confusion. Under the new and powerful impression of there being an extensive and important field of mental life which is normally withdrawn from the ego’s knowledge so that the processes occurring in it have to be regarded as unconscious in the truly dynamic sense, we have come to understand the term ‘unconscious’ in a **topographical** or systematic sense as well; we have come to speak of a ‘system’ of the preconscious and a ‘system’ of the unconscious, of a conflict between the ego and the system *Ucs.*, and have used the word more and more to denote a mental province rather than a quality of what is mental. The discovery, actually an inconvenient one, that portions of the ego and super-ego as well are unconscious in the dynamic sense, operates at this point as a relief – it makes possible the removal of a complication. We perceive that we have no right to name the mental region that is foreign to the ego ‘the system *Ucs.*’, since the characteristic of being unconscious is not restricted to it. Very well; we will no longer use the term ‘unconscious’ in the systematic sense and we will give what we have hitherto so described a better name and one no longer open to misunderstanding. Following a verbal usage of Nietzsche’s and taking up a suggestion by Georg Groddeck [1923], we will in future call it the ‘id’. This impersonal pronoun seems particularly well suited for expressing the main characteristic of this province of the mind – the fact of its being alien to the ego. The super-ego, the ego and the id – these, then, are the three realms, regions, provinces, into which we divide an individual’s mental apparatus, and with the mutual relations of which we shall be concerned in what follows.

But first a short **interpolation**. I suspect that you feel dissatisfied because the three qualities of the characteristic of consciousness and the three provinces of the mental apparatus do not fall together into three peaceable couples, and you may regard this as in some sense obscuring our findings. I do not think, however, that we should regret it, and we should tell ourselves that we had no right to expect any such smooth

**retrospectively** -  
in a manner contemplative of  
past events

**permissible** -  
permitted; allowable

**topographical** -  
of, relating to, or concerned  
with detailed, precise  
description of a place or region

**interpolation** -  
a message (spoken or written)  
that is introduced or inserted



arrangement. Let me give you an analogy; analogies, it is true, decide nothing, but they can make one feel more at home. I am imagining a country with a landscape of varying configuration – hill-country, plains, and chains of lakes – and with a mixed population: it is inhabited by Germans, **Magyars** and Slovaks, who carry on different activities. Now things might be partitioned in such a way that the Germans, who breed cattle, live in the hill-country, the Magyars, who grow cereals and wine, live in the plains, and the Slovaks, who catch fish and **plait reeds**, live by the lakes. If the **partitioning** could be neat and clear-cut like this, a **Woodrow Wilson** would be delighted by it; it would also be convenient for a lecture in a geography lesson. The probability is, however, that you will find less orderliness and more mixing, if you travel through the region. Germans, Magyars and Slovaks live interspersed all over it; in the hill-country there is agricultural land as well, cattle are bred in the plains too. A few things are naturally as you expected, for fish cannot be caught in the mountains and wine does not grow in the water. Indeed, the picture of the region that you brought with you may on the whole fit the facts; but you will have to put up with **deviations** in the details.

You will not expect me to have much to tell you that is new about the id apart from its new name. It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality; what little we know of it we have learnt from our study of the dream-work and of the construction of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is of a negative character and can be described only as a contrast to the ego. We approach the id with analogies: we call it a chaos, a **cauldron** full of **seething excitations**. We picture it as being open at its end to **somatic** influences, and as there taking up into itself instinctual needs which find their psychical expression in it, but we cannot say in what **substratum**. It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle. The logical laws of thought do not apply in the id, and this is true above all of the law of contradiction. Contrary impulses exist side by side, without canceling each other out or diminishing each other: at the most they may converge to form compromises under the dominating economic pressure towards the discharge of energy. There is nothing in the id that could be compared with negation; and we perceive with surprise an exception to the philosophical theorem that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. There is nothing in the id that corresponds to the idea of time; there is no recognition of the passage of time, and – a thing that is most remarkable and awaits consideration in philosophical thought – no alteration in its mental processes is produced by the passage of time. Wishful impulses which have never passed beyond the id, but impressions, too, which have been sunk into the id by repression, are virtually immortal; after the passage of decades they behave as though they had just occurred. They can only be recognized as belonging to the past, can only lose their importance and be deprived of their cathexis of energy when they have been made conscious by the work of analysis, and it is on this that the therapeutic effect of analytic treatment rests to no small extent.

**Magyar -**

Hungarian

**plait -**

to braid

**reed -**

any of various tall perennial grasses

**partitioning -**

the act of dividing

**Woodrow Wilson -**28<sup>th</sup> President of the United States (1913-1921), whose administration was marked by World War I and the introduction of prohibition.**deviation -**

abnormality; departure from the norm

**cauldron -**

state or situation of great distress or unrest felt to resemble a boiling kettle or vat

**seething -**

in constant agitation

**excitation -**

the state of being emotionally aroused and worked up

**somatic -**

affecting or characteristic of the body as opposed to the mind or spirit

**substratum -**

underlying layer



Again and again I have had the impression that we have made too little theoretical use of this fact, established beyond any doubt, of the **unalterability** by time of the repressed. This seems to offer an approach to the most profound discoveries. Nor, unfortunately, have I myself made any progress here.

The id, of course, knows no judgments of value: no good and evil, no morality. The economic or, if you prefer, the quantitative factor, which is intimately linked to the pleasure principle, dominates all its processes. Instinctual cathexes seeking discharge – that, in our view, is all there is in the id. It even seems that the energy of these instinctual impulses is in a state different from that in the other regions of the mind, far more mobile and capable of discharge; otherwise the displacements and **condensations** would not occur which are characteristic of the id and which so completely disregard the *quality* of what is **cathected** – what in the ego we should call an idea. We would give much to understand more about these things! You can see, incidentally, that we are in a position to attribute to the id characteristics other than that of its being unconscious, and you can recognize the possibility of portions of the ego and super-ego being unconscious without possessing the same primitive and irrational characteristics.

We can best arrive at the characteristics of the actual ego, in so far as it can be distinguished from the id and from the super-ego, by examining its relation to the outermost superficial portion of the mental apparatus, which we describe as the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* This system is turned towards the external world, it is the medium for the perceptions arising thence, and during its functioning the phenomenon of consciousness arises in it. It is the sense-organ of the entire apparatus; moreover it is receptive not only to excitations from outside but also to those arising from the interior or the mind. We need scarcely look for a justification of the view that the ego is that portion of the id which was modified by the proximity and influence of the external world, which is adapted for the reception of stimuli and as a protective shield against stimuli, comparable to the **cortical** layer by which a small piece of living substance is surrounded. The relation to the external world has become the decisive factor for the ego; it has taken on the task of representing the external world to the id – fortunately for the id, which could not escape destruction if, in its blind efforts for the satisfaction of its instincts, it disregarded that supreme external power. In accomplishing this function, the ego must observe the external world, must lay down an accurate picture of it in the memory traces of its perceptions, and by its exercise of the function of ‘reality-testing’ must put aside whatever in this picture of the external world is an addition derived from internal sources of excitation. The ego controls the approaches to motility under the id’s orders; but between a need and an action it has **interposed** a postponement in the form of the activity of thought, during which it makes use of the mnemonic residues of experience. In that way it has **dethroned** the pleasure principle which dominates the course of events in the id without any restriction and has replaced it by the reality principle, which promises more certainty and greater success.

The relation to time, which is so hard to describe, is also introduced into the ego by the perceptual system; it can scarcely be doubted that the mode of operation of that system is what provides the origin of the idea of time. But what distinguishes the ego from the id quite especially is a tendency to synthesis in its contents, to a combination and unification in its mental processes which are totally lacking in the id. When presently we come to deal with the instincts in mental life we shall, I hope, succeed in tracing this essential characteristic of the ego back to its source. It alone produces the high degree of organization which the ego needs for its best achievements. The ego develops from perceiving the instincts to controlling them; but this

**unalterability** -  
the quality of being fixed and  
unchangeable

**condensation** -  
the act of making more solid  
or dense

**cathect** -  
to invest emotional energy in a  
person, object or idea

**cortical** -  
belonging to, or consisting of,  
bark or rind; resembling bark  
or rind; external

**interpose** -  
to insert or introduce between  
parts

**dethroned** -  
removed from a prominent or  
powerful position; depose

last is only achieved by the [psychical] representative of the instinct being allotted its proper place in a considerable **assemblage**, by its being taken up into a coherent context. To adopt a popular mode of speaking, we might say that the ego stands for reason and good sense while the id stands for the **untamed** passions. So far we have allowed ourselves to be impressed by the merits and capabilities of the ego; it is now time to consider the other side as well. The ego is after all only a portion of the id, a portion that has been **expediently** modified by the proximity of the external world with its threat of danger. From a dynamic point of view it is weak, it has borrowed its energies from the id, and we are not entirely without insight into the methods – we might call them dodges – by which it extracts further amounts of energy from the id. One such method, for instance, is by identifying itself with actual or abandoned objects. The object cathexes spring from the instinctual demands of the id. The ego has in the first instance to take note of them. But by identifying itself with the object it recommends itself to the id in place of the object and seeks to divert the id's libido on to itself. We have already seen [p. 80] that in the course of its life the ego takes into itself a large number of **precipitates** like this of former object-cathexes. The ego must on the whole carry out the id's intentions. It fulfils its task by finding out the circumstances in which those intentions can best be achieved. The ego's relation to the id might be compared with that of a rider to his horse. The horse supplies the locomotive energy, while the rider has the privilege of deciding on the goal and of guiding the powerful animal's movement. But only too often there arises between the ego and the id the not precisely ideal situation of the rider being obliged to guide the horse along the path by which it itself wants to go.

There is one portion of the id from which the ego has separated itself by resistances due to repression. But the repression is not carried over into the id: the repressed merges into the remainder of the id.

We are warned by a proverb against serving two masters at the same time. The poor ego has things even worse: it serves three severe masters and does what it can to bring their claims and demands into harmony with one another. These claims are always divergent and often seem incompatible. No wonder that the ego so often fails in its task. Its three tyrannical masters are the external world, the superego and the id. When we follow the ego's efforts to satisfy them simultaneously – or rather, to obey them simultaneously – we cannot feel any regret at having personified this ego and having set it up as a separate organism. It feels **hemmed** in on three sides, threatened by three kinds of danger, to which, if it is hard pressed, it reacts by generating anxiety. Owing to its origin from the experiences of the perceptual system, it is earmarked for representing the demands of the external world, but it strives too to be a loyal servant of the id, to remain on good terms with it, to recommend itself to it as an object and to attract its libido to itself. In its attempts to mediate between the id and reality, it is often obliged to cloak the *Ucs.* commands of the id with its own *Pcs.* rationalizations, to conceal the id's conflicts with reality, to profess, with diplomatic **disingenuousness**,

**assemblage** -  
fitting together of parts, as  
those in a machine

**untamed** -  
in a natural state; not  
domesticated or cultivated

**expediently** -  
suitably; conveniently

**precipitate** -  
product resulting from a  
process, event, or course of  
action

to be taking notice of reality even when the id has remained rigid and **unyielding**. On the other hand it is observed at every step it takes by the strict super-ego, which lays down definite standards for its conduct, without taking any account of its difficulties from the direction of the id and the external world, and which, if those standards are not obeyed, punishes it with tense feelings of **inferiority** and of guilt. Thus the ego, driven by the id, confined by the super-ego, repulsed by reality, struggles to master its economic task of bringing about harmony among the forces and influences working in and upon it; and we can understand how it is that so often we cannot suppress a cry: 'Life is not easy!' If the ego is obliged to admit its weakness, it breaks out in anxiety – realistic anxiety regarding the external world, moral anxiety regarding the super-ego and neurotic anxiety regarding the strength of the passions in the id.

I should like to portray the structural relations of the mental personality, as I have described them to you, in the unassuming sketch which I now present you with:

As you see here, the super-ego merges into the id; indeed, as heir to the **Oedipus complex** it has intimate relations with the id; it is more remote than the ego from the perceptual system. The id has intercourse with the external world only through the ego – at least, according to this diagram. It is certainly hard to say today how far the drawing is correct. In one respect it is undoubtedly not. The space occupied by the unconscious id ought to have been incomparably greater than that of the ego or the preconscious. I must ask you to correct it in your thoughts.

And here is another warning, to conclude these remarks, which have certainly been exacting and not, perhaps, very illuminating. In thinking of this division of the personality into an ego, a super-ego and an id, you will not, of course, have pictured sharp frontiers like the artificial ones drawn in political geography. We cannot do justice to the characteristics of the mind by linear outlines like those in a drawing or in primitive painting, but rather by areas of color melting into one another as they are presented by modern artists. After making the separation we must allow what we have separated to merge together once more. You must not judge too harshly a first attempt at giving a pictorial representation of something so **intangible** as psychical processes. It is highly probable that the development of these divisions is subject to great variations in different individuals, it is possible that in the course of actual functioning they may change and go through a temporary phase of involution. Particularly in the case of what is phylogenetically the last and most delicate of these divisions – the differentiation between the ego and the super-ego – something of the sort seems to be true. There is no question but that the same thing results from psychical illness. It is easy to imagine, too, that certain mystical practices may succeed in upsetting the normal relations between the different regions of the mind, so that, for instance, perception may be able to grasp happenings in the depths of the ego and in the id which were otherwise inaccessible to it. It may safely be doubted, however, whether this road will lead us to the ultimate truths from which salvation is to be expected. Nevertheless it may be admitted that the therapeutic efforts of psycho-analysis have chosen a similar line of approach. Its intention is, indeed, to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego, to widen its field of perception and enlarge its organization, so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id was, there ego shall be. It is a work of culture – not unlike the draining of the **Zuider Zee**.

**hemmed -**

surrounded and shut in;  
enclosed

**disingenuousness -**

the quality of being not  
straightforward or candid,  
insincere or calculating

**unyielding -**

inflexible

**inferiority -**

a lower state or condition

**Oedipus complex -**

in psychoanalysis, a subconscious  
sexual desire in a child, especially  
a male child, for the parent  
of the opposite sex, usually  
accompanied by hostility to  
the parent of the same sex,  
named after the Greek drama  
"Oedipus Rex"

**intangible -**

incapable of being perceived by  
the senses

**Zuider Zee -**

a former inlet of the North Sea  
in the northern coast of the  
Netherlands sealed off from  
the sea in 1932 by a dam that  
created the IJsselmeer lake

**SOURCE:** Freud Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id*. Translated by Joan Riviere. Revised and edited by James Strachey. New York: W.W.Norton & Company: 1989.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What is the relationship between the “ego” and the “id” for Freud? How does the “super-ego” fit in this relationship?
2. How does the unconscious (*Ucs*) differ from preconscious (*Pcs*)?
3. Do you think Freud believed that the “ego” and the “id” were a way of answering the question “what is human nature”?
4. Is the psychoanalytic structure of the mind a *scientific* explanation of human nature? Why, or why not?
5. Why was the study of dreams so important for Freud’s psychoanalytic method?
6. Freud claimed that he had discovered the “common foundation” of mental life, which has been overlooked by others. Do you agree with his claim that his work is a “common foundation”?

**REVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Does Freud’s presentation of id, ego, and super ego allow room for a soul or a relationship with God, as presented by Nasafi or St. Catherine? Why, or why not?
2. Is the “ego” of Freud the same as the ego of Inayat Khan? Review Inayat Khan’s writings carefully before you answer.
3. Can the concept of *dharma* from the *Bhagavad Gita* be explained through the idea of the super ego? Do we lose something if we make *dharma* the same as super ego?

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## ERICH FROMM MALIGNANT AGGRESSION: PREMISES

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) was a social psychologist, anthropologist and sociologist, follower and critic of Freudism, and the author of the concept of individualism which he named “radical humanism”. He lived in Germany and was engaged in social psychology while carrying out a program of empirical research at an experimental level. In 1934 he moved to the USA because of increasing fascist ideology in Germany. Fromm analyzes the problem of the existence of the elements of destructiveness in humans, such as the problems of evil in an individual, in a society, in history and in the life of mankind. Fromm’s empirical and theoretical research reveals that evil has no independent, ontological existence. Moreover, a person is not a destroyer by nature; destructiveness is an acquired characteristic, i.e. evil has historical roots.

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Biologically adaptive aggression serves life. This is understood in principle, biologically and **neurophysiologically**, even though much more information is still needed. It is a drive man shares with all other animals, although with certain differences that have been discussed above.

What is unique in man is that he can be driven by impulses to kill and to **torture**, and that he feels **lust** in doing so; he is the only animal that can be a killer and destroyer of his own species without any rational gain, either biological or economic. To explore the nature of this biologically nonadaptive, **malignant** destructiveness is the object of the following pages.

Malignant aggression, let us remember, is specifically human and not derived from animal instinct. It does not serve the physiological survival of man, yet it is an important part of his mental functioning. It is one of the passions that are dominant and powerful in some individuals and cultures, although not in others. I shall try to show that destructiveness is one of the possible answers to psychic needs that are rooted in the existence of man, and that its generation results, as was stated earlier, from *the interaction of various social conditions with man’s existential needs*. This hypothesis makes it necessary to build a theoretical basis upon which we can attempt to examine the following questions: What are the specific conditions of human existence? What is man’s nature or essence?

Although present-day thought, especially in psychology, is not very **hospitable** to such questions, which are usually considered as belonging to the **realm** of philosophy and other purely “subjective speculations,” I hope to demonstrate in the following discussion that there are indeed areas for **empirical** examination.

#### neurophysiology -

is a part of physiology as a science which is concerned with the study of the low-level functioning of the nervous system

#### torture -

the act of causing great physical or mental pain in order to persuade someone to do something or to give information, or as an act of cruelty to a person or animal

#### lust -

a very powerful feeling of wanting something

#### malignant -

describes a disease or a diseased growth that is likely to get uncontrollably worse and lead to death

#### hospitable -

friendly and welcoming

#### realm -

an area of interest or activity

#### empirical -

based on what is experienced or seen rather than on theory

**anthropology -**

holistic study of humanity that is concerned with all human beings at all times and with all dimensions of humanity

**shield -**

protective barrier

**cynical -**

believing that people are only interested in themselves and are not sincere

**Karl Heinrich Marx -**

immensely influential German philosopher, political economist, and revolutionary

**Richard Maurice Bucke -**

(1837–1902) important Canadian progressive psychiatrist

**Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. -**

French Jesuit priest trained as a paleontologist and a philosopher

**Theodosius Grigorevich Dobzhansky -**

noted geneticist and evolutionary biologist

**posture -**

the way in which someone usually holds their shoulders, neck and back

**Charles Darwin -**

(1809 -1882) renowned naturalist and thinker associated with the theory of evolution by natural selection intercontinental migrations

**George Gaylord Simpson**

(1902 -1984) American paleontologist. He was an expert on extinct mammals and their intercontinental migrations

**self-conscious -**

uncomfortably or unnaturally aware of yourself and your actions

For most thinkers since the Greek philosophers, it was self-evident that there is something called human nature, something that constitutes the essence of man. There were various views about what constitutes it, but there was agreement that such an essence exists – that is to say, that there is something by virtue of which man is man. Thus man was defined as a rational being, as a social animal, an animal that can make tools (*Homo faber*), or a symbol-making animal.

More recently, this traditional view has begun to be questioned. One reason for this change was the increasing emphasis given to the historical approach to man. An examination of the history of humanity suggested that man in our epoch is so different from man in previous times that it seemed unrealistic to assume that man in every age has had in common something that can be called “human nature.” The historical approach was reinforced, particularly in the United States, by studies in the field of cultural **anthropology**. The study of primitive peoples has discovered such a diversity of customs, values, feelings, and thoughts that many anthropologists arrived at the concept that man is born as a blank sheet of paper on which each culture writes its text. Another factor contributing to the tendency to deny the assumption of a fixed human nature was that the concept has so often been abused as a **shield** behind which the most inhuman acts are committed. In the name of human nature, for example, Aristotle and most thinkers up to the eighteenth century defended slavery.<sup>1</sup> Or in order to prove the rationality and necessity of the capitalist form of society, scholars have tried to make a case for acquisitiveness, competitiveness, and selfishness as innate human traits. Popularly, one refers **cynically** to “human nature” in accepting the inevitability of such undesirable human behavior as greed, murder, cheating, and lying.

Another reason for skepticism about the concept of human nature probably lies in the influence of evolutionary thinking. Once man came to be seen as developing in the process of evolution, the idea of a substance which is contained in his essence seemed untenable. Yet I believe it is precisely from an evolutionary standpoint that we can expect new insight into the problem of the nature of man. New contributions have been made in this direction by such authors as **Karl Marx, R. M. Bucke, Teilhard de Chardin, T. Dobzhansky**; a similar approach is proposed also in this chapter.

The main argument in favor of the assumption of the existence of a human nature is that we can define the essence of *Homo sapiens* in morphological, anatomical, physiological, and neurological terms. In fact we give an exact and generally accepted definition of the species ‘man’ by data referring to **posture**, formation of the brain, the teeth, diet, and many other factors by which we clearly differentiate him from the most developed nonhuman primates. Surely we must assume, unless we regress to a view that considers body and mind as separate realms, that the species man must be definable mentally as well as physically.

**Darwin** himself was very aware of the fact that *man qua man* (one’s own life) was characterized not only by specific physical but also by specific psychical attributes. The most important ones he mentions in *The Descent of Man* are as follows (abbreviated and paraphrased by **G. G. Simpson**):

In proportion with his higher intelligence, man’s behavior is more flexible, less reflex or instinctive.

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions: among the Greeks would be the Stoics, defenders of the equality of all men, and in the Renaissance, such humanists as Erasmus, Thomas More, and Juan Luis Vives.



Man shares such complex factors as curiosity, imitation, attention, memory, and imagination with other relatively advanced animals, but has them in higher degree and applies them in more intricate ways.

More, at least, than other animals, man reasons and improves the adaptive nature of his behavior in rational ways.

Man regularly both uses and makes tools in great variety.

Man is self-conscious; he reflects on his past, future, life, death, and so forth.

Man makes mental abstractions and develops a related symbolism; the most essential and complexly-developed outcome of these capacities in language.

Some men have a sense of beauty.

Most men have a religious sense, taking that term broadly to include awe, superstition, belief in the animistic, supernatural, or spiritual.

Normal men have a moral sense; in later terms, man ethicizes.

Man is a cultural and social animal and has developed cultures and societies unique in kind and in complexity. (G. G. Simpson. 1949.)

If one examines Darwin's list of psychic traits, several elements stand out. He mentions a number of disparate single items, some uniquely human, such as **self-consciousness**, symbol and culture making, and an aesthetic, moral, and religious sense. This list of specific human characteristics suffers from the fact that it is purely descriptive and enumerative, is unsystematic, and makes no attempt to analyze their common conditions.

Most importantly, he does not mention in his list passions and emotions like tenderness, love, hate, cruelty, **narcissism**, **sadism**, **masochism**, and so on. This omission is related to Darwin's concept of instinct. For him, all men and animals,

especially the primates, have some few instincts in common. All have the same senses, intuitions, and sensations, similar passions, affections, and emotions, even the more complex ones, such as jealousy, suspicion, **emulation**, gratitude, and **magnanimity**: they practice **deceit** and are revengeful; they are sometimes **susceptible to ridicule**, and even have a sense of humor; they feel wonder and curiosity; they possess the same faculties of imitation, the association of ideas, and reason though in very different degrees. (C. Darwin. 1946.)

Clearly, our attempt to consider the most important human passions as specifically human, and not as inherited from our animal ancestors, can find no support in Darwin's view.

The advance of thought among students of evolution since Darwin is manifest in the views of one of the most eminent contemporary investigators, G. G. Simpson. He insists that man has essential attributes other than those of animals. "It is important to realize," he writes, "that man is an animal but it is even more important to realize that the essence of his unique nature lies precisely in those characteristics that are not shared with any other animal. His place in nature and its supreme significance are not defined by his animality but by his humanity." (G. G. Simpson, 1949.)

**narcissism -**

describes the character trait of self love derived from the Greek myth of Narcissus

**sadism -**

the obtaining of pleasure, sometimes sexual, from being cruel to or hurting another person

**masochism -**

the obtaining of pleasure (especially sexual) from being hurt or controlled by another person

**emulate -**

to copy something achieved by someone else and try to do it as well as they have

**magnanimous -**

very kind and generous towards an enemy or someone you have defeated

**deceit -**

(an act of) keeping the truth hidden

**susceptible -**

open to

**ridicule -**

unkind words or actions that make someone or something look stupid or worthless

Simpson suggests as the basic definition of *Homo sapiens* the interrelated factors of intelligence, flexibility, individualization, and socialization. Even if his answer is not entirely satisfactory, his attempt to understand man's essential traits as being interrelated and rooted in one basic factor and his recognition of the transformation of quantitative into qualitative change constitute a significant step beyond Darwin. (G. G. Simpson, 1944; 1953.)

From the side of psychology, one of the best-known attempts to describe man's specific needs is that made by **Abraham Maslow**, who drew up a list of man's "basic needs" – physiological and aesthetic needs, needs for safety, belongingness, love, esteem; self-actualization, knowledge and understanding. (A. Maslow, 1954.) This list is a somewhat unsystematic enumeration, and regrettably, Maslow did not try to analyze the common origin of such needs in the nature of man.

The attempt to define the nature of man in terms of the specific conditions – biological and mental – of the species man leads us first to some considerations concerning the birth of man.

It seems simple to know when a human individual comes into existence, but in fact it is not quite as simple as it seems. The answer might be: at the time of conception, when the **fetus** has assumed definite human form, in the act of birth, at the end of **weaning**; or one might even claim that most men have not yet been fully born by the time they die. We would best decline to fix a day or an hour for "the birth" of an individual, and speak rather of a *process* in the course of which a person comes into existence.

If we ask when man as a species was born, the answer is much more difficult. We know much less about the evolutionary process. Here we are dealing with millions of years; our knowledge is based on accidental findings of skeletons and tools whose significance is still much disputed.

Yet in spite of the insufficiency of our knowledge, there are a few data which, even though in need of modification in detail, give us a general picture of the process we may call the birth of man. We could date the *conception* of man back at the beginning of unicellular life, about one and a half billion years ago, or to the beginning of the existence of primitive **mammals**, about two hundred million years ago; we might say that human development begins with man's **hominid** ancestors who may have lived about fourteen million years ago or possibly earlier. We could date his *birth* from the appearance of the first man, *Homo erectus*, of whom the various specimens found in Asia cover a time from about one million to about five hundred thousand years ago (Peking Man); or from only about forty thousand years ago when modern man (*Homo sapiens*) emerged, who was in all essential biological aspects identical to man today.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, if we look at man's individual development in terms of historical time, we might say that man proper was born only a few minutes ago. Or we might even think that he is still in the process of birth, that the umbilical cord has not yet been severed, and that complications have arisen that make it appear doubtful whether man will ever be born or whether he is to be stillborn.

Most students of human evolution date the birth of man to one particular event: *the making of tools*, following **Benjamin Franklin's** definition of man as *Homo faber*, man the toolmaker. This definition has been sharply criticized by Marx who considered it "characteristic of Yankeedom."<sup>3</sup> Among modern writers, Mumford has most convincingly criticized this orientation based on tool making. (L. Mumford, 1967.)

#### Abraham Maslow

(1908 - 1970) American psychologist mostly noted today for his proposal of a hierarchy of human needs

#### fetus -

young human being or animal before birth, after the organs have started to develop

#### wean -

cause a baby or young animal to stop feeding on its mother's milk

#### mammal -

any animal of which the female gives birth to babies, not eggs, and feeds them on milk from her own body

#### Hominid -

any member of the biological family Hominidae (the "great apes"), including the extinct and extant humans, chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans

#### Benjamin Franklin -

(1706 - 1790) one of the best known Founding Fathers of the United States

2 Cf. the discussion in D. Pilbeam (1970); also M.F.A. Mortagu (1967) and G. Smolla (1967).

3 Cf. for an understanding of Marx's concept of human nature, E. Fromm (1961. 1968).

One must look for a concept of man's nature in the process of human evolution rather than in isolated aspects like tool making, which bears so clearly the stamp of the contemporary obsession with production. We have to arrive at an *understanding of man's nature on the basis of the blend of the two fundamental biological conditions that mark the emergence of man. One was the ever-decreasing determination of behavior by instincts.*<sup>4</sup> Even taking into account the many controversial views about the nature of instincts, it is generally accepted that the higher an animal has risen in the stages of evolution, the less is the weight of stereotyped behavior patterns that are strictly determined and phylogenetically programmed in the brain.

The process of ever-decreasing determination of behavior by instincts can be **plotted** as a continuum, at the zero end of which we will find the lowest forms of animal evolution with the highest degree of instinctive determination; this decreases along with animal evolution and reaches a certain level with the mammals; it decreases further in the development going up to the **primates**, and even here we find a great gulf between monkeys and **apes**, as Yerkes and Yerkes have shown in their classic investigation. (R. M. and A. V. Yerkes 1929.) In the species *Homo* instinctive determination has reached its maximum decrease.

The other trend to be found in animal evolution is *the growth of the brain, and particularly of the neocortex*. Here, too, we can plot the evolution as a continuum – at one end, the lowest animals, with the most primitive nervous structure and a relatively small number of neurons; at the other, man, with a larger and more complex brain structure, especially a neocortex three times as large as that of even his hominid ancestors, and a truly fantastic number of interneuronal connections.<sup>5</sup>

*Considering these data, man can be defined as the primate that emerged at the point of evolution where instinctive determination had reached a minimum and the development of the brain a maximum.* This combination of animal instinctive determination and maximal brain development had never occurred before in animal evolution and constitutes, biologically speaking, a completely new phenomenon.

4 The term "instincts" is used here in a loose fashion in order to simplify the discussion. It is not used in the dated sense of "instinct" as excluding learning, but in the sense of "organic drives."

5 C. Judson Herrick has tried to give an approximate idea of the potential ties of neuronal circuits: "Every neuron of the cerebral cortex is enmeshed in a tangle of very fine fibers of great complexity, some of which come from very remote parts. It is probably safe to say that the majority of cortical neurons are directly or indirectly connected with every cortical field. This is the anatomical basis of conical associational processes. The interconnections of these associational fibers from an anatomical mechanism which permits, during a train of cortical associations, numbers of different functional combinations of cortical neurons that far surpass any figures ever suggested by the astronomers in measuring the distances of stars. ... It is the capacity for making this sort of combination and recombination of the nervous elements that determines the practical value of the system. ... If a million cortical nerve cells were connected one with another in groups of only two neurons each in all possible combination, the number of different patterns of introneuronic connectedness provided would be expressed by  $10^{2,783,000}$ . ... On the basis of the known structure of the cortex, ... the number of intercellular connections that are anatomically present and available for use in a short series of cortical neurons of the visual area simultaneously excited by some retinal image . . . would far exceed the  $10^{2,783,000}$  already mentioned as the theoretically possible combinations in groups of two only." (C.J. Herrick, 1928.) For comparative purposes Livingston adds: "Recall that the number of atoms in the universe is estimated to be about  $10^{1080}$ ."<sup>11</sup>

**plot -**

represent graphically, as on a chart

**primate -**

a member of the most developed and intelligent group of mammals, including humans, monkeys and apes

**ape -**

an animal like a large monkey which has no tail and uses its arms to swing through trees

When man emerged, his behavior was little guided by his instinctive equipment. Aside from some elementary reactions, such as those to danger or to sexual stimuli, there is no inherited program that tells him how to decide in most instances in which his life may depend on a correct decision. It would thus seem that, biologically, man is the most helpless and **frail** of all animals.

Does the extraordinary development of his brain make up for his instinctive deficit?

To some extent it does. Man is guided by his intellect to make right choices. But we know also how weak and unreliable this instrument is. It is easily influenced by man's desires and passions and surrenders to their influence. Man's brain is insufficient not only as a substitute for the weakened instincts, but it complicates the task of living tremendously. By this I do not refer to *instrumental intelligence*, the use of thought as an instrument for the manipulation of objects in order to satisfy one's needs; after all, man shares this with animals, especially with the primates. I refer to that aspect in which man's thinking has acquired an entirely new quality, that of *self-awareness*. Man is the only animal who not only knows objects but who knows that he knows. Man is the only animal who has not only instrumental intelligence, but reason, the capacity to use his thinking to *understand* objectively – i.e., to know the nature of things as they are in themselves, and not only as means for his satisfaction. Gifted with self-awareness and reason, man is aware of himself as a being separate from nature and from others; he is aware of his powerlessness, of his ignorance; he is aware of his end: death.

Self-awareness, reason, and imagination have **disrupted** the "harmony" that characterizes animal existence. Their emergence has made man into an anomaly, the **freak** of the universe. He is part of nature, subject to her physical laws and unable to change them, yet he transcends nature. He is set apart while being a part; he is homeless, yet chained to the home he shares with all creatures. Cast into this world at an accidental place and time he is forced out of it accidentally and against his will. Being aware of himself, he realizes his powerlessness and the limitations of his existence. He is never free from the **dichotomy** of his existence: he cannot rid himself of his mind, even if he would want to; he cannot rid himself of his body as long as he is alive – and his body makes him want to be alive.

Man's life cannot be lived by repeating the pattern of his species; he must live. Man is the only animal who does not feel at home in nature, who can feel **evicted** from paradise, the only animal for whom his own existence is a problem that he has to solve and from which he cannot escape. He cannot go back to the pre-human state of harmony with nature, and he does not know where he will arrive if he goes forward. Man's existential contradiction results in a state of constant **disequilibrium**. This disequilibrium distinguishes him from the animal, which lives, as it were, in harmony with nature. This does not mean, of course, that the animal necessarily lives a peaceful and happy life, but that it has its specific ecological **niche** to which its physical and mental qualities have been adapted by the process of evolution. Man's existential, and hence unavoidable disequilibrium can be relatively stable when he has found, with the support of his culture, a more or less adequate way of coping with his existential problems. But this relative stability does not imply that the dichotomy has disappeared; it is merely **dormant** and becomes manifest as soon as the conditions for this relative stability change.

Indeed, in the process of man's self-creation this relative stability is upset again and again. Man, in his history, changes his environment, and in this process he changes himself. His knowledge increases, but so does his awareness of his ignorance; he

- frail** -  
weak or unhealthy, or easily damaged, broken or harmed
- disrupt** -  
to prevent something, especially a system, process or event, from continuing as usual or as expected
- freak** -  
abnormal, unnatural
- dichotomy** -  
a difference between two completely opposite ideas or things
- evict** -  
to force someone to leave somewhere
- disequilibrium** -  
state of misbalance
- niche** -  
job or position which is very suitable for someone
- dormant** -  
describes something that is not active or growing, but which has the ability to be active at a later time

experiences himself as an individual, and not only as a member of his tribe, and with this his sense of separateness and isolation grows. He creates larger and more efficient social units, led by powerful leaders – and he becomes frightened and submissive. He attains a certain amount of freedom – and becomes afraid of this very freedom. His capacity for material production grows, but in the process he becomes greedy and egotistical, a slave of the things he has created.

Every new state of disequilibrium forces man to seek for new equilibrium. Indeed what has often been considered man's innate drive for progress is his attempt to find a new and, if possible, better equilibrium.

The new forms of equilibrium by no means constitute a straight line of human improvement. Frequently in history new achievements have led to regressive developments. Many times, when forced to find a new solution, man runs into a blind **alley** from which he has to **extricate** himself; and it is indeed remarkable that thus far in history he has been able to do so.

These considerations suggest a hypothesis as to how to define the essence or nature of man. I propose that man's nature cannot be defined in terms of a specific quality, such as love, hate, reason, good or evil, but only in terms of fundamental *contradictions* that characterize human existence and have their root in the biological dichotomy between missing instincts and self-awareness. Man's existential conflict produces certain psychic needs common to all men. He is forced to overcome the horror of separateness, of powerlessness, and of being lost, and find new forms of relating himself to the world to enable him to feel at home. I have called these psychic needs existential because they are rooted in the very conditions of human existence. They are shared by all men, and their fulfillment is as necessary for man's remaining sane as the fulfillment of organic drives is necessary for his remaining alive. But each of these needs can be satisfied in different ways, which vary according to the differences of his social condition. These different ways of satisfying the existential needs manifest themselves in passions, such as love, tenderness, striving for justice, independence, truth, hate sadism, masochism, destructiveness, narcissism. I call them character-rooted passions – or simply human passions – because they are integrated in man's *character*.

While the concept of character will be discussed at length further on; it will suffice here to say that *character is the relatively permanent system of all non-instinctual strivings through which man relates himself to the human and natural world*. One may understand character as the human substitute for the missing animal instincts; it is man's *second nature*. What all men have in common are their organic drives (even though highly modifiable by experience) and their existential needs. What they do not have in common are the kinds of passions that are dominant in their respective characters – character-rooted passions. The difference in character is largely due to the difference in social conditions (although genetically given dispositions also influence the formation of the character); for this reason one can call character-rooted passions a historical category

**alley -**

a narrow road or path  
between buildings

**extricate -**

to remove or set free  
something with difficulty

and instincts a natural category. Yet the former are not a purely historical category either, because they are the result of the impact of the various historical constellations have on the biologically given conditions of human existence.<sup>6</sup>

We are now ready to discuss man's existential needs and the variety of character-rooted passions that in turn constitute different answers to these existential needs. Before starting this discussion let us look back and raise a question of method. I have suggested a "reconstruction" of man's mind as it may have been at the beginning of pre-history. The obvious objection to this method is that it is a theoretical reconstruction for which there is no evidence whatsoever – or so it would appear. However, evidence is not completely lacking for the formulation of some tentative hypotheses that may be disproved or confirmed by further findings.

This evidence lies essentially in those findings which indicate that man, perhaps as early as half a million years ago (Peking Man) had cults and rituals, manifesting that his concerns went beyond satisfying his material needs. The history of prehistoric religion and art (not separable in those times) is the main source for the study of primitive man's mind. Obviously I cannot set forth into this vast and yet controversial territory within the context of this study. What I want to stress is that the presently available data, as well as those still to be found in regard to primitive religions and rituals, will not reveal the nature of prehistoric man's mind unless we have a key with which we can **decipher** it. This key, I believe, is our own mind. Not our conscious thoughts, but those categories of thought and feeling that are buried in our unconscious and yet are an experiential core present in all men of all cultures; briefly, it is what I would like to call man's "primary human experience." This primary human experience is in itself rooted in man's existential situation. For this reason it is common to all men and does not need to be explained as being racially inherited.

The first question, of course, is whether we can find this key; whether we can **transcend** our normal frame of mind and **transpose** ourselves into the mind of the "original man." Drama, poetry, art, and myth have done this, but not psychology, with the exception of psychoanalysis. The various psychoanalytic schools have done it in different ways; Freud's original man was a historical construct of the member of a patriarchal organized male band, ruled and exploited by a father-tyrant against whom the sons rebel, and whose internalization is the basis for the formation of the **superego** and a new social organization. Freud's aim was to help the contemporary patient to discover his own unconscious by letting him share the experience of what Freud believed to be his earliest ancestors.

Even though this model of original man was **fictitious** and the corresponding "Oedipus complex" was not the deepest level of human experience, Freud's hypothesis opened up an entirely new possibility: that all men of every period and culture had shared a basic experience with their common ancestors. Thus Freud added another historical argument to the humanist belief that all men are the core of humanity.

**C. G. Jung** made the same attempt in a different and in many respects more **sophisticated** way than Freud's. He was particularly interested in the variety of myths, rituals, and religions. He used myth ingeniously and brilliantly as a key for the understanding of the unconscious, and thus built a bridge between mythology and

**decipher -**

to discover the meaning of something written badly or in a difficult or hidden way

**transcend -**

to go beyond, rise above

**transpose -**

to change something from one position to another

**superego -**

Freud's theory says that the superego is a symbolic internalization of the father figure and cultural regulations

**fictitious -**

invented and not true or not existing

**Carl Gustav Jung -**

(1875 -1961) Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology

**sophisticated -**

clever in a complicated way

6 This distinction between the two kinds of drives corresponds essentially to the one made by Marx. He spoke of two kinds of human drives and appetites: the "constant," or fixed ones – such as hunger, and the sexual drive – which are an integral part of human nature and can be changed only in their form and in the direction they take in various cultures, and the "relative appetites," which "owe their origin to certain social structures and certain conditions of production and communication." (K. Marx and F. Engels, MEGA, vol. 5. My translation.) He spoke of some of these appetites as "inhuman," "depraved," "unnatural," and "imaginary."



psychology more systematically and extensively than any of his predecessors.

What I am suggesting here is the use of our unconscious as a key to the understanding of prehistory. This requires the practice of self-knowledge in the psychoanalytic sense: the removal of a major part of our resistance against the awareness of our unconscious, thus reducing the difficulty of penetrating from our conscious mind to the depth of our core.

Provided we are able to do this, we can understand our fellow men who live in the same culture as we do, also men of an entirely different culture, and even a mad man. We can also sense what original man must have experienced, what existential needs he had, and in what ways men (including ourselves) can respond to these needs.

When we see primitive art, down to the cave paintings of thirty thousand years ago, or the art of radically different cultures like the African or Greek or that of the Middle Ages, we take it for granted that we understand them, in spite of the fact that these cultures were radically different from ours. We dream symbols and myths that are like those men thousands of years ago conceived when they were awake. Are they not a common language of all humanity, regardless of vast differences in conscious perception? (E. Fromm. 1951.)

Considering that contemporary thinking in the field of human evolution is so one-sidedly oriented along the lines of man's bodily development and his material culture, of which skeletons and tools are the main witnesses, it is not surprising that few investigators are interested in the mind of early man. Yet the view I have presented here is shared by a number of outstanding scholars, whose whole philosophical outlook differs from that of the majority; I am referring especially to the views, particularly close to my own, of the **paleontologist** F. M. Bergounioux and the zoologist and geneticist T. Dobzhansky.

Bergounioux writes:

Even though he [man] can legitimately be considered a primate, of which he possesses all the anatomical and physiological characteristics, he alone forms a biological group whose originality none will dispute. ...Man felt himself brutally torn from his environment and isolated in the middle of a world whose measure and laws he did not know; he therefore felt obliged to learn, by constant bitter effort and his own mistakes, everything he had to know to survive. The animals surrounding him came and went, **indefatigably** repeating the same actions: hunting, gathering, searching for water, doubling or fleeing to defend themselves against innumerable enemies; for them, periods of rest and activity succeed each other in an unchanging rhythm fixed by the needs for food or sleep, reproduction or protection. Man detaches himself from his surroundings; he feels alone, abandoned, ignorant of everything except that he knows nothing. ...His first feeling thus was existential anxiety, which may even have taken him to the limits of despair. (F. M. Bergounioux. 1964.)

**palaeontology -**

is the study of the history and development of life on earth

**indefatigable -**

never willing to admit defeat



A very similar view was expressed by Dobzhansky:

Self-awareness and foresight brought, however, the awesome gifts of freedom and responsibility. Man feels free to execute some of his plans and to leave others in abeyance. He feels the joy of being the master, rather than a slave, of the world and of himself. But the joy is tempered by a feeling of responsibility. Man knows that he is accountable for his acts: he has acquired the knowledge of good and evil. This is a dreadfully heavy load to carry. No other animal has to withstand anything like it. There is a tragic discord in the soul of man. Among the flaws in human nature, this one is far more serious than the pain of childbirth.

(T. Dobzhansky 1962.)

## THE EXISTENTIAL NEEDS OF MAN AND THE VARIOUS CHARACTER-ROOTED PASSIONS<sup>7</sup>

### A Frame of Orientation and Devotion

Man's capacity for self-awareness, reason, and imagination – new qualities that go beyond the capacity for instrumental thinking of even the cleverest animals – requires a picture of the world and of his place in it that is structured and has inner cohesion. Man needs a map of his natural and social world, without which he would be confused and unable to act purposefully and consistently. He would have no way of orienting himself and of finding for himself a fixed point that permits him to organize all the impressions that impinge upon him. Whether he believed in sorcery and magic as final explanations of all events, or in the spirit of his ancestors as guiding his life and fate, or in an omnipotent god who will reward or punish him, or in the power of science to give answers to all human problems – from the standpoint of his need for a frame of orientation, it does not make any difference. His world makes sense to him, and he feels certain about his ideas through the **consensus** with those around him. Even if the map is wrong, it fulfills its psychological function. But the map was never entirely wrong – nor has it ever been entirely right, either. It has always been enough of an approximation to the explanation of phenomena to serve the purpose of living.

The impressive fact is that we do not find any culture in which there does not exist such a frame of orientation. Or any individual either. Often an individual may disclaim having any such overall picture and believe that he responds to the various phenomena and incidents of life from case to case, as his judgment guides him. But it can be easily demonstrated that he takes his own philosophy for granted, because to him it is only common sense, and he is unaware that all his concepts rest upon a commonly accepted frame of reference. When such a person is confronted with a fundamentally different total view of life he judges it as “crazy” or “irrational” or “childish,” while he considers himself as being only logical. The need for the formation of a frame of reference is particularly clear in the case of children. They show, at a certain age, a deep need for a frame of orientation and often make it up themselves in an ingenious way, using the few data available to them.

The intensity of the need for a frame of orientation explains a fact that has puzzled many students of man, namely the ease with which people fall under the spell of ir-

#### consensus -

generally-accepted opinion  
or decision among a group of  
people

<sup>7</sup> The material in the following pages is an expansion of the discussion of the same subject in *The Sane Society* (E. Fromm, 1955); to avoid repetition as much as possible, I have given only a shortened version of the older material.

rational doctrines, either political or religious or of any other nature, when to the one who is not under their influence it seems obvious that they are worthless constructs. Part of the answer lies in the suggestive influence of leaders and in the suggestibility of man. But this does not seem to be the whole story. Man would probably not be so suggestive was it not that his need for a cohesive frame of orientation is so vital. The more an ideology pretends to give answers to all questions, the more attractive it is; here may lie the reason why irrational or even plainly insane thought systems can so easily attract the minds of men.

But a map is not enough as a guide for action; man also needs a goal that tells him where to go. The animal has no such problems. Its instincts provide it with a map as well as with goals. But man, lacking instinctive determination and having a brain that permits him to think of many directions in which he could go, needs an object of “ultimate concern,” to use **Tillich’s** expression; he needs an object of devotion to be the **focal point** of all his strivings and the basis for all his effective – and not only proclaimed – values. He needs such an object of devotion for a number of reasons. The object integrates his energies in one direction. It elevates him beyond his isolated existence, with all its doubts and insecurity, and gives meaning to life. In being devoted to a goal beyond his isolated ego, he transcends himself and leaves the prison of absolute **egocentricity**.<sup>8</sup>

**SOURCE:** Erich Fromm. *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. Holt, Rinehart Art and Winston. New York, Chicago, San Francisco. pp.218-231

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you agree with Fromm’s statement that only humans derive pleasure from inflicting pain? Do animals do this only because of the self-protection instinct?
2. Why is Erich Fromm confident that malignant aggression is peculiarly exclusively to humans and that it is not necessarily generated by animal brutality? How does Fromm support his thesis?
3. How does Fromm define the source of destructiveness? Are the sources only the result of the social conditions and existential needs of humans? Do you agree with such an opinion?

8 The term “transcendence” is traditionally used in a theological frame of reference. Christian thinking takes for granted that man’s transcendence implies transcendence beyond himself to God; thus theology tries to prove the need for belief in God by pointing to man’s need for transcendence. This logic, however, is faulty unless the concept of God is used in a purely symbolic sense standing for “not-self.” There is a need to transcend one’s self-centered, narcissistic, isolated position to one of being related to others, of openness to the world, escaping the hell of self-centeredness and hence self-imprisonment. Religious systems like Buddhism have postulated this kind of transcendence without any reference to a god or superhuman power; so did Meister Eckhart, in his boldest formulations.

**focal point** -  
the thing that everyone looks at or is interested in

**Paul Johannes Tillich** -  
(1886 -1965) German-American theologian and Christian existentialist philosopher

**egocentrism** -  
in psychology) the characteristic of regarding oneself and one’s own opinions or interests as most important

4. Might it be that destructiveness in human beings is still secret, and we are not able to investigate it yet? What do you think? Have you thought of destructiveness in human beings on the basis of your personal experience before?
5. Why does Fromm think that the hypothesis of eternal “*human nature*” is far from reality? How would the previous philosophers have reacted to this statement? What was the reason for Fromm’s rejection of the traditional view of human nature?
6. Do you agree with the analysis of the concept of human beings, which had been stated by many scientists before Fromm? How far could Fromm remain objective in this analysis?
7. How far can the brain compensate for the shortcomings of instinct? What is the intercourse between the brain and human passions according to Fromm? Why do consciousness, mind and reason destroy the “harmony” of natural existence which is inherent in all animals? Why does a person, according to Fromm, become lonely and lost – deserted in this world since he is not able to live by his own will?
8. Why does Fromm consider that human essence cannot be defined by one quality – like love, hatred, good, evil and etc.? What concepts of humanity do not suit him when he makes such statements?
9. What kind of human essence does Fromm oppose as the second nature of animal instincts? How is it possible, according to Fromm, to use unconsciousness as a key for studying human history? Have you had personal experience in studying the unconscious?
10. Fromm agrees that consciousness and the ability to predict the future have bore results, which inspired fear as freedom and responsibility. Why does assuming responsibility create so many problems for a person? Is it, in fact, an element of freedom? Can human beings live only pursuant to the laws of nature or instinct? Does it mean that a person is not always able to accept something “human”?
11. Why, according to Fromm, does a person need the system of coordination? Why is it the existential human need? What is the difference between idols and ideals? According to Fromm what are the means of solving the problem of destructiveness in human beings?
12. What are the similarities and differences between Fromm’s concept of human beings and the other doctrines which you have studied? Can we say that this concept is one of the most humane among the existing concepts?
13. What kind of shortcomings in the modern world did Fromm find? What difficulties would this doctrine face in the modern world?
14. Write your own argumentative essay using Fromm’s human doctrine and evidence from your life. What is of practical value in Fromm’s doctrine?

#### **ADDITIONAL READING:**

- Erich Fromm: The Courage to Be Human, [www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/Funk,The%20Courage%20to%20Be%20Human.pdf](http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/Funk,The%20Courage%20to%20Be%20Human.pdf)
- Bibliography of the Literature about Erich Fromm, [www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/English%20about%20Fromm.pdf](http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/English%20about%20Fromm.pdf)
- In search of Solidarity: the ethical politics of Erich Fromm, [www.rci.rutgers.edu/~kking/Dissertation%20Folder/Articles%20&%20Essays/Wilde%20-%20Fromm%20Solidarity.pdf](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~kking/Dissertation%20Folder/Articles%20&%20Essays/Wilde%20-%20Fromm%20Solidarity.pdf)
- Erich Fromm, Two Voices of Erich Fromm: The Prophetic and the Analytic, portfolio. [chez-alice.fr/NewFiles/fromm.html](http://chez-alice.fr/NewFiles/fromm.html)

## NAWAL EL SAADAWI WHY KEEP ASKING ME ABOUT MY IDENTITY?

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Nawal El Saadawi, a woman who would become an ardent spokesperson for social justice and women's right in the Arab world, was born in the arid land of the pyramids that boasts a history dating back to ancient times. She has justly earned the name the "Daughter of Isis", as Nawal called in the title of her autobiography. Isis, the goddess of knowledge and freedom. It is a true depiction of Nawal's character, as seen in her writings, often dedicated to women and men who choose to pay the price and be free rather than continue to pay the price for slavery. The following text provides a glimpse into the works of this extraordinary person, whose message keeps influencing the lives of both men and women all around the world. She raises questions of identity, its formation, and particular ways identities are sustained. She claims that human nature is not violent, and when people turn to evil things, it is because of the system or culture they live in. Further, she analyzes the effects this has on the individual and community. While reading the text, please keep in mind the author's background and life experience.

Every time I come to a conference dealing with African identity or culture held in Europe or North America, I ask myself why these conferences are held, why the organizers and most of the participants live in England or Germany or Switzerland or the United States, are citizens of these lands, and scholars, researchers, intellectuals, or writers in various institutions. This conference is being held in the United States with American money, American logistical and informational facilities provided by American institutions. And here I am after a long journey from Africa, sitting in my seat on time, ready to talk about my 'identity', an identity which I am asked about over and over again. It makes me turn your question round and round. Why does no one ask you what is your 'identity'? Is it that the American 'identity', American culture, does not require any questioning, does not need to be examined, or studied or discussed in conferences like this?

So far I have not heard of a conference held in Africa or Asia or even in America dealing with *Pan-Americanism* as related, for example, to North and South America even since the **Monroe Doctrine** made of South America your backyard. Neither have I heard that Pan-Americanism, just like **Pan-Africanism**, requires some updating so that we can understand a little more of what is going on in this world of ours – so that 'identity politics' does not remain the exclusive tool of the powerful against the peoples who are being post-colonialized.

Words whose meanings are obscure sometimes open up **vistas** in the mind. They may, however, be a **shroud**, a mask that hides: such are 'God' and 'Satan', or 'free trade', or 'democracy' in my country or in the countries of the West. The game of words continues all the time. Some years ago my 'Arab identity' was a fact of politics and culture and of life. Today it has become a taboo, a curse for those who insist on saying they are Arabs. Now a new identity has been coined for me by the global powers. Our region is 'the Middle East', **refurbished** to include Israel, Turkey, and perhaps a subdued Iran. If I am asked I should say my identity is Middle Eastern, not Arab at all. That way I can be post-modern, updated,

### Monroe Doctrine -

principle of American foreign policy enunciated in President James Monroe's message to Congress, Dec. 2, 1823. It initially called for an end to European intervention in the Americas, but it was later extended to justify U.S. imperialism in the Western Hemisphere

### Pan-Africanism -

general term for various movements in Africa that have as their common goal the unity of Africans and the elimination of colonialism and white supremacy from the continent

### vista -

awareness of a range of time, events, or subjects; a broad mental view

### shroud -

cloth used to wrap a body for burial

### refurbished -

made clean, bright, or fresh again; renovated

**euphemistically -**

pertaining to the act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive

**horde -**

large group or crowd; swarm

**Huntington, Samuel P. -**

his most famous book is, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* was published in the fall of 1996 and is being translated into 22 other languages

**Bernard Lewis -**

his most famous book is *What Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*

**Sharm Al-Sheikh -**

Egyptian city

**Hamas -**

militant Islamic fundamentalist political movement that opposes peace with Israel and uses terrorism as a weapon and seeks to create an Islamic state in place of Israel

**Deir Yasseen -**

place where 120 villagers were massacred by Irgun and Stern gangs

**Intifada -**

uprising among Palestinian Arabs of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, beginning in late 1987 and continuing sporadically into the early 1990s, in protest against continued Israeli occupation of these territories

**Mameluke -**

member of a former military caste, originally composed of slaves from Turkey, that held the Egyptian throne from about 1250 until 1517 and remained powerful until 1811

**alienation -**

emotional isolation or dissociation

moving with the times. The Arab nation, Arab unity, Arab nationalism are over. These are the relics of the past, like other backward national identities that belonged at one time to the 'third', or the fourth or perhaps even the fifth world, not **euphemistically** designated as the 'South' where the marginalized 'Confucian', or 'Islamic', or 'Hindu' **hordes** teem, and starve and die, threatening to clash with the 'Christian' civilization of professors **Huntington** and **Bernard Lewis**. My backward national identity has been replaced by more advanced, more civilized identities: 'Middle Eastern', or American', or 'Israeli', or maybe a global identity with no place for secondary national identities like mine.

Recently I was asked, 'What country are you from?' I said Egypt, and the man said, 'Do you consider Egypt to be in Africa?' So I found Egypt being uprooted from Africa too, after it had ceased to be a part of the Arab world. Now I no longer know the Monroe Doctrine principle of American foreign policy enunciated in President James Monroe's message to Congress, Dec. 2, 1823. It initially called for an end to European intervention in the Americas, but it was later extended to justify U.S. imperialism in the Western Hemisphere continent in which Egypt can be found, nor do I know if I am Arab, or African, or whether I should be here at all. And in early 1996 I watched the leaders of the world as they sat in Egypt, in **Sharm Al-Sheikh**, beside the Red Sea, discussing so-called terrorism and updating things. They called themselves the 'makers of peace' and established a new map for Africa and the Middle East. Their friends and business partners and followers of their creed were identified as the 'angels of this peace', and others who did not agree to their view of things were called 'terrorists', backward barbarians with no soul. These 'makers of peace' forgot that **Hamas** had been nurtured and used by Israel against the Palestine Liberation Organization. They forgot **Deir Yasseen** and the children of the **Intifada** with broken bones and plastic bullet wounds to their heads. People asked me where I stood, did I identify with the angels, makers of the peace, or with the devils, the makers of war, the aggressors, the terrorists. I am not a terrorist, nor will I ever be. But I believe that without justice there is no peace. Ever since I was born, the events in my region have proved that to me. 'Identity' is a discourse, and it is essential to know who is using it, who decides, who labels me, what all this interest in 'cultural identity' means, where does it lead.

That is what I want to keep in mind as I address the issue of identity and language. When I was a child I was told to 'hide' my brown complexion under a coating of white powder. I was born in the early thirties and at that time Egypt was under the rule of the British and the royal descendants of the Albanian Turk Mohammed Ali who overthrew the **Mameluke** dynasty. At that time a 'white' skin meant that one came from the upper classes, for both the British and the Turks had fair complexions. Beauty was therefore to have white skin. To be brown or dark-skinned was ugly, related to the lower, poorer classes of society. I wasted many years of my life before I would feel comfortable with a brown skin, before I gained sufficient self-confidence and understanding to see that my brown skin could be different and yet beautiful, before I could wash off the coating of white powder and live in the world with my real face, my real identity.

Later I asked myself a question: 'Is my identity related to the color of my skin and what was I doing covering it with a coating of white powder? Does not the coating reflect a *migration* of the mind, an **alienation** from my mind?' Migrating words and worlds is a theme I relate to the general problems we are facing in the countries of our African continent. These problems to my mind are not, as some people tend or like to think, related to questions of identity or to what we now designate as a 'global culture' crossing national, ethnic and geographic boundaries and overcoming the frontiers, the delimitation resulting from land, language, state, color, race and religion.

For four years from 1992 I lived in the United States in what may be considered a form of exile. Before they were over I realized that I had to go back *home* to my country, my land, my people, my language. My home, my country, could not be the United States. In the USA I am a stranger, an 'alien'. There I discovered that Americans are attached to their country, to their nation and their national identity to a greater degree than most peoples of the world. They take great pride in being American, in being patriotic. Yet they are surprised when other people take pride in being African. Perhaps they think that the only country worth being proud of is the United States. And this is the case even amongst learned people in the academy. This probably has a lot to do with how the world is divided today despite the fact that we have moved out of the so-called modern era of thinking into the so-called post-modern era, which implies an important step forward.

But in this post-modern era the struggle has intensified over sources of wealth and power and therefore over people's minds, over culture. What decides the issue of these struggles, however, is not justice or human rights but multinational economic power and **monopoly**, intensified a hundred times by the backing of military power at the core of which resides the club of states possessing **nuclear** and post-nuclear weapons. Much effort goes into the drive, led by the United States, to break down boundaries, destroy frontiers, dissolve nation-states and national entities. But it is these multinational powers who decide which frontiers, which boundaries, which entities should disappear and which should be maintained and injected with new strength. The black peoples of Africa, the poor of Africa, are required to overcome the limitations of their blackness, their languages, their international or national frontiers in the name of 'one world', of humanity, of a 'human universalism'. They are required to **soar** towards the ever-widening horizons of postmodernism, where everything is fragmented, diffused, **splintered** to the advantage of a handful of rich people.

### THE ECONOMIC AND THE CULTURAL

Never before in the history of the world has there been such a concentration and centralization of capital in so few nations, and in the hands of so few people. The countries that form the **Group of Seven** with their 800 million inhabitants, control more technical, economic informational and military power than the rest of the world's people, the approximately 4.3 billion who live in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America. Five hundred multinational corporations account for 80 per cent of world trade and 75 per cent of investment, and their number is dropping each year as a result of mergers and the elimination of the relatively smaller ones. Half these multinational corporations are based in the USA, Germany, Japan and Switzerland. The OECD group of countries accounts for 80 per cent of world production.

Since around 1970, technological advances have reduced the amount of raw materials used per product by more than one third. This *de-materialization* of production has resulted in a tendency for the real prices of fifty principal raw materials to fall. Price



MUHAMMAD ALI

#### monopoly -

exclusive possession or control

#### nuclear -

using or derived from the energy of atomic nuclei

#### soar -

to rise, fly, or glide high and with little apparent effort

#### splintered -

broken into sharp, slender pieces

#### Group of Seven -

international organization officially established in 1985 to facilitate economic cooperation among the world's largest industrial nations



**deterioration** has been ever more **pronounced** in recent years. Dematerialization of production combined with automation means that labor loses value. People are losing their value or are no longer needed. The South, including Africa, which depends on raw materials and labor, suffers most.

Plunder of the South, including Africa, is now taking place under new names, such as 'aid' or 'free trade' or even 'development'. About \$220 billion was transferred from the Third World to commercial banks in the West during the period 1986-92. What the World Bank calls structural adjustment is potential *economic genocide*. Its essence is to raise prices in the so-called developing countries to world levels – yet average earnings in the South are seventy times lower than in the North. 'Free trade' means an expanding world market for the multinational corporations. It means breaking down customs, subsidies, tariffs, quota; ending cheap adaptations of patents – breaking everything that protects the weaker. It means protection when necessary for the stronger; witness the **wrangles** between the USA and Europe or Japan over 'free trade'. Double standards have always been used to defend privilege.

To expand their world market, the multinational corporations use economic power, buy governments and rulers, play politics, and have recourse to armed force where necessary through the UN, or away from it, according to circumstances. It becomes easier, however, if people can be convinced to do what the masters of the global economy want them to do.

This is where culture comes in. And culture includes identity, migrant words, and migrating worlds. Culture can serve in different ways to help the global market reach out all over the world and expand to the most distant regions. Culture can also serve to reduce or destroy, or prevent, or divide, or outflank, the resistance of people. At the disposal of culture today are powerful means which function across the whole world: the media.

To expand the global market, to increase the number of consumers, make sure that they buy what is produced for sale or offered as services, to develop needs and desires, and to multiply them, to create fever for consuming culture must play its role in developing certain values, certain patterns of behavior, certain visions of what is happiness or success in the world, certain attitudes towards sex, beauty, and love, including a cult of pornography and desire and violence. Culture must fashion the global consumer.

## AFRICA: A GIANT SUFFERING FRAGMENTATION

In this global economy Africa, so rich in potential power and resources, remains the poorest of the poor. It has a debt of \$317 billion – on which \$10 billion are paid as interest every year – 50 per cent of the cases of malaria in the world, 17 million cases of tuberculosis, and 45 percent of all the people below the UN poverty line.

The global culture which aims at expanding, **homogenizing** and unifying the world into one market seems to be contradicted by another movement towards cultural division, fragmentation and strife, towards the multiplication of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities. It mutilates against Pan-Africanism or, more precisely, against *African* unity. It serves the purpose of the multinationals. It is a post-modern application of the old **adage** 'divide and rule'.

The movement towards a global culture is therefore not contradicted by this post-modern tendency towards cultural fragmentation and identity struggles. They are two faces of the same coin. To unify power, economic or cultural, at the top, it is necessary to fragment power at the bottom. To maintain the global economy of the few, of the multinationals, unification must exist at the top, amongst the few, the very few. It must

**deterioration** -  
the process or condition of  
becoming worse

**pronounced** -  
strongly marked; distinct

**genocide** -  
the systematic and planned  
extermination of an entire  
national, racial, political, or  
ethnic group

**wrangle** -  
angry, noisy argument or  
dispute

**homogenising** -  
making uniform in consistency

**adage** -  
saying that sets forth a general  
truth and that has gained  
credit through long use



not take place at the bottom, in Africa, and especially not amongst the many, amongst the African peoples. There should be no African unity. People should remain divided, fragmented, confused. And new slogans, new **catchwords**, new worthy causes must be found to hide this truth. 'Identity', 'multiculturalism', 'respect for other cultures', 'cultural studies', the list will go on proliferating, so that as soon as we unveil one world another is found to replace it, so that our African peoples remain perpetually confused, so that our African intellectuals and thinkers and writers are drawn into the **noose**. Instead of struggling for economic identity, for political identity and for cultural identity, instead of making links between them, they forget that there is no culture without an economy to support it, without political institutions to defend it, without a land in which it can strike its roots, that 'cultures' and 'identities' are doomed without a material base, condemned to **wither** away, that the struggle for 'identity' is a total struggle, like the struggle for my personal identity depends on my **integrity**, my originality, my mind, my thoughts, but also on my material existence, my economic independence, my capacity to earn and produce.

Otherwise culture, identity, multiculturalism become an exhibition, a spectacle for the pleasure of others to see, to consume. Like the festivals of African culture I have seen in London, or Copenhagen or New York. Like the visibility of African-Americans in music, dance and sports and their almost total exclusion from the decisive levels of banking, production, business and other areas linked to intellectual or administrative or economic power.

### MIGRATING WORDS, MIGRATING WORLDS

Globalization has meant different things at different levels for different categories of people. Millions of farmers, immigrants, poorly-qualified urban workers, youth, and especially women in Africa suffer globalization's negative consequences. They are marginalized and excluded from the new world economy as a result of structural changes imposed by World Bank policies and multinational intervention. Africa, with its rivers and fertile lands, imports 10,000 million dollars' worth of foodstuffs every year.

The phenomenon of globalization has brought with it massive international migration on a scale never seen before in history. Whereas in the nineteenth century Europeans left their homes in great numbers to colonize the United States, today the poor populations of the South are traveling in an opposite direction. Accepted at one time as cheap sources of labor or in order to **lure** the best brains of the South into the scientific, technological, academic, information and intellectual institutions of the North, they are now being sent home again. Multinationals can exploit their physical and mental capacities more effectively in their home countries. Borders are closing, immigrants and refugees are being rejected, and **xenophobic** ideologies are once more on the rise. Xenophobic, **chauvinistic** and fundamentalist movements are also multiplying in the South. Fuelled by the quasi-genocidal economic difficulties, despair and loss of faith in past experiments and in the leaderships imposed by the new colonial powers, these movements are be-

#### catchword -

a well-known word or phrase, especially one that exemplifies a notion, class, or quality

#### noose -

a snare or trap

#### wither -

to cause to shrivel or fade

#### integrity -

steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code

#### lure -

to attract by wiles or temptation; entice

#### xenophobic -

having abnormal fear or hatred of the strange or foreign

#### chauvinistic -

prejudiced belief in the superiority of one's own gender, group, or kind

ing used in the power game to contain progressive forces, exert pressures and provide alternative regimes when others have done their time. They are also part of the identity game of fragmentation and the policies that divide. So where is the place of the migrant word, the migrant intellectual, the migrant writer from Africa in this global world of ours? What roles can he or she play, and what roles should he or she avoid?

### MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE MIGRANT WORLD IN EXILE

As I noted above, between 1992 and 1996 I was a migrant from my country, Egypt, to the United States.

I opened my eyes one morning just before dawn to the sound of knocks on the door of my flat in Giza. At the door was a police office in plain clothes accompanied by two other men. He had come to install armed guards around my home and to place bodyguards who would accompany me wherever I went. He told me the state had decided to take these measures to protect my life. They had information that indicated that my life was in danger, that the religious fundamentalists had put my name on a death list and that they might try to kill me. My life was now **at the mercy of** a state apparatus that I opposed and that throughout the long years had done its best to silence and oppress me in different ways. This oppression had included banning my books, firing me from my post in the Ministry of Health, and a period of imprisonment. The last measure taken against me had been the arbitrary and illegal closing down of the Egyptian branch of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association in June 1991 and the banning of its magazine *Noon*.

My life was thus caught in the **crossfire** between the state security forces and the terrorist movements that concealed their aims behind a religious facade. I did not know where the bullets would come from, who would aim their guns at me, and to what end – to fulfill the desire of the state, or to serve the aims of the fundamentalist movement? Would the fatal bullet be shot in my back by a bodyguard, or from the front by a youth wearing a religious mask?

As I sat in my home surrounded by enemies on every side, not knowing what to do, fortune intervened. An American student named Elizabeth had come to Cairo to pursue some studies and by sheer accident she decided to take a chance and visit me after failing to get through to me by phone. At one time she had been a student at Duke University, and when she saw the armed guards around my home she suddenly said to me, 'Why don't you leave?' I said, 'Where to? I cannot leave like that just to any place. I must know where I'm going, and what I'll do.'

Next day she phoned up a friend of hers at Duke, Professor Miriam Cooke, who taught Arabic literature, including several of my novels. And that's how I became a migrant and an exile, living in the USA for four years as a visiting professor at Duke. They were good years and I was happy to be there. But as the years went by I felt I must return *even if my life was in danger*. Back in my country even if there is a threat I am where I belong, I am more at ease. I am not an 'alien', as they call me in the United States. In the USA I'm treated as an alien even though I pay my taxes, the same taxes as a US citizen pays. I do not have the same rights. I cannot even get a certificate to say that I pay taxes in the USA so that I can be exempted from paying taxes elsewhere. So when I was in the USA I was paying double taxes, and if I had a book translated, which happens quite a lot, I was paying taxes in three places at the same time.

Within Duke University I was treated like other colleagues who were aliens: in a different way. I was not like a US professor, even though I might be more efficient and more gifted in many ways. It was not only a matter of pay. There was no equal pay for equal work. It was the way academia valued me as a person. It was as though

#### at the mercy of -

without any protection against;  
helpless before

#### crossfire -

confrontational situation  
in which opposing factions,  
forces, views, or opinions  
converge

#### holistic -

emphasising the importance  
of the whole and the  
interdependence of its parts

US professors alone had knowledge, alone would deal with theory, alone had higher thoughts. There were a few exceptions of course, but Africans or Arabs like me were of inferior intelligence and standing. And if we had thoughts, or theories, or contributions to make they were necessarily limited, localized, one-sided. The higher, **holistic**, global thinking was the realm of the American. He or she alone could see across the world, englobe it in a total vision, explore the horizons as they opened up, soar with daring up, up and far away. He or she was not limited by geography, or history, or language, or culture. He or she could speak of Africa with authority, deal with so-called Third World culture better than I could. To them this seemed natural, despite the outward veneer of polite tolerance. After all, the USA was the leader of the world, with a global reach. And English was the global language. All other languages were limited, local, they could not leap across frontiers to reach as far as English went. American culture alone was universal. All other cultures were narrow in scope, backward, biased, **prejudiced**, unable to deal with the world as it is today, unable even to deal with their own problems and find a way out. People in my part of the world were corrupt, accustomed to bend their backs, knew little about the human essence, and less about human rights. This is how identity was seen by the bulk of academics.

Their post-modern vision and thinking fragmented us into a colorful mosaic. Interesting they would say, delightful. To study the other gave them a thrill. But the other was not of great weight, not of real value in the future of the world. The other could not become a part of self. Identity was there, but it was there for intellectual fun.

Yet US academic life has left open a space, a limited space, for us African migrants. We can find a corner in which to rest, perhaps to find some peace from ruthless tracking down by corrupt states, from the gangs in the political game, or the bands of fundamentalists pointing guns. And we must admit that, after all, the US academy is more tolerant, more flexible, than the academy in Europe, or the universities of African countries from which we come. Here there is more room to learn, to argue, and to think.

I would never have found a place in England, or in Germany, or in France. Even Switzerland, the 'neutral' paradise, was closed to me. In the US academy there are men and women who welcome us, open their arms, help us to find our way, exchange their thoughts with us. They learn from us and we from them. We exchange on equal terms. We become friends. And together we forge a new image of what America is, of what it can be, a new image of Africa and of what it can become – a new image of a future world in which our identities are genuine though distinct, yet unified by a common endeavor for what is human and best in both of us.

I lived in North Carolina for four years. I was at the **margin** of the intellectual life in Duke, and of the wider spaces of thought outside the narrow confines drawn by forest trees around the campus grounds. I was hemmed in. My voice was not able to reach into the media because I was the bearer of a different thought, of an Arab-African identity misunderstood and distorted by those who monopolize the word, including the word of migrants like myself.

**prejudiced -**

being biased or having a  
preconceived belief or attitude

**margin -**

an edge and the area  
immediately adjacent to it;  
border

For despite all the talk about diversity, difference, respect for other cultures, despite the post-modern discourse about multiculturalism and identities, there is no space in the media, or even in the academy, for a real, in-depth discussion of who I am, and who you are. Of who each one of us really is. In the United States the same process of exclusion operates that we have in Africa. The mechanisms are different, more **sophisticated**, more economic, less evident. Africans appear here and there as samples.

My experiences with American TV and radio have shown me time and time again that my real identity is something that should be concealed. My sentences are amputated, my words are rearranged, my thoughts are distorted, even my features are made to be angry when I should smile, made to smile where I am rebelling. *Fresh Air* radio program wanted to interview me after the publication of one of my books by California Press. But when I expressed some of my opinions on the phone, the person responsible for the arrangements cancelled the interview. For when I, as an Arab woman, say what I think about what is happening in my region I am made to disappear or portrayed as an Arab terrorist thirsty for blood. If I say something with which my US interviewers agree, I am called a peacemaker, or a post-modern thinker. Never am I allowed to be myself and yet an Arab woman. At each moment I am robbed of my cue identity to fit in with the views of those otherwise in control.

After four years of **exile** I decided to go back to my country where I belong. To the land where I was born and where I shall die. To the people who speak my language and understand what I say. To the men and women with whom I have shared the struggle and with whom I will share the hope and the pain of the future.

## MY IDENTITY

I have tried to tell you about my identity. I hope I have been able to make you understand the African woman that I am. But we are so **engrossed** in defining our identities, when they are changing all the time. Instead of stressing what is different perhaps we should spend more time discovering what is common to you and me. Or perhaps we cannot do one without the other. Our humanity is common but it takes many forms.

For me there is no identity without home, no identity without a land on which I can stand, without a language, without the means to keep it alive and help it to flourish and grow, without an organization and a pen with which to struggle for freedom and justice and love and peace, for women to know that they are human beings, for blacks to feel that all the colors in the world are what make it glow.

I am an Arab woman fighting for a peace that will last; not surrendering to the US and Israeli nuclear arsenal, nor the peace that fundamentalism wishes to impose by bullets and terror in the United States and also in Egypt; not the peace of fanatic religious movements, whether Muslim, or Christian, or Jewish.

I am against the identities built on religion because the history of religion was written in the endless rivers of blood flowing in the name of God, in the name of a land chosen by Him for His people, in the name of any god-chosen race or nation on earth. I am against a nationalism, a patriotism, that does not see the rest of the world. I am against privilege of the rich against the poor, against privilege of man against woman.

I am an Arab woman. But in my body run the rivers of Africa, that flow through Africa from Jinja and Tana. I am African and Arab and Egyptian because my genes were drawn from all these, because my history goes back in Egypt for seven thousand years, to Isis and Ma'at and Noon. I am a woman who is Arab, who writes in Arabic, struggles in the Arab region and belongs to the world.

- sophisticated -**  
ahead in development; complex  
or intricate
- exile -**  
enforced removal from one's  
native country
- engrossed -**  
wholly absorbed as in thought
- Mediterranean -**  
of or relating to or  
characteristic of or located  
near the Mediterranean Sea

Is my identity **Mediterranean**? Some people say Egypt is not an African country but is in fact linked not only geographically but also culturally to the Mediterranean basin. They organize conferences and meetings, establish institutions and carry out other activities which group the Mediterranean countries including Egypt in a cultural complex. They bestow upon us a new 'identity', separating culture and economics, culture and the right of people to self-determination, culture and the rights of the Palestinians to their land. They forget that the Lebanese have been chased out of south Lebanon and that the Syrians have been forced to accept the Israeli occupation of Golan.

Am I a woman whose past and future are linked to Black Africa? Or am I a white Egyptian whose land is bathed by the Mediterranean Sea like Italy and Greece and France and Spain? Does this make North Africa a part of Europe rather than of the continent from which it draws its name? Does the Sahara Desert decide my culture for me?

This difference of opinion related to identity involves an argument about the statue of the **sphinx** that lies at the foot of the pyramids not far from my house in Giza. Was Abul-Houl black or white? Was his nose fleshy and flat like that of black Africans or was it sharp and common but lost its shape when Napoleon fired his guns during the French invasion and clipped it off? And Cleopatra: were her ancestors black or white? Who discovered the continent of America? Was it a black man from Mali who sent his ships across the ocean more than two centuries before Christopher Columbus set out from Spain? Was the beginning of Greek civilization a movement that spread across the Mediterranean from Egypt as Martin Bernal maintains in his book *Black Athena*?<sup>1</sup> Or was Greek civilization newborn in Greece and therefore European in origin, untainted by the Egyptian civilization that had preceded it and developed over thousands of years before we heard of Greece?

Do I inherit my identity from my female ancestors Ma'at (the goddess of justice and truth), Isis (the goddess of knowledge and freedom), Sekhmek (the goddess of medicine and health) and Hypathia (the philosopher born and burnt in Alexandria with the library of the city)?

The struggle over history, over identities and their origin, is part of the struggle over power which has never ceased throughout the centuries. It is those who possess military and nuclear and economic power, those who invade us and take away our material and cultural sustenance, those who rob us of our own riches and our labor and our history, who tell us what our identity is. Throughout the ages it has been like this.

How can I, Nawal El Saadawi, have an identity if my history is **effaced**? If my female ancestors are forgotten, buried in **oblivion**? If Ma'at, Isis, and Sekhmet are not spoken of? If Khadija the wife of Prophet Muhammad (who was the first to call him Prophet, to tell him not to fear or doubt but go on with courage) is not spoken of, although if it were not for her courage Islam might have been born not through him but perhaps through someone else.

**sphinx -**

one of the huge statues built by the ancient Egyptians, with the body of a lion and the head of a man

**efface -**

to rub or wipe out; erase

**oblivion -**

the state of being disregarded or forgotten

<sup>1</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasian Roots of Classical Civilization*, Rutgers University Press, 1987.

Is it I who decides what my identity is or those who have the power, and the money, and the arms and the media, and the global market and the multinational corporations in their hands?

How can I defend my real identity against the international and national forces that wish to take it away from me, or distort it, or change it into something else, into the identity of a slave who does and says what he or she is told, who speaks the language of the masters of this world?

A few days ago, in Cairo, I read the weekly issue of the most important weekly women's magazine in Egypt (24 March 1996). This women's magazine was first published after the Egyptian government authorities took the decision to ban our women's magazine Noon.

The magazine in question, *Nisf Al-Dunia*, whose Arabic name means 'Half the World', was celebrating 8 March, International Women's Day. The first page was an editorial written by a man whose name is Ibrahim Nafi. He is head of the biggest newspaper complex in Egypt, Al-Ahrarn. In his editorial defining feminine identity, or rather women's identity, Ibrahim Nafi took as his reference Jean Jacques Rousseau, whom he quoted as having written that a woman is like a cat – if you show affection to her she keeps rubbing up against you. This is the identity that the man in charge of this women's magazine finds suitable to describe the traits that distinguish a woman. If she is treated well she turns her back on those who were good to her: she is traitorous and not to be trusted. If she is treated badly she becomes servile and tries to **endear** herself.

On the front page there was the photograph of a woman **ostensibly** depicting the ideal woman, with a **demure** face like a kitten's, covered in makeup: a post-modern veil hiding her real features just like the **hijab** hides the face of women, their history, their authenticity, their true identity, in the name of religion.

## A ROLE FOR MIGRANT INTELLECTUALS

Many of those who have migrated from Africa have built their lives, and see their future, elsewhere. Some of them would like to go back but cannot for political or other reasons. What role can the migrant world and the migrant word they carry with them fulfill?

When speaking of cultural, multicultural or intercultural writings and studies in the academy, in various institutions, or in conferences, we Africans should struggle against the tendency to deal with issues of identity, of ethnicity, of language and of national or local or **subaltern** cultures as such, separately. To separate, to deal with culture and identities apart from the economic and the political, serves the purposes of the **neo-colonialist** approach. We cannot understand the role which culture plays, or how it is and what it does, if we fail to link it to the power struggle, to the dynamics of gender and class, to rulers and people, to economic interests. Perhaps cultural, multicultural and intercultural studies need to identify themselves more clearly. What path or paths would enable cultural studies to prove a greater concern with and solidarity for people and their cultures in the African continent? How can we transfer knowledge and technology to those working in the area of culture without appropriating them to the power system? Does this not involve avoiding being appropriated ourselves or at least maintaining a sufficient distance so that we see through eyes that remain focused on Africa as it is and can be in the twenty-first century?

The forces of globalization are homogenizing indigenous African cultures everywhere.

In villages that continue to be deprived of the basic necessities of life it is possible to see Star TV, Zee TV, cable TV and blue movies. The cultural invasion by consumerism is spreading, creating a severe conflict between what is available and what is desired, the

### endear -

to make beloved or very sympathetic

### ostensibly -

from appearances alone

### demure -

affectedly shy, modest, or reserved

### hijab -

the headscarf worn by Muslim women, sometimes including a veil that covers the face except for the eyes

### subaltern -

lower in position or rank; secondary

### neo-colonialist -

one believing in policy whereby a major power uses economic and political means to perpetuate or extend its influence over underdeveloped nations or areas



invasion by images is critical. For the first time in the history of cultures like ours we are watching the homogenization of Western or Northern culture into a consolidated, alluring image of the other, of a liberal, capitalist, materially and sexually **enticing** market, of a world that in comparison with our life we can see only with envy and even reverence.

What can writers and multicultural scholars or academicians from Africa do to appraise critically the image created, which we know is quite false?

When cultural and identity studies speak of the 'other', the two poles involved are usually North and South. Yet I as an Egyptian and we as Africans can look in our continent to many directions, to the north or the south, to the east or the west, to the sixty or so countries or entities that exist in Africa. Religious, ethnic and racial strife are increasing the gaps and reinforcing barriers between people in many parts of the world. The 'other' is a matter related not only to North and South but also to South and South, to differences and similarities between African countries where culture and cultural identity are concerned. What we might call intercultural studies and writings can therefore be useful in bridging the **dichotomies** of a bipolar world, in coming closer to a global world not from above but from below. In such a global world, people would understand one another and come closer – despite 'identities' and 'diversities' – through joint ventures, writing, and research, rather than maintaining a hegemonic, pyramidal world where culture and identities are decided in the boardrooms of multinational media companies and institutions run or influenced by them.

The Orient, or the South, or Africa have served long enough as sources of self definition to the West or the North. This process has been going on for over four centuries. The mechanism used has remained the same: taking the societies and the ways of life, in Africa and elsewhere in the South, out of their socioeconomic and historical context so that they appear unreal, strange, foreign; distancing them as much as you can. And this process still happens on a wide scale today. Time and time again I have attended African art festivals, or cultural events, or exhibitions, that were displays of disparate samples brought to entertain and to delight without any reference to the societies, the miseries they represent and the factors behind them, including relations with the North.

Books that are translated are a glaring example of this tendency to choose the exotic or the strange or to misrepresent. French publishing houses are past masters at this art, more often than not aided and abetted by North African Arabs or sub-Saharan Africans living in France. US publishing houses are rapidly picking up the same trick. The modern writings, novels produced in Africa and the South, especially if they deal with the reality of relations between Africa and the North, or with gender and class, are not considered to be suitable consumption in the North.

New media technology has opened up wide vistas to small groups, and even to individuals. In the countries of Africa even the production of long feature films is relatively inexpensive, probably around \$300,000. My son directed a short feature film called *Bride of the Nile* for a production cost of \$12,000, and it won six international prizes. The possibilities opened up in the cultural field by film and above all by video are enormous.

**enticing -**

highly attractive and able to arouse hope or desire

**dichotomy -**

division into two usually contradictory parts or opinions



Africans in academia, in media and other institutions can think along these lines; the material costs are limited and can be found. Migrant Africans can cooperate with local groups, and this form of North-South networking can do a lot in many fields. Problems exist, but how much have we Africans in northern countries, including the United States, been oriented to think this way? How much have we thought of building up the expertise and knowledge of people still living in the countries from which we came?

There is so much that migrant Africans can do. They are living in advanced countries. They have access to knowledge and technological means that their brothers and sisters at home are deprived of. By networking with them they can help in many ways build up a global solidarity from below. Step by step, over the years, they can help to resist marginalization of the millions back home. Step by step they can participate in creating a global force from below, an alliance of peoples united in a universal human endeavor which is able to respect cultures and identities and yet unite in struggle for true democracy, justice, peace and a better future for all people.

Some of the African emigrants in the North are working in academia, in culture, in science, in the media. Many of them are intellectuals and writers, and quite a number have become prominent or even **eminent** contributors to the fields in which they work.

It is natural that those of them who are involved in literature, the arts, the humanities, in writing and culture should become involved in multicultural and intercultural thought, in the problems of identity, of migrants' words, migrants' worlds, and migrants' thoughts. They represent more than one culture or possess a dual one. They reflect this dual culture and are better equipped to navigate between the two cultures to understand the changes that are producing a new international body 'Mankind and Womankind'. The mutual fertilization of two cultures is an asset, or can be an asset if well used, used for their people, for their migrant communities, and for their fellow citizens in what has now become their home. The dual culture can give insights into the twin poles of North and South, Africa and the United States. Migrant intellectuals have at their disposal all the accumulated knowledge provided by modern information technology, and its means, as well as the discipline, the training, the frame of mind, the habits, which motivate research, understanding and initiative. If courageous, these intellectuals can help to bridge the gap between Africa and the North, to bring people closer, to emphasize what is good, and to criticize what is negative on both sides.

However, they cannot replace those who continue to struggle and work at home in Africa. Representation is never easy. And there is no real representation if you are not part of people's everyday life, of their failures and their successes, their misery and their joy, their despair and their passion, their margins of freedom and their prison bars. Some Africans have thought that they can represent their people better than their counterparts in Africa because of the sophistication, the means, the knowledge at their disposal. This is an illusion. This is what the global powers tend to encourage. They want to separate the intellectuals and the peoples who resist at home. They want to play another power game, to stand them up one against the other. We Africans should not let them play that game.

In the early part of 1996, I was invited to Paris to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March. The invitation came from Iranian women exiled in France and in other countries of the world. Those women have never ceased struggling to change the Iranian regime, which under the Shah oppressed women and the poor in the name of modernization and now oppresses them in the name of the mullahs and Islam. They have formed an alliance, a front of women and men, which is growing in strength. Their resistance movement is well organized and **enlightened** in its approach. They have a parliament in exile composed of 560 members, of which 52 per cent are women.

In 1993 this parliament elected a woman as president of the new Iranian regime that they are struggling to create. These people have succeeded in developing a new personality for both men and women, a new identity, where gender discrimination is disappearing through the conscious effort of women, but also men. They want to build a different country, a different economy where the gap between the rich and poor is gradually bridged, where Islam, or 'aid', or 'development' under the guidance and the pressures of the World Bank can no longer be used for the benefit of the few at the expense of those who work. This is a new identity. It is created by people who struggle in exile, who see exile not only as the path to self-improvement, but also as a chance to help in changing things in their own country. For them, exile is no longer just exile. It is a way to change the world, by changing the societies from which we came. The migrant word is no longer just a changing word, it is an *act*, it is a part of the struggle against injustice and oppression.

This struggle for change, for revolution, can unite us across differences in color, in race, in language, in culture, in sex, in identity. To end, let me quote from an interview given by the former **Black Panther** activist and journalist Mumia Abu Jamal, while on death row waiting to die (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, Cairo, 21-27 March 1996):

The color of power in the courtroom can often be white. And the color of dispower in the courtroom can often be black. But the most consistent variable that determines power in the courtroom is the color of green, the colour of money, the power of wealth.

He says:

We spent our energy in professional illusion: fighting with words, debating identity, culture, and diversity without understanding that the essential truth, the essential element that is real, is revolution, and that revolution must **enthuse**, feed and give life to every facet of our being or else will fail.

And he says:

The spirit of freedom, of human liberation, cannot be held within one vessel. It is like holding air in a glass: The rest of the area around that glass is not a vacuum, it doesn't stop there. It's the same for the spirit of revolution. I am just one vessel. There are many other vessels. Let's keep pouring and pouring it on until it becomes the air we breathe.

**SOURCE:** El Saadawi, Nawal. *The Nawal El Saadawi Reader*. London and New York: Zed Books, 1997, pp. 117-133.

**enlightened -**

highly educated; having extensive information or understanding

**Black Panther -**

member of a militant Black political party founded in 1965 to end political dominance by Whites

**enthuse -**

to cause to become excited or interested

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How does El Saadawi see 'identity politics' in Egypt, the Middle East, and the Arab world?
2. "'Identity' is a discourse," says El Saadawi. How do you understand this statement?
3. What is El Saadawi's vision of 'culture' and how culture is used in the international economic system?
4. Speaking about her desire to return to Egypt, El Saadawi says, "Back in my country, even if there is a threat, I am where I belong, I am more at ease." Why does she come to such a conclusion?
5. What is the connection that El Saadawi draws between economy, politics and identity?
6. El Saadawi calls on people to organize from below and to strive toward a certain vision of society. Why do you think she suggests this? Do you think she believes that people are inherently inclined towards this type of action?

**REVIEW QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you give a Freudian reading of El Saadawi's complex identity? Can you give a Darwinian reading? How would El Saadawi respond?
2. El Saadawi is a modern writer responding to specific social and economic conditions in the modern world. Does human nature still play a role in her response?
3. Education is very important for El Saadawi. What might she say about Wollstonecraft's, Tagore's, and Inayat Khan's observations on education?

**ADDITIONAL READING:**

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## ABUL HASAN ALI AL-MASU'DI THE MEADOWS OF GOLD

Born some time before the year 893 CE in Baghdad, Abu-L-Hasan Ali Bin Al-Hussain Al-Masu'di died circa 957 CE in Cairo. During the approximately 65 years of his life, Al-Masudi traveled far and wide through the Islamic empire and beyond, visiting countries as diverse as Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Iran, India, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, and Arabia. Possessed by a vast curiosity about the world, its peoples, religions, customs, geography, and history, Al-Masu'di wrote no fewer than 36 works on these subjects. Of all his works, by far the most famous is "The Meadows of Gold." This work is a universal history, the main focus of which is the lives of the Abbasid Caliphs. Narrated in a series of anecdotes, these lives of the Caliphs give us a unique window into the centuries when the Islamic world reached its political, military, economic, and cultural peak. What distinguishes Al-Masu'di, and many of his 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century contemporaries in the Islamic world, was his curiosity, his desire to travel and to discover the world for himself, and then to write a history of his times that reveals all that was both laudable and contemptible in the men and women who guided the destiny of the caliphate. Mistrusted by many Shiites because of his fascination with the Sunni Abbasids, and rejected by many Sunnis because of his obvious sympathy for many Shiite doctrines, the works of Al-Masu'di have survived all of his detractors, fascinating historians and non-historians alike over the last millennium.

Let us praise God, whose works we should study, and celebrate and glorify. May God grant his blessing and his peace to Mohammed, chief of the prophets, and to all his holy **posterity**.

### THE CALIPHATE OF ABU 'BAKR, THE TRUTHFUL

'Abu 'Bakr surpassed all the Muhammadans in his **austerity**, his **frugality**, and the simplicity of his life and outward appearance. During his rule he wore but a single linen garment and a cloak. In this simple dress he gave audience to the chiefs of the noblest Arab tribes and to the kings of Yemen. The latter appeared before him dressed in the richest robes, covered with gold embroideries and wearing splendid crowns. But at the sight of the Caliph, shamed by his mingling of pious humility and earnest gravity, they followed his example and renounced their gorgeous attire.

### THE CALIPHATE OF AL MANSUR, THE BUILDER OF BAGHDAD

Al Mansur, the third Caliph of the house of Abbas, succeeded his brother Es-Saffah ("the blood-shedder"). He was a prince of great **prudence**, integrity, and **discretion**; but these good qualities were sullied by his extraordinary **covetousness** and occasional cruelty. He patronized poets and learned men, and was **endowed** with a remarkable memory. It is said that he could remember a poem after having only once heard it. He also had a slave who could commit to memory anything that he had heard "twice, and a slave-girl who could do the same with what she had heard three times.

**posterity** -

future generations

**austerity** -

severe and rigid economy

**frugality** -

careful management of anything valuable which expends nothing unnecessarily

**prudence** -

wisdom in the way of caution and provision

**discretion** -

ability or power to decide responsibly

**covetousness** -

strong or inordinate desire of obtaining and possessing some supposed good

**endowed** -

provided or supplied

**ode** -

lyric poem of some length

One day there came to him a poet bringing a congratulatory **ode**, and Al Mansur said to him: "If it appears that anybody knows it by heart, or that anyone composed it – that is to say, that it was brought here by some other person before thee – we will give thee no recompense for it; but if no one knows it, we will give thee the weight in money of that upon which it is written.

So the poet repeated his poem, and the Caliph at once committed it to memory, although it contained a thousand lines. Then he said to the poet: "Listen to it from me," and he recited it perfectly. Then he added: "And this slave, too, knows it by heart." This was the case, as he had heard it twice, once from the poet and once from the Caliph. Then the Caliph said: "And this slave-girl, who is concealed by the curtain, she also recollects it." So she repeated every letter of it, and the poet went away unrewarded.

Another poet, El Asmany, was among the intimate friends and table-companions of the Caliph. He composed some very difficult verses, and scratched them upon a fragment of a marble pillar, which he wrapped in a cloak and placed on the back of a camel. Then he disguised himself like a foreign Arab, and fastened on a face-cloth, so that nothing was visible but his eyes, and came to the Caliph and said: "Verily I have lauded the Commander of the Faithful in a 'Kasidah'" (ode).

Then said Al Mansur: "O brother of the Arabs! If the poem has been brought by anyone beside thee, we will give thee no recompense for it; otherwise we will bestow on thee the weight in money of that upon which it is written." So El Asmany recited the Kasidah, which, as it was extraordinarily **intricate** and difficult, the Caliph could not commit to memory. He looked toward the slave and the girl, but neither of them had learned it. So he cried: "O brother of the Arabs! Bring hither that whereon it is written, that we may give thee its weight."

Then said the seeming Arab: "O my Lord! Of a truth I could find no paper to write it upon; but I had amongst the things left me at my father's death a piece of a marble column which had been thrown aside as useless, so I scratched the Kasidah upon that." Then the Caliph had no help for it but to give him its weight in gold, and this nearly exhausted his treasury. The poet took it and departed. When he had gone away, the Caliph said: "It forces itself upon my mind that this is El Asmany." So he commanded him to be brought back, and lo! It was El Asmany, who said: "O Commander of the Faithful! Verily the poets are poor and are fathers of families, and **thou dost debar** them from receiving anything by the power of thy memory and the memories of this slave and this slave-girl. But **wert** thou to bestow upon them what thou could easily spare, they might with it support their families, and it could not injure thee."

One day the poet Thalibi recited an ode in the presence of Al Mansur, hoping for a reward. When he had finished, the Caliph said to him: "Will you have three hundred dinars from my treasury, or hear three wise sayings from my lips?" "Oh," said the poet, anxious to curry favor with his master, "durable wisdom is better than transitory treasure." "Very well," said the Caliph, "the first word of wisdom is: When your garment is worn, don't sew on a new **patch**, for it looks badly." "Alas! Alas!" wailed the poet, "there go a hundred dinars at one blow." The Caliph smiled, and continued: "The second piece of advice is: When you **anoint** your beard, don't anoint the bottom of it, lest you soil your clothes." "Ah!" sighed the poet, "there go the second hundred." Again the Caliph smiled, and continued: "The third piece of advice – " "O Caliph," cried the poet in an agony: "keep the third piece of advice to yourself and let me have the last hundred **dinars**." Then the Caliph laughed outright and ordered five hundred dinars to be paid him from the treasury.

**intricate -**

having many complexly  
arranged elements

**thou -**

you

**dost -**

do

**debar -**

to forbid, hinder, or prevent

**wert -**

were

**patch -**

reinforcement or repair of a  
worn area, hole, or tear

**anoint -**

to apply oil, ointment

**dinar -**

any of several units of gold and  
silver currency formerly used  
in the Middle East

## THE CALIPHATE OF AL MAHDI

Al Mahdi, the third Caliph of the Abbassid dynasty, succeeded his father, Abu Jafar Al Mansur [774 CE]. He was as prodigal as his father was **avaricious**, and rapidly squandered his vast inheritance. Al Mansur had appointed as his instructor, before he succeeded to the throne, Sharki Ibn Kotami, who was learned in all the lore and traditions of the Arabs. One evening Al Mahdi asked his preceptor to **divert** him with some amusing **anecdote**. “I obey, Prince. May God protect you,” answered Sharki. “They relate that a certain King of Hirah had two courtiers whom he loved equally with himself. They never quitted his society night or day, in the palace or on a journey. He took no decision without consulting them, and his wishes coincided with theirs. Thus they lived together a long time; but one evening the king, having drunk to excess, drew his sword from the **sheath**, and, rushing upon his two friends, killed them; then he fell into a drunken slumber.

The next morning, when told of what he had done, he cast himself upon the earth, biting it in his fury, weeping for his friends, and **bewailing** the loss of them. He fasted for some days, and swore that for the rest of his life he would **abstain** from the beverage which had deprived him of reason. Then he had them buried, and erected a shrine over their remains, to which he gave the title, ‘El-Ghareiain’ (The Two Effigies). He commanded, in addition, that no persons should pass this monument without prostrating themselves.

“Now, like the laws of the **Medes** and Persians, every custom set up by a King of Hirah could not be changed, but became a hard-and-fast tradition, handed on from generation to generation. The command, therefore, of the King was rigidly obeyed: his subjects, of low and high degree, never passed before the double tomb without prostrating themselves. This usage gradually acquired the binding force of a religious rite. The King had ordered that any one who refused to conform to it should be punished with death after expressing two wishes, which would be granted, no matter what they were.

“One day a fuller passed, bearing on his back a bundle of clothes and a **mallet**. The guardians of the mausoleum ordered him to kneel down. He refused. They threatened him with death. He persisted in his refusal. They brought him before the King, whom they informed of the matter. ‘Why did you refuse to bow down?’ asked the King. ‘I did bow down,’ answered the man; ‘they are lying.’ ‘No; you are the liar!’ said the King. ‘Express two wishes; they shall be granted, and then you will die.’ ‘Nothing, then, can save me from death after those men have accused me?’ asked the fuller. ‘Nothing.’ ‘Very well,’ replied the fuller, ‘here is my wish: I wish to strike the King on the head with this mallet.’ ‘Fool!’ answered the King. ‘It were better worth your while to let me enrich those whom you leave behind you.’ ‘No,’ said the fuller; ‘I only wish to strike the King on the back of his head.’

“The King then addressed his ministers: ‘What do you think,’ he said to them, ‘of the wish of this madman?’ ‘Your Majesty,’ they answered, ‘you yourself have instituted this law: your Majesty knows better than anyone that the violation of law is a shame, a **calamity**, a crime which involves **damnation**. Besides, after having

- avaricious** -  
immoderately desirous of  
wealth or gain
- divert** -  
to turn aside from a course or  
direction
- anecdote** -  
short account of an interesting  
incident
- sheath** -  
case for a blade, as of a sword
- bewailing** -  
crying over; lamenting
- abstain** -  
to refrain from something by  
one's own choice
- Mede** -  
closely related to the Persians,  
inhabiting ancient Media
- mallet** -  
hammer with a large wooden  
head, used to strike a item  
without damaging its surface
- calamity** -  
lasting distress, or severe  
affliction
- damnation** -  
condemnation to everlasting  
punishment; doom

violated one law, you will violate a second, then a third; your successors will do the same, and all our laws will be profaned.' The King replied: 'Get this man to ask anything he likes; provided he lets me off, I am ready to grant all his requests, even to the half of my kingdom.'"

"They laid these proposals before the fuller, but in vain; he declared that he had no other wish but to strike the King. The latter, seeing that the man was thoroughly resolved, **convoked** a public assembly. The fuller was introduced. He took his mallet and struck the King on the back of the head so violent a blow that he fell from his throne and lay stretched on the ground unconscious. Subsequently he lay ill with fever for six months, and was so severely injured that he could only drink a drop at a time. At last he got well, recovered the use of his tongue and could eat and drink. He asked for news of the fuller. On being told that he was in prison, he **summoned** him and said: 'There is still a wish **retaining** to you: express it, so that I may order your death according to law.'

'Since it is absolutely necessary that I must die,' replied the fuller, 'I wish to strike you another blow on the head.' At these words the King was seized with dismay and exclaimed that it was all over with him. At last he said to the fuller: '**Wretch!** renounce a claim which is profitless to you. What advantage have you reaped from your first wish? Ask for something else, and whatever it is, I will grant it.' 'No,' said the man, 'I only demand my right – the right to strike you once more.'

"The King again consulted his ministers, who answered that the best thing for him was to resign himself to death, in obedience to the law. 'But,' said the King, 'if he strikes me again, I shall never be able to drink any more; I know what I have already suffered.' 'We can not help that, your Majesty,' answered the ministers. 'Finding himself in this extremity, the king said to the fuller: 'Answer, fellow! That day when you were brought hither by the guardians of the mausoleum, did not I hear you declare that you had **prostrated** yourself and that they had slandered you?' 'Yes, I did say so,' answered the fuller, 'but you would not believe me.' The King jumped from his seat, embraced the fuller, and exclaimed: 'I swear that you are more truthful than these **rascals**, and that they have lied at your expense. I give you their place, and authorize you to inflict upon them the punishment they have deserved.'"

Al Madhi laughed heartily on hearing this story, complimented the narrator, and rewarded him generously.

The following anecdotes are related by Faika, the daughter of Abdallah: "We were one day with the Caliph Al Mahdi, who had just returned from Anbar, to which he had made a pleasure excursion, when Ar-Rabi, the **chamberlain**, came in, holding a piece of leather on which some words were written in **charcoal**, and to which was attached a seal composed of clay mixed with ashes and bearing the impression of the Caliph's signet-ring. 'Commander of the Faithful,' said Ar-Rabi, 'I never saw anything more extraordinary than this document; I received it from an Arab of the desert who was crying out: "This is the Commander of the Faithful's letter! Show me where to find the man who is called Ar-Rabi, for it is to him that he told me to deliver it!"'

"Al Mahdi took the letter and laughed; he then said: 'It is true: this is my writing and this is my seal.'

'Shall I relate how it happened?' To this we replied: 'If it please the Commander of the Faithful.' Then he said: 'I went out to hunt yesterday evening when the shower was over. The next morning a thick **mist** overwhelmed us, and I lost sight of my companions; I then suffered such cold, hunger, and thirst as God only knows, and I lost my way besides. At that moment came to my mind a form of prayer which my

- convoked** -  
caused to assemble in a meeting; convened
- summon** -  
to request to appear
- retaining** -  
designed for (usually temporary) retention
- wretch** -  
miserable, unfortunate person
- prostrate** -  
to put or throw flat with the face down, as in submission or ado
- rascal** -  
unscrupulous, dishonest person
- chamberlain** -  
high-ranking official in various royal courts
- charcoal** -  
a dark grayish brown to black pencil made of wood embers
- mist** -  
water vapor which has condensed and clouds the view; fog



father, Al Mansur, had taught me, saying that his father, Muhammad, had learned it from his grandfather, Ali, who had been taught it by his father, Abdallah, the son of Abbas. It was this: "In the name of God," and "By the might of God! We have no power or force but in God! I fly to God for protection! I confide in God: God **sufficeth** me! He protecteth, sufficeth, directeth, and healeth, from fire and food, from the fall of house, and from evil death!"

'When I had uttered these words, God raised up a light before me, and I went toward it, and lo! I found this very Arab of the desert in his tent, with a fire which he had been just lighting up. "Arab of the desert," said I. "Hast thou withal to treat a guest?" "**Dismount!**" said he. Then I dismounted, and he said to his wife: "Bring here that **barley**"; and she brought it. "Grind it," said he; and she began to grind it. I then said to him: "Give me a drink of water"; and he brought me a skin in which was a little milk mixed with water, and I drank thereof a drink such as I had never drunk before, it was so sweet! And he gave me one of his saddle-cloths, and I laid my head on it, and never did I sleep a sounder sleep.

'On awaking, I saw him seize on a poor miserable sheep and kill it, when his wife said to him: "Beware, wretched man! Thou hast slain thyself and thy children; our nourishment came from this sheep, and yet thou hast killed it! What then have we to live upon?" On this I said: "Do not mind. Bring the sheep here"; and I opened it with the knife I wore in my boot, and I took out the liver, and having split it open, I placed it upon the fire and I ate thereof. I then said to him: "Dost thou want anything? I shall give thee a written order for it." On this he brought me that piece of leather, and I wrote on it with a bit of burnt wood which I picked up at his feet – that very note. I then set this seal on it, and told him to go and ask for one Ar-Rabi, to whom he was to give it.' This note contained an order for five hundred thousand dirhams, and Al Mahdi exclaimed on hearing it: 'By Allah! I meant only fifty thousand, but since five hundred thousand are written in it, I shall not diminish the sum one single dirham; and were there no more in the treasury, he should have it. So give him beasts of burden, and let him take it away.'

"In a very short time that Arab had numerous flocks of camels and sheep, and his dwelling became a **halting-place** for those who were going on the pilgrimage, and it received the name of the 'Dwelling of the host of Al Mahdi, the Commander of the Faithful.'"

On another occasion it is recorded that Al Mahdi went out hunting, and his horse ran away with him until he came to the hut of an Arab.<sup>b</sup> And the Caliph cried: "O Arab! Hast thou wherewith to feed a guest?" The Arab replied, "Yes," and produced for him a barley loaf, which Al Mahdi ate; then he brought some wine in a bottle, and gave it to him to drink. And when Al Mahdi had drunk it, he said "O brother of the Arabs, dost thou know who I am?" "No, by Allah," he replied. "I am one of the personal attendants of the Commander of the Faithful," said Al Mahdi. "May Allah prosper thee in thy situation!" returned the Arab. Then he poured out a second glass, and when Al Mahdi had drunk it, he cried: "O Arab,

- suffice** -  
to be equal to a specified task;  
be capable
- dismount** -  
to get off or down
- barley** -  
a cereal grass
- halting-place** -  
stopping place

dost thou know who I am?" He answered: "Thou hast stated that thou art one of the personal attendants of the Commander of the Faithful." "No," said Al Mahdi, "but I am one of the chief officers of the Commander of the Faithful." "May thy country be enlarged and thy wishes fulfilled!" exclaimed the Arab. Then he poured out a third glass for him, and when Al Mahdi had drained it, he said: "O Arab! Dost thou know who I am?" The man replied: "Thou hast made me believe thou art one of the chief officers of the Commander of the Faithful." "Not so," said Al Mahdi, "but I am the Commander of the Faithful himself."

Then the Arab took the bottle and put it away and said: "By Allah! wert thou to drink the fourth, thou wouldst declare thyself to be Mohammed the Prophet of God!" Then Al Mahdi laughed till he could laugh no more. And lo! The horsemen surrounded them, and the Princes and nobles dismounted before him, and the heart of the Arab stood still. But Al Mahdi said to him: "Fear not! Thou hast done no wrong." And he ordered a robe and a sum of money to be given him.

### The Death of Al Mahdi

Tabari, the historian, describes the death of Al Mahdi as taking place in the following tragic manner. Among his wives there were two for whom he seems to have entertained an equal degree of affection; but as one of them seemed to the other to have the preference in his heart, the latter, whose name was Hassanna, conceived a bitter jealousy against her rival, and determined to be **avenged** on her. In order to accomplish her purpose, she prepared a dish of confectionery, in which she mixed a **malignant** poison, and sent it as an offering to her rival. As the **damsel** who was **dispatched** upon the errand happened to pass beneath one of the balconies of the palace, Al Mahdi, who was watching the sunset, saw her. The **confectionery**, which was uncovered, attracting his notice, he asked the messenger whither she was bound. She having informed him, he took and ate heartily of it, saying: "Hassanna will, I am sure, be better pleased that I should partake of her sweets than any one else." In a few hours he was a corpse.

## THE CALIPH HAROUN AL RASHID

Haroun Al Rashid became Caliph in the year CE 786, and he ranks among the Caliphs who have been most distinguished by eloquence, learning, and generosity. During the whole of his reign he performed the pilgrimage to Mecca or carried on war with the unbelievers nearly every year. His daily prayers exceeded the number fixed by the law, and he used to perform the pilgrimage on foot, an act which no previous Caliph had done.

**avenged** -  
to inflict a punishment or  
penalty in return for

**malignant** -  
disposed to do evil

**damsel** -  
young woman or girl

**dispatch** -  
send on specific business or to  
a specific location

**confectionery** -  
candies and other confections  
considered as a group

### The Fall of the Barmecides

Haroun Al Rashid had such an extraordinary affection to Jafar the Barmecide that he could not bear to be one hour apart from him. Rashid loved his own sister Abbasah also with an extreme affection, and could not bear to be long absent from her. She was a woman of extraordinary beauty, and exceeded all in science and knowledge. Zobeidah, who was the chief favorite of the Caliph, and all her dependents were opposed to Abbasah.

One day Rashid said to Jafar: “Thou knowest how great is my affection to thee, and also how greatly I love my sister Abbasah, and that I can not live without the company of either of you. I have thought of an **expedient** whereby you may both accompany me in the same assembly – that a marriage take place between you. That will legalize your meeting and authorize your beholding one another. But all this is on condition that you never meet except I am a third in the party.”

When Jafar heard this, the world on all sides grew black with darkness to his eyes. Distressed and **confounded**, he fell at the feet of Rashid, and said: “Commander of the Faithful, wilt thou slay me? From the time of Adam to our day no servant has been admitted to such confidence as that he should marry with the family of his lords and benefactors; or if any one hath treacherously imagined such a thing, very shortly he hath been reduced to nothingness, and all men have counted him a bread-and-salt traitor. And what sin hath thy slave committed, O Commander of the Faithful, that thou **shouldest** seek after his blood? Is this the reward of all my services and devotion? And, besides, how should I, the son of a Persian fire-worshiper, be allied to the family of Hashem and the nephews of the Prophet – may the mercy of God be upon him and his family! – and by what right can I aspire to such a distinction? If my father and mother heard of this, they would mourn for me, and my enemies would rejoice.”

Some days passed, and he neither ate nor drank, but all was of no **avail**. He could not oppose the decrees of heaven and the **ordainment** of God by remedy or **contrivance**. Unable to help himself, he submitted and consented to a marriage on the terms before mentioned. When Yahya, the father of Jafar and Fadhl, and his other brothers heard of this, they were full of sorrow, and looked for the reversal of their fortune and the downfall of their power.

These forebodings were soon justified. The cruel commands of Rashid to his favorite and his sister were disregarded, and Abbasah became a mother. The birth of the child, concealed for a time, was revealed to Rashid by a **vengeful** slave-girl whom Abbasah had struck. The Caliph was intensely **wroth**, but concealed his **indignation** for a time, though betraying it at unguarded moments.

Ahmed Bin Muhammad Wasil, who was one of his confidential attendants, relates as follows: “One day I was standing before Rashid in his private apartment when no one besides was there. Perfumes were burning, and the place was filled with sweet odours. Haroun Al Rashid lay down to rest, and wrapped his head in the skirt of his garment to keep his eyes cool, when Jafar the Barmecide came in and told his business to the Caliph, receiving in return a gracious answer, and retiring. In those days the story of Abbasah and her union with Jafar was talked of constantly among the people.

“When Jafar was gone Rashid lifted his head out of his skirt, and from his mouth came these words: ‘O God, do thou so favour Jafar the Barmecide that he may kill me, or make me quickly powerful over him that I may cut off his head from

- expedient** -  
something contrived or used  
to meet an urgent need
- confounded** -  
confused; befuddled
- (thou) shouldest** -  
(you) should
- avail** -  
use, benefit, or advantage
- ordainment** -  
order; decree
- contrivance** -  
inventing, devising, or planning
- vengeful** -  
indicating or proceeding from  
a desire for revenge
- wroth** -  
wrathful; angry
- indignation** -  
anger aroused by something  
unjust, mean, or unworthy

his body; for with anger and jealousy against him I am near to destruction.' These words he spoke to himself but they reached my ears, and I trembled within and without, and I said to myself: 'If the Commander of the Faithful knows that I have heard this, he will not leave me alive.'

"Suddenly Haroun Al Rashid lifted up his head from its covering, and said to me: 'Hast thou heard that which I said to myself just now?' I said: 'I have not heard it.' The Commander of the Faithful said: 'There is no one but thyself here, and so truly as the **censer** is in thy hand, thou hast heard all. If thou care for thy life, keep this secret concealed; and if not, I will strike off thy head.' I replied: 'May the life of the Commander of the Faithful be long! I have not heard any of these words.' And with this the Caliph was satisfied."

It was not long after this that the blow fell on the Barmecides. On his return from one of his pilgrimages to Mecca, Rashid came by water from Hira to Anbar, on the River Euphrates. Here he invited the three brothers Fadhl, Jafar, and Mousa, to his presence, and, having caressed them with extraordinary **cordiality**, dismissed them once more to their quarters, with rich khelats, the customary robe of honor. The Caliph withdrew to his apartments, and betook himself to his usual indulgence in wine. In a little time he sent one of his domestics to inquire if Jafar was employed in the same way. Finding that such was not the case, Rashid sent his attendant again to Jafar, urging him by the life of his master to imitate his example without further delay, for that his wine seemed **deprived** of all its **zest** until he knew that his faithful Jafar partook of the same enjoyment.

Jafar felt, however, unaccountably alarmed and averse to such a gratification, and, reluctantly withdrawing to his chamber, called for the wine. It happened that he was attended by a favourite blind **minstrel** named Abou Zaccar, to whom, after a few **goblets**, he could not forbear from communicating his **apprehensions**. The minstrel treated them as merely imaginary, urged his master to banish them from his thoughts, and to resume his usual cheerfulness. But Jafar declared that he found it impossible to dispel the uneasiness which seemed to haunt him. About the hour of evening prayer another messenger arrived from Rashid with a present of nuts and sweetmeats for Jafar, as a relish to his wine, from his own table.

When midnight came, Rashid called for Mesrour, his favorite domestic, and directed him to bring Jafar and strike off his head. Mesrour proceeded accordingly, and entering Jafar's apartment while Abou Zaccar was singing some Arabic verses, stood suddenly at the head of Jafar, who started involuntarily at his appearance. Mesrour told him that he was summoned to attend the Caliph. Jafar entreated that he might be permitted to withdraw for a moment, to speak to the women of his family. This last indulgence was withheld, Mesrour observing that any instructions which he had to communicate might as well be delivered where he was. This he was accordingly obliged to do, after which he accompanied Mesrour to his tent, on entering which the latter immediately drew his sword. Jafar asked that the Caliph's instructions might be explained to him, and when he heard them, cautioned Mesrour to beware how he carried into execution an order which had evidently been given under the influence of wine, lest, when their sovereign should be restored to himself, it might be followed by unavailing repentance and remorse. He further adjured Mesrour by the memory of their past friendship that he would return to the Caliph's presence, and require his final commands.

Mesrour yielded to these entreaties, and appeared before Rashid, whom he found expecting his return. "Is this the head of Jafar?" demanded the Caliph. "Jafar

**censer -**

vessel in which incense is burned, especially during religious services

**cordiality -**

sincere affection and kindness; warmth of regard; heartiness

**deprived -**

lacking in advantage, opportunity, or experience

**zest -**

flavor or interest

**minstrel -**

medieval entertainer who traveled from place to place, especially to sing and recite poetry

**goblet -**

drinking vessel

**apprehension -**

fearful or uneasy anticipation of the future; dread

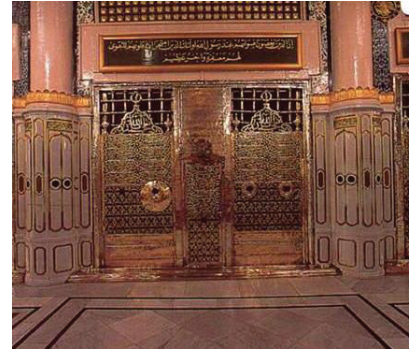
is at the door, my lord,” replied Mesrour, with some **trepidation**. “I wanted not Jafar,” said the Caliph sternly; “I wanted his head.” This sealed the fate of the unhappy favorite. Mesrour immediately withdrew, decapitated Jafar in the **antechamber**, and returned with his head, which he laid at the Caliph’s feet. He was then directed by Rashid to keep that head by him till he should receive further orders.

In the meantime he was enjoined to proceed without delay and apprehend Yahya, his three sons, Fadhl, Muhammad, and Mousa, and his brother Muhammad. These commands were immediately carried into execution. The head of Jafar was dispatched the next day, to be suspended to a **gibbet** on the bridge of Baghdad, after which the Caliph continued his journey to Rakkah.

Stripped of all their wealth and honors, Yahya, his three sons, and his brother Muhammad, languished in **confinement** until the former perished in prison. At first they were allowed some liberty, but subsequently they experienced alternatives of rigor and relaxation, according to the reports which reached Rashid concerning them. He then confiscated the property of every member of the family. It is said that Mesrour was sent by him to the prison, and that he told the jailor to bring Fadhl before him. When he was brought out, Mesrour addressed him thus: “The Commander of the Faithful sends me to say that he ordered thee to make a true statement of thy property, and that thou didst pretend to do so but he is assured that thou hast still great wealth in reserve, and his orders to me are that, if thou dost not inform me where the money is, I am to give thee two hundred strokes of a whip. I should therefore advise thee not to prefer thy riches to thyself.”

On this Fadhl looked up at him and said: “By Allah, I made no false statements; and were the choice offered to me of being sent out of the world or of receiving a single stroke of a whip, I should prefer the former alternative – that the Commander of the Faithful well knoweth, and thou also knowest full well that we maintained our reputation at the expense of our wealth. How, then, could we now **shield** our wealth at the expense of our bodies? If thou hast really got any orders, let them be executed.”

At this Mesrour produced some **whips**, which he brought with him rolled up in a napkin, and ordered his servants to inflict on Al Fadhl two hundred stripes. They struck him with all their force, using no moderation in their **blows**, so that they nearly killed him. There was in that place a man skilled in treating wounds, who was called in to attend Al Fadhl. When he saw him he observed that fifty strokes had been inflicted on him; and when the others declared that two hundred had been given, he asserted that his back bore the traces of fifty, and not more. He then told Al Fadhl that he must lie down on his back on a reed-mat, so that they might tread on his breast. Al Fadhl **shuddered** at the proposal, but, having at length given his consent, they placed him on his back. The operator then trod on him, after which he took him by the arms and dragged him along the mat, by which means a great quantity of flesh was torn off the back. He then proceeded to dress



THE GRAVE OF ABU BAKR AT THE MASJID AL-NABAWI

**trepidation** -  
a state of alarm or dread

**antechamber** -  
smaller room serving as an entryway into a larger room

**gibbet** -  
a device used for hanging a person until dead; a gallows

**confinement** -  
the act of restricting or the state of being restricted in movement

**shield** -  
to cover up; protect

**whip** -  
a flexible rod or a flexible thong or lash attached to a handle used for administering corporal punishment

**blows** -  
hits

**shuddered** -  
shivered convulsively, as from fear or revulsion

the wounds, and continued his services regularly, till one day, when, on examining them, he immediately prostrated himself in thanksgiving to God. They asked him what was the matter, and he replied that the patient was saved, because new flesh was forming. He then said: "Did I not say that he had received fifty strokes? Well, by Allah! One thousand strokes could not have left worse marks; but I merely said so that he might take courage, and thus aid my efforts to cure him."

Al Fadhl, on his recovery, borrowed ten thousand dirhams from a friend, and sent them to the doctor, who returned them. Thinking that he had offered too little, he borrowed ten thousand more; but the man refused them, and said: "I can not accept a fee for curing the greatest among the generous. Were it even twenty thousand dinars, I should refuse them." When this was told to Al Fadhl, he declared that such an act of generosity surpassed all that he himself had done during the whole course of his life.

When Rashid had overthrown the family of the Barmecides, he endeavored to **obliterate** even their very name. He forbade the poets to compose eulogies on their fall, and commanded that those who did so should be punished. One day one of the soldiers of the guard, passing near some ruined and abandoned buildings, perceived a man standing upright with a paper in his hand. It contained a **lament** for the ruin of the Barmecides, which he was reciting with tears.

The soldier arrested him, and conducted him to the palace of Rashid. He related the whole matter to the Caliph, who caused the accused to be brought before him. When he was convinced by the man's own confession of the truth of the accusation, he said to him: "Did you not know that I have forbidden the **utterance** of any lament for the family of the Barmecides? Assuredly I will treat thee according to thy deserts." "Prince," the accused answered, "if thou wilt allow, I will relate my history. Afterward deal with me as thou pleasest."

Rashid having allowed him to speak, he went on: "I was one of the petty officials in the court of Yahya. One day he said to me: 'I must dine at your house.' 'My lord,' I said to him, 'I am far too mean for such an honor, and my house is not fit to receive you.' 'No,' replied Yahya, 'I must come to you.' 'In that case,' I said, 'will you allow me some time to make the proper arrangements and put my house in order? – and afterward do as you like.'

"He then wished to know how much time I wanted. At first I asked for a year. This appeared to him too much; I therefore asked for some months. He consented, and I immediately began to prepare everything necessary for his reception. When all the preparations were complete I sent to inform Yahya, who said he would come on the **morrow**. On the next day, accordingly, he came, with his two sons Jafar and Fadhl and a few of his most intimate friends. Scarcely had he dismounted than he addressed me by name, and said: 'Make haste and get me something to eat, for I am hungry.' Fadhl told me that his father was especially fond of roast **fowl**; accordingly I brought some, and when Yahya had eaten he rose and began to walk about the house, and asked me to show him all over it. 'My lord,' I said, 'you have just been over it: there is no more.' 'Certainly there is more,' he replied.

"It was in vain that I assured him, in the name of God, that that was all I had: he had a **mason** sent for, and told him to make a hole in the wall. The mason began to do so. I said to Yahya: 'My Lord, is it permissible to make a hole into one's neighbor's house when God has commanded us to respect our neighbors' rights?' 'Never mind,' said he. And when the mason had made a sufficiently wide entrance, he went through, with his sons.

**obliterate -**

to do away with completely so  
as to leave no trace

**lament -**

expression of grief

**utterance -**

vocal expression

**morrow -**

the next day

**fowl -**

any of various birds of the  
order Galliformes, especially  
the common, widely  
domesticated chicken

**mason -**

one who builds or works with  
stone or brick



"I followed them, and we came into a delicious garden, well planted and watered by fountains. In this garden were pavilions and halls adorned with all kinds of marbles and **tapestry**; on all sides were numbers of beautiful slaves of both sexes. Yahya then said to me: 'This house and all that you see is yours.' I hastened to kiss his hands and to pray God to bless him, and then I learned that from the very day he had told me that he was coming to my house he had bought the ground **adjacent** to it, and caused a beautiful **mansion** to be constructed, furnished, and adorned, without my knowing anything of it. I saw indeed that building was going on, but I thought it was some work being carried on by one of my neighbors.

"Yahya then, addressing his son Jafar, said to him: 'Well, here is a house, with attendants, but how is he to keep it up?' 'I will turn over to him such and such a farm, with its revenues,' answered Jafar, 'and sign a contract with him to that effect.' 'Very good,' said Yahya, turning to his other son, Fadhl; 'but 'till he receives those revenues, how is he to meet current expenses?' 'I will give him ten thousand pieces of gold,' answered Fadhl, 'and have them conveyed to his house.' 'Be quick, then,' said Yahya. 'And fulfil your promises without delay.' This they both did, so that I found myself rich of a sudden and living a life of ease. Thus, O Commander of the Faithful, I have never failed on all fitting occasions to rehearse their praises and to pray for them, in order to discharge my debt of gratitude, but never shall I be able to do so completely. If thou choosest, slay me for doing that."

Rashid was moved at this recital, and let him go. He also gave a general permission to the poets to **bewail** the tragic end of the Barmecides. A pathetic anecdote relating to their fall is recorded by Muhammad, son of Abdur Rahman the Hashimite.

"Having gone to visit my mother on the day of the Feast of Sacrifice, I found her talking with an old woman of **venerable** appearance, but meanly **clad**. My mother asked if I knew her, and I answered, 'No.' She replied: 'It is Abbadah, the mother of Jafar Bin Yahya.' I turned to her and saluted her with respect. After some time I said to her: 'Madam, what is the strangest thing you have seen?' 'My friend,' she replied, 'there was once a time when this same festival saw me escorted by four hundred slaves, and still I thought that my son was not sufficiently grateful to me. Today the **feast** has returned, and all I wish for is two sheepskins – one to lie down on and one to cover me.' "I gave her," adds the narrator, "five hundred dirhams and she nearly died of joy. She did not cease her visits till the day death separated us."

After the destruction of this family, the affairs of Rashid fell into irretrievable confusion. Treason, revolt, and rebellion assailed him in different parts of the empire. He himself became a prey to disease, and was tortured by unavailing remorse. If anyone blamed the Barmecides in his presence he would say: "Cease to blame them or fill the void." So great was the disaffection aroused by his treatment of them that he removed the seat of government from Baghdad to Rakkah, on the Euphrates.

**tapestry -**

a heavy cloth woven with rich, often varicolored designs or scenes, usually hung on walls for decoration and sometimes used to cover furniture

**adjacent -**

next to

**mansion -**

a large stately house

**bewail -**

to cry over; lament

**venerable -**

commanding respect by virtue

**clad -**

wearing clothing

**feast -**

large, elaborately prepared meal and often accompanied by a banquet



Yahya, the father of Jafar and Eadhl, died in prison, CE 805. On his body was found a paper containing these words: "The accuser has gone on before to the tribunal, and the accused shall follow. The Qadi will be that just Judge who never errs and who needs no witnesses." This, being reported to Rashid, deepened his gloom, which began to wear the appearance of madness. One morning his physician, finding him greatly discomposed, inquired the reason. Rashid replied: "I will describe to thee what presented itself to my imagination. **Methought** I saw an arm suddenly extend itself from beneath my pillow, holding in the palm of the hand, a quantity of red earth, while a voice addressed me in the following words: 'Haroun, behold this handful of earth; it is that in which they are about to bury thee.' I demanded to know where I was about to find my grave, and the voice replied: 'At Tuz.' The arm disappeared and I awoke."

Shortly after this Rashid, though suffering from the disease which was to end his life, set out to put down a rebellion in Transoxiana. When one of the captured rebel leaders was brought into his presence, he ordered him to be cut to pieces limb by limb on the spot. When the execution was over Rashid fell into a **swoon**, and, on recovering himself, asked his physician if he did not recollect the dream which had occurred to him at Rakkah, for they were now in the neighborhood of Tuz. He also desired his chamberlain Mesrour to bring him a sample of the native earth of the country. When Mesrour returned with his naked arm extended, Rashid immediately exclaimed: "Behold the arm and the earth, precisely as they appeared in my dream!" The Caliph died at midnight the following Saturday, March 23, CE 809.

## THE CALIPH AL MAMOUN

When Haroun Al Rashid died he left the empire to his sons Emin and Mamoun, giving the former Iraq and Syria, and the latter Khorassan and Persia. Emin had the title of Caliph, to which Mamoun was to succeed. War broke out between the brothers; Emin fled from Baghdad, but was captured and slain, and his head sent to Mamoun in Khorassan, who wept at the sight of it. He had, however, previously, when his general Tahir sent to him requesting to know what to do with Emin in case he caught him, sent to the general a shirt with no opening in it for the head. By this Tahir knew that he wished Emin to be put to death, and acted accordingly.

The Caliph, however, bore a grudge against Tahir for the death of his brother, as was shown by the following circumstance: Tahir went one day to ask some favor from Al Mamoun; the latter granted it, and then wept till his eyes were bathed in tears. "Commander of the Faithful," said Tahir, "why do you weep? May God never cause you to shed a tear! The universe obeys you, and you have obtained your **utmost** wishes." "I weep not," replied the Caliph, "from any humiliation which may have **befallen** me, neither do I weep from grief, but my mind is never free from cares."

These words gave great uneasiness to Tahir, and, on retiring, he said to Husain, the eunuch who waited at the door of the Caliph's private apartment: "I wish you to ask the Commander of the Faithful why he wept on seeing me." On reaching home Tahir sent Husain one hundred thousand dirhams. Some time afterward, when Al Mamoun was alone and in a good humour, Husain said to him: "Why did you weep when Tahir came to see you?" "What is that to you?" replied the Prince. "It made me sad to see you weep," answered the eunuch. "I shall tell you the reason," the Caliph said; "but if you ever allow it to pass your lips, I shall have

### **methought -**

it seems to me; I thought

### **swoon -**

state of ecstasy or rapture

### **utmost -**

of the highest or greatest  
degree, amount, or intensity

### **befall -**

to happen

your head taken off.” “O my master,” the eunuch replied, “did I ever disclose any of your secrets?” “I was thinking of my brother Emin,” said the Caliph, “and of the misfortune which befell him, so that I was nearly choked with weeping; but Tahir shall not escape me! I shall make him feel what he will not like.”

Husain related this to Tahir, who immediately rode off to the Vizier Abi Khalid, and said to him: “I am not **parsimonious** in my gratitude, and a service **rendered** to me is never lost; **contrive** to have me removed away from Al Mamoun.” “I shall,” replied Abi Khalid. “Come to me tomorrow morning.” He then rode off to Al Mamoun, and said, “I was not able to sleep last night.” “Why so?” asked the Caliph. “Because you have entrusted Ghassan with the government of Khorassan, and his friends are very few, and I fear that ruin awaits him.” “And whom do you think a proper person for it?” said Al Mamoun. “Tahir,” replied Abi Khalid. “He is ambitious,” observed the Caliph. “I will answer for his conduct,” said the other.

Al Mamoun then sent for Tahir, and named him governor of Khorassan on the spot; he made him also a present of a **eunuch**, to whom he had just given orders to poison his new master if he remarked anything suspicious in his conduct. When Tahir was solidly established in his government he ceased mentioning Al Mamoun’s name in the public prayers as the reigning Caliph. A dispatch was immediately sent off by express to inform Al Mamoun of the circumstance, and the next morning Tahir was found dead in his bed. It is said that the eunuch administered the poison to him in some sauce.

Al Mamoun placed his two sons under the tuition of Al Farra, so that they might be instructed in grammar. One day Al Farra rose to leave the house, and the two young princes hastened to bring his shoes. They struggled between themselves for the honor of offering them to him, and they finally agreed that each of them should present him with one slipper. As Al Mamoun had secret agents who informed him of everything that passed, he learned what had taken place, and caused Al Farra to be brought before him.

When he entered, the Caliph said to him: “Who is the most honored of men?” Al Farra answered: “I know not anyone more honored than the Commander of the Faithful.” “Nay,” replied Al Mamoun, “it is he who arose to go out, and the two designated successors of the Commander of the Faithful contended for the honor of presenting him his slippers, and at length agreed that each of them should offer him one.”

Al Farra answered: “Commander of the Faithful, I should have prevented them from doing so had I not been apprehensive of discouraging their minds in the pursuit of that excellence to which they **ardently** aspire. We know by tradition that Ibn Abbas held the stirrups of Hasan and Husain, when they were getting on horseback after paying him a visit. One of those who were present said to him: ‘How is it that you hold the stirrups of these striplings, you who are their elder?’ To which he replied: ‘Ignorant man! No one can appreciate the merit of people of merit except a man of merit.’”

- parsimonious** -  
excessively unwilling to spend
- rendered** -  
given or made available
- contrive** -  
to plan with cleverness or  
ingenuity
- eunuch** -  
castrated man
- ardently** -  
in a passionate manner

Al Mamoun then said to him: "Had you prevented them, I should have declared you in fault. That which they have done is no **debasement** of their dignity; on the contrary, it exalts their merit. No man, though great in rank, can be **dispensed** from three obligations: he must respect his sovereign, **venerate** his father, and honor his preceptor. As a reward for their conduct, I bestow upon them twenty thousand dinars, and on you for the good education you give them, ten thousand dirhams."

When Al Mamoun was still in Khorassan, a revolt was raised against him in Baghdad by his uncle, Ibrahim, the son of Mahdi. This prince had great talent as a singer, and was a skilful performer on musical instruments. Being of a dark complexion, which he inherited from his mother, Shikla, who was a negress, and of a large frame of body, he received the name of al-Tinnin (the Dragon). He was proclaimed Caliph at Baghdad during the absence of Al Mamoun. The cause which led the people to renounce Al Mamoun and choose Ibrahim was that the former had chosen as his successor one of the descendants of Ali, and in doing so had ordered the public to cease wearing black, which was the distinctive colour of the Abbassides, the reigning family, and to put on green, the color of the family of Ali and their partisans.

On Mamoun's entry into Baghdad, Ibrahim fled disguised as a woman. He was, however, detected and arrested by one of the Negro police. When he was before Al Mamoun, who addressed him in ironic terms, he replied: "Prince of the believers, my crime gives you the right of **retaliation**, but forgiveness is a near neighbor to **piety**. God has placed you above all those who are generous, as he has placed me above all criminals in the **magnitude** of my crime. If you punish me you will be just; if you pardon me you will be great." "Then I pardon you," said Mamoun, and prostrated himself in prayer.

He commanded, however, that Ibrahim should continue to wear the **burqa**, or long female veil in which he had fled, so that people might see in what disguise he had been arrested; he ordered also that he should be exposed to view in the palace courtyard; then he committed him to police supervision, and finally, after some days of **detention**, set him free.

The following anecdote was related by Ibrahim regarding the time when he was in hiding with a price set on his head: "I went out one day at the hour of noon without knowing whither I was going. I found myself in a narrow street, which ended in a **cul-de-sac**, and noticed a Negro standing in front of the door of a house. I went straight to him, and asked if he could afford me shelter for a short time. He consented, and **bade** me enter. The hall was adorned with mats and leather cushions. Then he left me alone, closed the door, and departed. A suspicion flashed across my mind; this man knew that a price was set on my head, and had gone to denounce me.

"While I was revolving these gloomy thoughts, he returned with a servant bearing a tray loaded with **victuals**. 'May my life be a sacrifice for you,' he said. 'I am a barber, and therefore I have not touched any of these things with my hand; do me the honor to **partake** of them.' Hunger pressed me; I rose and obeyed. 'What about some wine?' he asked. 'I do not **detest** it,' I replied. He brought some, and then said again: 'May my life be your **ransom**! Will you allow me to sit near you and drink to your health?' I consented. After having emptied three cups, he opened a cupboard and took out a lute. 'Sir,' he said, 'it does not behoove a man of my low degree to beg you to sing, but your kindness prompts me to do so; if you deign to consent it will be a great honor for your slave.'

"How do you know that I am a good singer?' I asked him. 'By Allah!' he an-

**debasement -**

lowering

**dispensed -**

let go from

**venerate -**

to regard with respect

**retaliation -**

action taken in return for an injury or offense

**piety -**

loving obedience to the will of God

**magnitude -**

greatness in significance or influence

**burqa -**

loose garment worn by Muslim women

**detention -**

a forced or punitive delay

**cul-de-sac -**

dead-end street

**bade -**

requested

**victuals -**

provisions

**partake -**

to take or be given part or portion

**detest -**

to dislike intensely

**ransom -**

the price or payment demanded or paid for the release of property

swered, with an air of astonishment, 'your reputation is too great for me not to know it: you are Ibrahim, the son of Mahdi, and a reward of a hundred thousand dirhams is promised by Al Mamoun to the man who will find you.' At these words I took the lute, and was about to commence, when he added: 'Sir, would you be so kind as first to sing the piece which I shall choose?' When I consented he chose three **airs** in which I had no rival. Then I said to him: 'You know me, I admit; but where did you learn to know these three airs?' 'I have been,' he answered, 'in the service of Ishak, son of Ibrahim Mausili, and I have often heard him speak of the great singers and the airs in which they excelled; but who could have guessed that I would hear you myself and in my own house?'

"I sang to him accordingly, and remained some time in his company, charmed with his agreeable manners. At nightfall I took leave of him. I had brought with me a purse full of gold pieces; I offered it to him, promising him a greater reward some day. 'This is strange,' he said; 'it is rather I who should offer you all I possess, and implore you to do me the honor to accept it. Only respect has restrained me from doing so.' He refused, accordingly, to receive anything from me; but he went out with me and put me on the road to the place whither I wished to go. Then he went off, and I have never seen him since."

### The Death of Al Mamoun

During Al Mamoun's last campaign against the Greek Emperor he arrived at the River Qushairah, and encamped on its banks. Charmed by the clearness and purity of its waters, and by the beauty and fertility of the surrounding country, he had a kind of arbor constructed by the banks of the stream, intending to rest there some days. So clear was the water that the **inscription** on a coin lying at the bottom could be clearly read; but it was so cold that it was impossible for any one to bathe in it.

All at once a fish, about a **fathom** in length and flashing like an **ingot** of silver, appeared in the water. The Caliph promised a reward to any one who would capture it; an attendant went down, caught the fish and regained the shore, but as he approached the spot where Al Mamoun was sitting, the fish slipped from his grasp, fell into the water, and sank like a stone to the bottom. Some of the water was splashed on the Caliph's neck, chest, and arms, and wetted his clothes. The attendant went down again, recaptured the fish, and placed it, wriggling, in a napkin before the Caliph. Just as he had ordered it to be fried, Al Mamoun felt a sudden shiver, and could not move from the place. In vain he was covered with rugs and skins; he trembled like a leaf, and exclaimed: "I am cold! I am cold!" He was carried into his tent, covered with clothes, and a fire was lit, but he continued to complain of cold. When the fish had been cooked it was brought to him, but he could neither taste nor touch it, so great was his suffering.

#### air -

a solo with or without accompaniment

#### inscription -

something, such as the wording on a coin, medal, monument, or seal, that is inscribed

#### fathom -

a unit of length equal to 6 feet (1.83 meters), used principally in the measurement and specification of marine depths

#### ingot -

mass of metal, such as a bar or block, that is cast in a standard shape for convenient storage or shipment

As he grew rapidly worse, his brother Mutasim questioned Bakhteshou and Ibn Masouyieh, his physicians, on his condition, and whether they could do him any good. Ibn Masouyieh took one of the patient's hands and Bakhteshou the other, and felt his pulse together; the irregular pulsations **heralded** his dissolution. Just then Al Mamoun awoke out of his **stupor**; he opened his eyes, and caused some of the natives of the place to be sent for, and questioned them regarding the stream and the locality. When asked regarding the meaning of the name "Qushairah," they replied that it signified "Stretch out thy feet" [i.e., "die"]. Al Mamoun then inquired the Arabic name of the country, and was told "Rakkah." Now, the horoscope drawn at the moment of his birth announced that he would die in a place of that name; therefore he had always avoided residing in the city of Rakkah, fearing to die there. When he heard the answer given by these people, he felt sure that this was the place predicted by his horoscope.

Feeling himself becoming worse, he commanded that he should be carried outside his tent in order to survey his camp and his army once more. It was now night-time. As his gaze wandered over the long lines of the camp and the lights twinkling into the distance, he cried: "O thou whose reign will never end, have mercy on him whose reign is now ending." He was then carried back to his bed. Mutasim, seeing that he was sinking, commanded some one to whisper in his ear the confession of the Mohammedan faith. As the attendant was about to speak, in order that Al Mamoun might repeat the words after him, Ibn Masouyieh said to him: "Do not speak, for truly he could not now distinguish between God and Manes." The dying man opened his eyes – they seemed extraordinarily large, and shone with a wonderful luster; his hands **clutched** at the doctor; he tried to speak to him, but could not; then his eyes turned toward heaven and filled with tears; finally his tongue was loosened, and he spoke: "O thou who diest not, have mercy on him who dies," and he expired immediately. His body was carried to Tarsus and buried there.

**heralded** -  
proclaimed

**stupor** -  
state of reduced or suspended  
sensitivity

**clutched** -  
grasped and held tightly

**SOURCE:** Al-Masu'di. "The Meadows of Gold." *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*. Edited by Charles F. Horne. New York: Parke, Austin, & Lipscomb, 1917, Vol. VI: Medieval Arabia, pp. 35-89. Online version. Internet Medieval Source Book. URL: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/masoudi.html>.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A number of the anecdotes related by Al-Masu'di deal with the generosity (or lack thereof) of the Caliphs. Why do you suppose that generosity is considered an important virtue for a ruler, even when it drains the treasury of a large, centralized state? What might be the cultural origin of this emphasis on gift-giving?
2. Many of the anecdotes contained in *The Meadows of Gold* are probably semi-fictional, if not outright inventions. What purpose do you think it serves for a historian to put speeches into the mouths of characters when there is no record of what they said? Do you think that the audiences who read these stories in Al-Masu'di's time accepted them uncritically as representing historical truth?

3. In the story of the fall of the Barmakids (in the text, Bermecides), we see Harun al-Rashid, who is first described as a pious and upright ruler, capriciously bringing about the downfall of his closest supporters, in order to satisfy his own whims and jealousies. Do you see any intentional irony in this juxtaposition?
4. In the section on the Caliphate of Al-Mamoun, the Caliph comes to power by murdering his brother Amin, and then he kills the general who carried out his orders. Al-Masu'di says that "The Caliph, however, bore a grudge against Tahir for the death of his brother." What do you make of this apparent contradiction? Does it suggest a real psychological denial of responsibility on the part of Al-Mamoun for his brother's death, or is it merely a pretext for getting rid of Tahir?
5. Although *The Meadows of Gold* deals primarily with people of power, we occasionally catch glimpses of lesser persons. Can you think of an interesting example of this?
6. How is Al-Masu'di's style of writing similar to that of other historians that you have read? How is it different? Can you think of modern examples (not necessarily limited to books) of this kind of anecdotal historical narrative that are meant to entertain their audience as well as to inform them about the past?
7. As you read these passages from *The Meadows of Gold*, were you surprised at any of the beliefs or reactions of the characters to the world around them? Did anything that you read in these anecdotes challenge a preconceived notion that you had about life in this particular age and place?

### REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Although Al-Masu'di is a devout Muslim, he is willing to portray the cruelty and extravagance of the rulers of the Islamic world. What does Al-Masu'di's narrative tell us about his view of humanity? How does this view compare to that from Chapters One and Two?
2. Are Al-Masu'di's primary concerns different from those presented in the previous chapters? If so, how? Support your answer with specific passages.
3. Do you see a common purpose or goal in all of the texts from the first three chapters? If so, what is it?

**ADDITIONAL READING:**

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## **NEGOTIATING HUMAN NATURE**

Editors: ***Jonathan Edwins, Farrukh Ashrapov***

### **UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA**

#### **Aga Khan Humanities Project**

47A, Druzhbi Narodov Avenue

734013 Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Tel. (+992-372) 245823

Fax (+992-372) 510128

Email: [akhp.dushanbe@ucentralasia.org](mailto:akhp.dushanbe@ucentralasia.org)

<http://www.ucentralasia.org>



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