

Is There A Human Nature?

- What is a Nature?
 - A group of basic properties which
 - Determines what is possible for the thing in question.
 - Determines the excellence and well-being of the thing in question.
- Everything has a nature.
- A human being is not, perchance, a squirrel or a brussels sprout.

To Have A Human Nature Is:

- To have parts with specific properties that constitute the human a whole.
- In such a way that its peculiar wholeness provides a standard for what a human being is.
- And provides norms for how a person is to be treated and what they are to do.
- Compare a turnip or horse.

Illustrated By Plato's Republic

- The parts of the human being are
 - Reason
 - Emotion
 - Appetite
- These and their properties interrelate to form a person who ‘naturally’ lives in a social context because of those parts.
- To be good and live well, emotion guided by reason must direct the appetites to their proper exercise, in the individual and in society.

What 'No Nature' Does

- To hold that human beings have no nature is to say that any and every thing can be appropriate to do to them and for them to do.
- It is, in effect, to make desire and will ultimate.
- But desire is not self limiting. Hence the glorification of a life without boundaries.
(Watch how often this theme shows up on TV commercials as a desirable condition.)

What 'No Nature' Does

- The supremacy of feeling in life now.
Buns & Abs
- The impossibility of satisfaction. “I don’t get no satisfaction.” Dr. Faustus
- No nature is a Renaissance idea. Pico della Mirandola, On the Dignity of Man.

Nature Falsely Used

- Human nature **has** been used oppressively.
- What was not nature was ascribed to nature, when it was just historical accident.
- But one corrects these false appeals only by appealing to what is truly natural.
- And that is what is constantly done today by those who reject nature.

Why Moral Knowledge Disappeared in the Western World (NOTE: It didn't cease to exist!)

- Rumors of relativity—that moral judgment does not apprehend a reality that is there regardless of what we think or feel about it.
- Rumors that only the sense perceptible is known—the empirical, the naturalistic.
- Rumors that only the measurable is known.
- The idea that moral truth suppresses freedom and diversity
- The idea that everyone should be able to do what they want “as long as nobody gets hurt.”
- Profound changes in the university. See Reuben, The Making of the Modern University, and Marsden, Soul of Am. Univ..
- All tied in with the denial of a human nature. John Dewey.

Political Correctness Is The *Only* Correctness

- With human nature gone, power is all that is left. Derrida and Foucault.
- Politics and law rule, and the former rules the latter.
- Desire degrades the person to the body.
- No foundation for human dignity.
- Paul's analysis in Romans chapter one.

A Christian Reading Of Human Nature

- “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.”
- The essential dimensions of human nature:
 - Will (Heart, Spirit)
 - Mind
 - Thoughts
 - Feelings
 - Body
 - Social relations
 - Soul

The Order Proper To Human Beings

- Will Subordinated to God—My ‘kingdom’ under God’s, and therefore at least in a process of harmonization with my neighbors’ kingdoms
- Mind subordinated to spirit under God.
- Soul to mind under God.
- Body to soul under God.
- Social relations harmonized with the body under God

Spiritual Life From God

- Life is self-initiating, self-sustaining, self-directing activity.
- Spiritual life is such activity enlivened by connection with god.
- “Eternal life” is interactive relationship with God who is spiritual substance.
- With this influx of God’s life, we can begin to pull the wreck of the human self back to its proper order.

‘Great Commandment’ Fulfilled In Real Life

- We can become whole persons—parts in proper order and function—by living a life of worship and service to god and others in a power beyond ourselves.
- The ‘Great Commandment’ is basic knowledge of how to live well and be a good person.
- What realistic alternatives are there to this?

Not Will Alone

- The will touched by grace moves forward in inner transformation by doing the things that will bring each of the elements of the human self into alignment with God's will.
- The place of 'spiritual disciplines.'
- The mistake of the Pharisee and the legalist is to emphasize direct control of action. This always fails.
- The aim must be to become in all dimensions of the self the kind of person who naturally and easily does what is good and right.

Moral Life Must Be Based on Knowledge

- What we believe to be real or fact will govern, with an iron hand, what we believe we ought to do.
- We will have beliefs about what is real and the task is to ensure that they are true beliefs.
- The secular mind drove the spirit out of any reality it was willing to accept.
- Since the moral life is a matter of spirit (will and character), it was inevitable that moral knowledge would disappear from our culture.
- What Nietzsche knew.

Revelation as a Source of Knowledge

- Recall our description of knowledge in Session I.
- The Bible and the central tradition of interpretation thereof is a unique and indispensable source of knowledge for humanity.
- With specific reference to moral knowledge, and especially as presented in the person and teaching of Jesus, no other body of information comes close to the adequacy achieved through the Biblical tradition.
- The need now is for those who believe this to present the way of Christ as knowledge and reality – in clear and frank juxtaposition to what is taught in the universities and elsewhere.

The Treasure of Moral Knowledge

- We emphasize in closing, that the Way of Christ contains the body of moral knowledge for which the world is dying. (Keep in mind what knowledge is.)
- We need to practice that knowledge, openly and honestly test it and present it.
- And in this way (see Chap. 13 Renovation Of The Heart) make our assemblies of Christians the guiding light of humanity, including education and all of culture.
- Human nature as it should be is not the responsibility or possibility of the university.