Introduction to Philosophy

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Readings in Philosophy

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Contents

The Value of Philosophy

Bertrand Russell

[Chapter 15 of *The Problems of Philosophy*]

Having now come to the end of our brief and very incomplete review of the problems of philosophy, it will be well to consider, in conclusion, what is the value of philosophy and why it ought to be studied. It is the more necessary to consider this question, in view of the fact that many men, under the influence of science or of practical affairs, are inclined to doubt whether philosophy is anything better than innocent but useless trifling, hair-splitting distinctions, and controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is impossible.

This view of philosophy appears to result, partly from a wrong conception of the ends of life, partly from a wrong conception of the kind of goods which philosophy strives to achieve. Physical science, through the medium of inventions, is useful to innumerable people who are wholly ignorant of it; thus the study of physical science is to be recommended, not only, or primarily, because of the effect on the student, but rather because of the effect on mankind in general. This utility does not belong to philosophy. If the study of philosophy has any value at all for others than students of philosophy, it must be only indirectly, through its effects upon the lives of those who study it. It is in these effects, therefore, if anywhere, that the value of philosophy must be primarily sought.

But further, if we are not to fail in our endeavour to determine the value of philosophy, we must first free our minds from the prejudices of what are wrongly called 'practical' men. The 'practical' man, as this word is often used, is one who recognizes only material needs, who realizes that men must have food for the body, but is oblivious of the necessity of providing food for the mind. If all men were well off, if poverty and disease had been reduced to their lowest possible point, there would still remain much to be done to produce a valuable society; and even in the existing world the goods of the mind are at least as important as the goods of the body. It is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found; and only those who are not indifferent to these goods can be persuaded that the study of philosophy is not a waste of time.

Philosophy, like all other studies, aims primarily at knowledge. The knowledge it aims at is the kind of knowledge which gives unity and system to the body of the sciences, and the kind which results from a critical examination of the grounds of our convictions, prejudices, and beliefs. But it cannot be maintained that philosophy has had any very great measure of success in its attempts to provide definite answers to its questions. If you ask a mathematician, a mineralogist, a historian, or any other man of learning, what definite body of

truths has been ascertained by his science, his answer will last as long as you are willing to listen. But if you put the same question to a philosopher, he will, if he is candid, have to confess that his study has not achieved positive results such as have been achieved by other sciences. It is true that this is partly accounted for by the fact that, as soon as definite knowledge concerning any subject becomes possible, this subject ceases to be called philosophy, and becomes a separate science. The whole study of the heavens, which now belongs to astronomy, was once included in philosophy; Newton's great work was called 'the mathematical principles of natural philosophy'. Similarly, the study of the human mind, which was a part of philosophy, has now been separated from philosophy and has become the science of psychology. Thus, to a great extent, the uncertainty of philosophy is more apparent than real: those questions which are already capable of definite answers are placed in the sciences, while those only to which, at present, no definite answer can be given, remain to form the residue which is called philosophy.

This is, however, only a part of the truth concerning the uncertainty of philosophy. There are many questions—and among them those that are of the profoundest interest to our spiritual life—which, so far as we can see, must remain insoluble to the human intellect unless its powers become of quite a different order from what they are now. Has the universe any unity of plan or purpose, or is it a fortuitous concourse of atoms? Is consciousness a permanent part of the universe, giving hope of indefinite growth in wisdom, or is it a transitory accident on a small planet on which life must ultimately become impossible? Are good and evil of importance to the universe or only to man? Such questions are asked by philosophy, and variously answered by various philosophers. But it would seem that, whether answers be otherwise discoverable or not, the answers suggested by philosophy are none of them demonstrably true. Yet, however slight may be the hope of discovering an answer, it is part of the business of philosophy to continue the consideration of such questions, to make us aware of their importance, to examine all the approaches to them, and to keep alive that speculative interest in the universe which is apt to be killed by confining ourselves to definitely ascertainable knowledge.

Many philosophers, it is true, have held that philosophy could establish the truth of certain answers to such fundamental questions. They have supposed that what is of most importance in religious beliefs could be proved by strict demonstration to be true. In order to judge of such attempts, it is necessary to take a survey of human knowledge, and to form an opinion as to its methods and its limitations. On such a subject it would be unwise to pronounce dogmatically; but if the investigations of our previous chapters have not led us astray, we shall be compelled to renounce the hope of finding philosophical proofs of religious beliefs. We cannot, therefore, include as part of the value of philosophy any definite set of answers to such questions. Hence, once more, the value of

philosophy must not depend upon any supposed body of definitely ascertainable knowledge to be acquired by those who study it.

The value of philosophy is, in fact, to be sought largely in its very uncertainty. The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason. To such a man the world tends to become definite, finite, obvious; common objects rouse no questions, and unfamiliar possibilities are contemptuously rejected. As soon as we begin to philosophize, on the contrary, we find, as we saw in our opening chapters, that even the most everyday things lead to problems to which only very incomplete answers can be given. Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom. Thus, while diminishing our feeling of certainty as to what things are, it greatly increases our knowledge as to what they may be; it removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never travelled into the region of liberating doubt, and it keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect.

Apart from its utility in showing unsuspected possibilities, philosophy has a value—perhaps its chief value—through the greatness of the objects which it contemplates, and the freedom from narrow and personal aims resulting from this contemplation. The life of the instinctive man is shut up within the circle of his private interests: family and friends may be included, but the outer world is not regarded except as it may help or hinder what comes within the circle of instinctive wishes. In such a life there is something feverish and confined, in comparison with which the philosophic life is calm and free. The private world of instinctive interests is a small one, set in the midst of a great and powerful world which must, sooner or later, lay our private world in ruins. Unless we can so enlarge our interests as to include the whole outer world, we remain like a garrison in a beleagured fortress, knowing that the enemy prevents escape and that ultimate surrender is inevitable. In such a life there is no peace, but a constant strife between the insistence of desire and the powerlessness of will. In one way or another, if our life is to be great and free, we must escape this prison and this strife.

One way of escape is by philosophic contemplation. Philosophic contemplation does not, in its widest survey, divide the universe into two hostile camps—friends and foes, helpful and hostile, good and bad—it views the whole impartially. Philosophic contemplation, when it is unalloyed, does not aim at proving that the rest of the universe is akin to man. All acquisition of knowledge is an enlargement of the Self, but this enlargement is best attained when it is not

directly sought. It is obtained when the desire for knowledge is alone operative, by a study which does not wish in advance that its objects should have this or that character, but adapts the Self to the characters which it finds in its objects. This enlargement of Self is not obtained when, taking the Self as it is, we try to show that the world is so similar to this Self that knowledge of it is possible without any admission of what seems alien. The desire to prove this is a form of self-assertion and, like all self-assertion, it is an obstacle to the growth of Self which it desires, and of which the Self knows that it is capable. Self-assertion, in philosophic speculation as elsewhere, views the world as a means to its own ends; thus it makes the world of less account than Self, and the Self sets bounds to the greatness of its goods. In contemplation, on the contrary, we start from the not-Self, and through its greatness the boundaries of Self are enlarged; through the infinity of the universe the mind which contemplates it achieves some share in infinity.

For this reason greatness of soul is not fostered by those philosophies which assimilate the universe to Man. Knowledge is a form of union of Self and not-Self; like all union, it is impaired by dominion, and therefore by any attempt to force the universe into conformity with what we find in ourselves. There is a widespread philosophical tendency towards the view which tells us that Man is the measure of all things, that truth is man-made, that space and time and the world of universals are properties of the mind, and that, if there be anything not created by the mind, it is unknowable and of no account for us. This view, if our previous discussions were correct, is untrue; but in addition to being untrue, it has the effect of robbing philosophic contemplation of all that gives it value, since it fetters contemplation to Self. What it calls knowledge is not a union with the not-Self, but a set of prejudices, habits, and desires, making an impenetrable veil between us and the world beyond. The man who finds pleasure in such a theory of knowledge is like the man who never leaves the domestic circle for fear his word might not be law.

The true philosophic contemplation, on the contrary, finds its satisfaction in every enlargement of the not-Self, in everything that magnifies the objects contemplated, and thereby the subject contemplating. Everything, in contemplation, that is personal or private, everything that depends upon habit, self-interest, or desire, distorts the object, and hence impairs the union which the intellect seeks. By thus making a barrier between subject and object, such personal and private things become a prison to the intellect. The free intellect will see as God might see, without a here and now, without hopes and fears, without the trammels of customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, calmly, dispassionately, in the sole and exclusive desire of knowledge—knowledge as impersonal, as purely contemplative, as it is possible for man to attain. Hence also the free intellect will value more the abstract and universal knowledge into which the accidents of private history do not enter, than the knowledge brought

by the senses, and dependent, as such knowledge must be, upon an exclusive and personal point of view and a body whose sense-organs distort as much as they reveal.

The mind which has become accustomed to the freedom and impartiality of philosophic contemplation will preserve something of the same freedom and impartiality in the world of action and emotion. It will view its purposes and desires as parts of the whole, with the absence of insistence that results from seeing them as infinitesimal fragments in a world of which all the rest is unaffected by any one man's deeds. The impartiality which, in contemplation, is the unalloyed desire for truth, is the very same quality of mind which, in action, is justice, and in emotion is that universal love which can be given to all, and not only to those who are judged useful or admirable. Thus contemplation enlarges not only the objects of our thoughts, but also the objects of our actions and our affections: it makes us citizens of the universe, not only of one walled city at war with all the rest. In this citizenship of the universe consists man's true freedom, and his liberation from the thraldom of narrow hopes and fears.

Thus, to sum up our discussion of the value of philosophy; Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.

Philosophy: Who Needs It?

Ayn Rand

Address to the Graduating Class of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York — March 6, 1974

Since I am a fiction writer, let us start with a short story. Suppose that you are an astronaut whose spaceship gets out of control and crashes on an unknown planet. When you regain consciousness and find that you are not hurt badly, the first three questions in or mind would be: Where am I? How can I discover it? What should I do?

You see unfamiliar vegetation outside, and there is air to breathe; the sunlight seems paler than you remember it and colder. You turn to look at the sky, but stop. You are struck by a sudden feeling: it you don't look, you won't have to know that you are, perhaps, too far from the earth and no return is possible; so long as you don't know it, you are free to believe what you wish—and you experience a foggy, pleasant, but somehow guilty, kind of hope.

You turn to your instruments: they may be damaged, you don't know how seriously. But you stop, struck by a sudden fear: how can you trust these instruments? How can you be sure that they won't mislead you? How can you know whether they will work in a different world? You turn away from the instruments.

Now you begin to wonder why you have no desire to do anything. It seems so much safer just to wait for something to turn up somehow; it is better, you tell yourself, not to rock the spaceship. Far in the distance, you see some sort of living creatures approaching; you don't know whether they are human, but they walk on two feet. They, you decide, will tell you what to do.

You are never heard from again.

This is fantasy, you say? You would not act like that and no astronaut ever would? Perhaps not. But this is the way most men live their lives, here, on earth.

Most men spend their days struggling to evade three questions, the answers to which underlie man's every thought, feeling and action, whether he is consciously aware of it or not: Where am I? How do I know it? What should I do?

By the time they are old enough to understand these questions, men believe that they know the answers. Where am I? Say, in New York City. How do I know it? It's self-evident. What should I do? Here, they are not too sure—but the usual answer is: whatever everybody does. The only trouble seems to be that they

are not very active, not very confident, not very happy—and they experience, at times, a causeless fear and an undefined guilt, which they cannot explain or get rid of.

They have never discovered the fact that the trouble comes from the three unanswered questions—and that there is only one science that can answer them: philosophy.

Philosophy studies the fundamental nature of existence, of man, and of man's relationship to existence. As against the special sciences, which deal only with particular aspects, philosophy deals with those aspects of the universe which pertain to everything that exists. In the realm of cognition, the special sciences are the trees, but philosophy is the soil which makes the forest possible.

Philosophy would not tell you, for instance, whether you are in New York City or in Zanzibar (though it would give you the means to find out). But here is what it would tell you: Are you in a universe which is ruled by natural laws and, therefore, is stable, firm, absolute—and knowable? Or are you in an incomprehensible chaos, a realm of inexplicable miracles, an unpredictable, unknowable flux, which your mind is impotent to grasp? Are the things you see around you real—or are they only an illusion? Do they exist independent of any observer—or are they created by the observer? Are they the object or the subject of man's consciousness? Are they what they are—or can they be changed by a mere act of your consciousness, such as a wish?

The nature of your actions-and of your ambition—will be different, according to which set of answers you come to accept. These answers are the province of metaphysics—the study of existence as such or, in Aristotle's words, of "being qua being"—the basic branch of philosophy.

No matter what conclusions you reach, you will be confronted by the necessity to answer another, corollary question: How do I know it? Since man is not omniscient or infallible, you have to discover what you can claim as knowledge and how to prove the validity of your conclusions. Does man acquire knowledge by a process of reason—or by sudden revelation from a supernatural power? Is reason a faculty that identifies and integrates the material provided by man's senses—or is it fed by innate ideas, implanted in man's mind before he was born? Is reason competent to perceive reality—or does man possess some other cognitive faculty which is superior to reason? Can man achieve certainty—or is he doomed to perpetual doubt?

The extent of your self-confidence—and of your success—will be different, according to which set of answers you accept. These answers are the province of epistemology, the theory of knowledge, which studies man's means of cognition.

These two branches are the theoretical foundation of philosophy. The

third branch—ethics—may be regarded as its technology. Ethics does not apply to everything that exists, only to man, but it applies to every aspect of man's life: his character, his actions, his values, his relationship to all of existence. Ethics, or morality, defines a code of values to guide man's choices and actions—the choices and actions that determine the course of his life.

Just as the astronaut in my story did not know what he should do, because he refused to know where he was and how to discover it, so you cannot know what you should do until you know the nature of the universe you deal with, the nature of your means of cognition—and your own nature. Before you come to ethics, you must answer the questions posed by metaphysics and epistemology: Is man a rational being, able to deal with reality—or is he a helplessly blind misfit, a chip buffeted by the universal flux? Are achievement and enjoyment possible to man on earth—or is he doomed to failure and distaste? Depending on the answers, you can proceed to consider the questions posed by ethics: What is good or evil for man—and why? Should man's primary concern be a quest for joy—or an escape from suffering? Should man hold self-fulfillment—or self-destruction—as the goal of his life? Should man pursue his values—or should he place the interests of others above his own? Should man seek happiness—or self-sacrifice?

I do not have to point out the different consequences of these two sets of answers. You can see them everywhere—within you and around you.

The answers given by ethics determine how man should treat other men, and this determines the fourth branch of philosophy: politics, which defines the principles of a proper social system. As an example of philosophy's function, political philosophy will not tell you how mush rationed gas you should be given and on which day of the week—it will tell you whether the government has the right to impose any rationing on anything.

The fifth and last branch of philosophy is esthetics, the study of art, which is based on metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. Art deals with the needs—the refueling—of man's consciousness.

Now some of you might say, as many people do: "Aw, I never think in such abstract terms—I want to deal with concrete, particular, real-life problems—what do I need philosophy for?" My answer is: In order to be able to deal with concrete, particular, real-life problems—i.e., in order to be able to live on earth.

You might claim-as most people do—that you have never been influenced by philosophy. I will ask you to check that claim. Have you ever thought or said the following? "Don't be so sure—nobody can be certain of anything." You got that notion from David Hume (and many, many others), even though you might never have heard of him. Or: "This may be good in theory, but it doesn't work in practice." You got that from Plato. Or: "That was a rotten thing to do, but it's only human, nobody is perfect in this world." You got that from Augustine. Or: "It may be true for you, but it's not true for me." You got it from William James. Or: "I

couldn't help it! Nobody can help anything he does." You got it from Hegel. Or: "I can't prove it, but I feel that it's true." You got it from Kant. Or: "It's logical, but logic has nothing to do with reality." You got it from Kant. Or: "It's evil, because it's selfish." You got it from Kant. Have you heard the modern activists say: "Act first, think afterward"? They got it from John Dewey.

Some people might answer: "Sure, I've said those things at different times, but I don't have to believe that stuff all of the time. It may have been true yesterday, but it's not true today." They got it from Hegel. They might say: "Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." They got it from a very little mind, Emerson. They might say: "But can't one compromise and borrow different ideas from different philosophies according to the expediency of the moment?" They got it from Richard Nixon—who got it from William James.

Now ask yourself: if you are not interested in abstract ideas, why do you (and all men) feel compelled to use them? The fact is that abstract ideas are conceptual integrations which subsume an incalculable number of concretes—and that without abstract ideas you would not be able to deal with concrete, particular, real-life problems. You would be in the position of a newborn infant, to whom every object is a unique, unprecedented phenomenon. The difference between his mental state and yours lies in the number of conceptual integrations your mind has performed.

You have no choice about the necessity to integrate your observations, your experiences, your knowledge into abstract ideas, i.e., into principles. Your only choice is whether these principles are true or false, whether they represent your conscious, rational conviction—or a grab-bag of notions snatched at random, whose sources, validity, context and consequences you do not know, notions which, more often than not, you would drop like a hot potato if you knew.

But the principles you accept (consciously or subconsciously) may clash with or contradict one another; they, too, have to be integrated. What integrates them? Philosophy. A philosophic system is an integrated view of existence. As a human being, you have no choice about the fact that you need a philosophy. Your only choice is whether you define your philosophy by a conscious, rational, disciplined process of thought and scrupulously logical deliberation—or let your subconscious accumulate a junk heap of unwarranted conclusions, false generalizations, undefined contradictions, undigested slogans, unidentified whishes, doubts and fears, thrown together by chance, but integrated by your subconscious into a kind of mongrel philosophy and fused into a single, solid weight: self-doubt, like a ball and chain in the place where your mind's wings should have grown.

You might say, as many people do, that it is not easy always to act on abstract principles. No, it is not easy. But how much harder is it, to have to act on them without knowing what they are?

Your subconscious is like a computer—more complex a computer than men can build—and its main function is the integration of your ideas. Who programs it? Your conscious mind. If you default, if you don't reach any firm convictions, your subconscious is programmed by chance—and you deliver yourself into the power of ideas you do not know you have accepted. But one way or the other, your computer gives you print-outs, daily and hourly, in the form of emotions—which are lightning-like estimates of the things around you, calculated according to your values. If you programmed your computer by conscious thinking, you know the nature of your values and emotions. If you didn't, you don't.

Many people, particularly today, claim that man cannot live by logic alone, that there's the emotional element of his nature to consider, and that they rely on the guidance of their emotions. Well, so did the astronaut in my story. The joke is on him—and on them: man's values and emotions are determined by his fundamental view of life. The ultimate programmer of his subconscious is philosophy—the science which, according to the emotionalists, is impotent to affect or penetrate the murky mysteries of their feelings.

The quality of a computer's output is determined by the quality of its input. If your subconscious is programmed by chance, its output will have a corresponding character. You have probably heard the computer operators' eloquent term "gigo"—which means: "Garbage in, garbage out." The same formula applies to the relationship between a man's thinking and his emotions.

A man who is run by emotions is like a man who is run by a computer whose print-outs he cannot read. He does not know whether its programming is true or false, right or wrong, whether it's set to lead him to success or destruction, whether it serves his goals or those of some evil, unknowable power. He is blind on two fronts: blind to the world around him and to his own inner world, unable to grasp reality or his own motives, and he is in chronic terror of both. Emotions are not tools of cognition. The men who are not interested in philosophy need it most urgently: they are most helplessly in its power.

The men who are not interested in philosophy absorb its principles from the cultural atmosphere around them—from schools, colleges, books, magazines, newspapers, movies, television, etc. Who sets the tone of a culture? A small handful of men: the philosophers. Others follow their lead, either by conviction or by default. For some two hundred years, under the influence of Immanuel Kant, the dominant trend of philosophy has been directed to a single goal: the destruction of man's mind, of his confidence in the power of reason. Today, we are seeing the climax of that trend.

When men abandon reason, they find not only that their emotions cannot guide them, but that they can experience no emotions save one: terror. The spread of drug addiction among young people brought up on today's intellectual fashions,

demonstrates the unbearable inner state of men who are deprived of their means of cognition and who seek escape from reality—from the terror of their impotence to deal with existence. Observe these young people's dread of independence and their frantic desire to "belong," to attach themselves to some group, clique or gang. Most of them have never heard of philosophy, but they sense that they need some fundamental answers to questions they dare not ask—and they hope that the tribe will tell them how to live. They are ready to be taken over by any witch doctor, guru, or dictator. One of the most dangerous things a man can do is to surrender his moral autonomy to others: like the astronaut in my story, he does not know whether they are human, even though they walk on two feet.

Now you may ask: If philosophy can be that evil, why should one study it? Particularly, why should one study the philosophical theories which are blatantly false, make no sense, and bear no relation to real life?

My answer is: In self-protection—and in defense of truth, justice, freedom, and any value you ever held or may ever hold.

Not all philosophies are evil, though too many of them are, particularly in modern history. On the other hand, at the root of every civilized achievement, such as science, technology, progress, freedom—at the root of every value we enjoy today, including the birth of this country—you will find the achievement of one man, who lived over two thousand years ago: Aristotle.

If you feel nothing but boredom when reading the virtually unintelligible theories of some philosophers, you have my deepest sympathy. But if you brush them aside, saying: "Why should I study that stuff when I know it's nonsense?"—you are mistaken. It is nonsense, but you don't know it—not so long as you go on accepting all their conclusions, all the vicious catch phrases generated by those philosophers. And not so long as you are unable to refute them.

That nonsense deals with the most crucial, the life-or-death issues of man's existence. At the root of every significant philosophic theory, there is a legitimate issue—in the sense that there is an authentic need of man's consciousness, which some theories struggle to clarify and others struggle to obfuscate, to corrupt, to prevent man from ever discovering. The battle of philosophers is a battle for man's mind. If you do not understand their theories, you are vulnerable to the worst among them.

The best way to study philosophy is to approach it as one approaches a detective story: follow every trail, clue and implication, in order to discover who is a murderer and who is a hero. The criterion of detection is two questions: Why? and How? If a given tenet seems to be true—why? If another tenet seems to be false—why? and how is it being put over? You will not find all the answers immediately, but you will acquire an invaluable characteristic: the ability to think in terms of essentials.

Nothing is given to man automatically, neither knowledge, nor self-confidence, nor inner serenity, nor the right way to use his mind. Every value he needs or wants has to be discovered, learned and acquired—even the proper posture of his body. In this context, I want to say that I have always admired the posture of West Point graduates, a posture that projects man in proud, disciplined control of his body. Well, philosophical training gives man the proper intellectual posture—a proud, disciplined control of his mind.

In your own profession, in military science, you know the importance of keeping track of the enemy's weapons, strategy and tactics—and of being prepared to counter them. The same is true in philosophy: you have to understand the enemy's ideas and be prepared to refute them, you have to know his basic arguments and be able to blast them.

In physical warfare, you would not send your men into a booby trap: you would make every effort to discover its location. Well, Kant's system is the biggest and most intricate booby trap in the history of philosophy—but it's so full of holes that once you grasp its gimmick, you can defuse it without any trouble and walk forward over it in perfect safety. And, once it is defused, the lesser Kantians—the lower ranks of his army, the philosophical sergeants, buck privates, and mercenaries of today—will fall of their own weightlessness, by chain reaction.

There is a special reason why you, the future leaders of the United States Army, need to be philosophically armed today. You are the target of a special attack by the Kantian-Hegelian-collectivist establishment that dominates our cultural institutions at present. You are the army of the last semi-free country left on earth, yet you are accused of being a tool of imperialism—and "imperialism" is the name given to the foreign policy of this country, which has never engaged in military conquest and has never profited from the two world wars, which she did not initiate, but entered and won. (It was, incidentally, a foolishly overgenerous policy, which made this country waste her wealth on helping both her allies and her former enemies.) Something called "the military-industrial complex"—which is a myth or worse—is being blamed for all of this country's troubles. Bloody college hoodlums scream demands that R.O.T.C. units be banned from college campuses. Our defense budget is being attacked, denounced and undercut by people who claim that financial priority should be given to ecological rose gardens and to classes in esthetic self-expression for the residents of the slums.

Some of you may be bewildered by this campaign and may be wondering, in good faith, what errors you committed to bring it about. If so, it is urgently important for you to understand the nature of the enemy. You are attacked, not for any errors or flaws, but for your virtues. You are denounced, not for any weaknesses, but for your strength and your competence. You are penalized for being the protectors of the United States. On a lower level of the same issue, a

similar kind of campaign is conducted against the police force. Those who seek to destroy this country, seek to disarm it—intellectually and physically. But it is not a mere political issue; politics is not the cause, but the last consequence of philosophical ideas. It is not a communist conspiracy, though some communists may be involved—as maggots cashing in on a disaster they had no power to originate. The motive of the destroyers is not love for communism, but hatred for America. Why hatred? Because America is the living refutation of a Kantian universe.

Today's mawkish concern with and compassion for the feeble, the flawed, the suffering, the guilty, is a cover for the profoundly Kantian hatred of the innocent, the strong, the able, the successful, the virtuous, the confident, the happy. A philosophy out to destroy man's mind is necessarily a philosophy of hatred for man, for man's life, and for every human value. Hatred of the good for being the good, is the hallmark of the twentieth century. This is the enemy you are facing.

A battle of this kind requires special weapons. It has to be fought with a full understanding of your cause, a full confidence in yourself, and the fullest certainty of the moral rightness of both. Only philosophy can provide you with these weapons.

The assignment I gave myself for tonight is not to sell you on my philosophy, but on philosophy as such. I have, however, been speaking implicitly of my philosophy in every sentence—since none of us and no statement can escape from philosophical premises. What is my selfish interest in the matter? I am confident enough to think that if you accept the importance of philosophy and the task of examining it critically, it is my philosophy that you will come to accept. Formally, I call it Objectivism, but informally I call it a philosophy for living on earth. You will find an explicit presentation of it in my books, particularly in *Atlas Shrugged*.

In conclusion, allow me to speak in personal terms. This evening means a great deal to me. I feel deeply honored by the opportunity to address you. I can say—not as a patriotic bromide, but with full knowledge of the necessary metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, political and esthetic roots—that the United States of America is the greatest, the noblest and, in its original founding principles, the only moral country in the history of the world. There is a kind of quiet radiance associated in my mind with the name West Point—because you have preserved the spirit of those original founding principles and you are their symbol. There were contradictions and omissions in those principles, and there may be in yours—but I am speaking of the essentials. There may be individuals in your history who did not live up to your highest standards—as there are in every institution—since no institutions and no social system can guarantee the automatic perfection of all its members; this depends on an individual's free will.

I am speaking of your standards. You have preserved three qualities of character which were typical at the time of America's birth, but are virtually nonexistent today: earnestness—dedication—a sense of honor. Honor is self-esteem made visible in action.

You have chosen to risk your lives for the defense of this country. I will not insult you by saying that you are dedicated to selfless service—it is not a virtue in my morality. In my morality, the defense of one's country means that a man is personally unwilling to live as the conquered slave of any enemy, foreign or domestic. This is an enormous virtue. Some of you may not be consciously aware of it. I want to help you to realize it.

The army of a free country has a great responsibility: the right to use force, but not as an instrument of compulsion and brute conquest—as the armies of other countries have done in their histories—only as an instrument of a free nation's self-defense, which means: the defense of a man's individual rights. The principle of using force only in retaliation against those who initiate its use, is the principle of subordinating might to right. The highest integrity and sense of honor are required for such a task. No other army in the world has achieved it. You have.

West Point has given America a long line of heroes, known and unknown. You, this year's graduates, have a glorious tradition to carry on—which I admire profoundly, not because it is a tradition, but because it is glorious.

Since I came from a country guilty of the worst tyranny on earth, I am particularly able to appreciate the meaning, the greatness and the supreme value of that which you are defending. So, in my own name and in the name of many people who think as I do, I want to say, to all the men of West Point, past, present and future: Thank you.

* * *

Source: http://gos.sbc.edu/r/rand.html

Three Quotations on Dualism

Martin Luther in 1520: "Man has a twofold nature, a spiritual one and a bodily one. According to the spiritual nature, which men refer to as the soul, he is called a spiritual, inner, or new man. According to the bodily nature, which men refer to as flesh, he is called a carnal, outward, or old man, of whom the Apostle writes in 2 Cor. 4 [:16], 'Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day.' Because of this diversity of nature the Scriptures assert contradictory things concerning the same man, since these two men in the same man contradict each other, 'for the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh,' according to Gal. 5 [:17]."

Pope Innocent III's (1160-1216) disgust at human body: "impure begetting, disgusting means of nutrition in his mother's womb, baseness of matter out of which man evolves, hideous stink, secretion of saliva, urine, and filth."

St. Paul: "I am physical, sold into slavery to sin. I do not understand what I am doing, for I do not do what I want to do; I do the things that I hate ... . What a wretched man I am! Who can save me from this doomed body?" (St. Paul)

Where Am I?

Daniel C. Dennett

Now that I've won my suit under the Freedom of Information Act, I am at liberty to reveal for the first time a curious episode in my life that may be of interest not only to those engaged in research in the philosophy of mind, artificial intelligence, and neuroscience but also to the general public.

Several years ago I was approached by Pentagon officials who asked me to volunteer for a highly dangerous and secret mission. In collaboration with NASA and Howard Hughes, the Department of Defense was spending billions to develop a Supersonic Tunneling Underground Device, or STUD. It was supposed to tunnel through the Earth's core at great speed and deliver a specially designed atomic warhead "right up the Red's missile silos," as one of the Pentagon brass put it.

The problem was that in an early test they had succeeded in lodging a warhead about a mile deep under Tulsa, Oklahoma, and they wanted me to retrieve it for them. "Why me?" I asked. Well, the mission involved some pioneering applications of current brain research, and they had heard of my interest in brains and of course my Faustian curiosity and great courage and so forth ... . Well, how could I refuse? The difficulty that brought the Pentagon to my door was that the device I'd been asked to recover was fiercely radioactive, in a new way. According to monitoring instruments, something about the nature of the device and its complex interactions with pockets of material deep in the earth had produced radiation that could cause severe abnormalities in certain tissues of the brain. No way had been found to shield the brain from these deadly rays, which were apparently harmless to other tissues and organs of the body. So it had been decided that the person sent to recover the device should *leave his brain behind.* It would be kept in a safe place where it could execute its normal control functions by elaborate radio links. Would I submit to a surgical procedure that would completely remove my brain, which would then be placed in a life-support system at the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston? Each input and output pathway, as it was severed, would be restored by a pair of micro-miniaturized radio transceivers, one attached precisely to the brain, the other to the nerve stumps in the empty cranium. No information would be lost, all the connectivity would be preserved. At first I was a bit reluctant. Would it really work? The Houston brain surgeons encouraged me. "Think of it," they said, "as a mere *stretching* of the nerves. If your brain were just moved over an inch in your skull, that would not alter or impair your mind. We're simply going to *make* the nerves indefinitely elastic by splicing radio links into them."

I was shown around the life-support lab in Houston and saw the sparkling

new vat in which my brain would be placed, were I to agree. I met the large and brilliant support team of neurologists, hematologists, biophysicists, and electrical engineers, and after several days of discussions and demonstrations, I agreed to give it a try. I was subjected to an enormous array of blood tests, brain scans, experiments, interviews, and the like. They took down my autobiography at great length, recorded tedious lists of my beliefs, hopes, fears, and tastes. They even listed my favorite stereo recordings and gave me a crash session of psychoanalysis.

The day for surgery arrived at last and of course I was anesthetized and remember nothing of the operation itself. When I came out of anesthesia, I opened my eyes, looked around, and asked the inevitable, the traditional, the lamentably hackneyed postoperative question: "Where am I?" The nurse smiled down at me. "You're in Houston," she said, and I reflected that this still had a good chance of being the truth one way or another. She handed me a mirror. Sure enough, there were the tiny antennae poling up through their titanium ports cemented into my skull.

"I gather the operation was a success," I said. "I want to go see my brain." They led me (I was a bit dizzy and unsteady) down a long corridor and into the life-support lab. A cheer went up from the assembled support team, and I responded with what I hoped was a jaunty salute. Still feeling lightheaded, I was helped over to the life-support vat. I peered through the glass. There, floating in what looked like ginger ale, was undeniably a human brain, though it was almost covered with printed circuit chips, plastic tubules, electrodes, and other paraphernalia. "Is that mine?" I asked. "Hit the output transmitter switch there on the side of the vat and see for yourself," the project director replied. I moved the switch to OFF, and immediately slumped, groggy and nauseated, into the arms of the technicians, one of whom kindly restored the switch to its ON position. While I recovered my equilibrium and composure, I thought to myself, "Well, here I am sitting on a folding chair, staring through a piece of plate glass at my own brain ... . But wait," I said to myself, "shouldn't I have thought, 'Here I am, suspended in a bubbling fluid, being stared at by my own eyes'?" I tried to think this latter thought. I tried to project it into the tank, offering it hopefully to my brain, but I failed to carry off the exercise with any conviction. I tried again. "Here am I, Daniel Dennett, suspended in a bubbling fluid, being stared at by my own eyes." No, it just didn't work. Most puzzling and confusing. Being a philosopher of firm physicalist conviction, I believed unswervingly that the tokening of my thoughts was occurring somewhere in my brain: yet, when I thought "Here I am," where the thought occurred to me was *here,* outside the vat, where I, Dennett, was standing staring at my brain.

I tried and tried to think myself into the vat, but to no avail. I tried to build up to the task by doing mental exercises. I thought to myself, "The sun is

shining *over there*," five times in rapid succession, each time mentally ostending a different place: in order, the sunlit corner of the lab, the visible front lawn of the hospital, Houston, Mars, and Jupiter. I found I had little difficulty in getting my "theres" to hop all over the celestial map with their proper references. I could loft a "there" in an instant rough the farthest reaches of space, and then aim the next "there" with accuracy at the upper left quadrant of a freckle on my arm. Why such trouble with "here"? "Here in Houston" worked well so did "here in the lab," and even "here in this part of the lab," but "here in the vat" always seemed merely an unmeant mental mouthing. I tried closing my eyes while thinking it. This seemed to help, I couldn't manage to pull it off, except perhaps for a fleeting instant. I couldn't be sure. The discovery that I couldn't be sure was also unsettling. How did I know *where I* meant by "here" when I thought "here"? Could I *think* I meant one place when in fact I meant another? I didn't see how that could be admitted without untying the few bonds of intimacy between a person and his own mental life that had survived the onslaught of the brain scientists and philosophers, the physicalists and behaviorists. Perhaps I was incorrigible about where I *meant* when I "here." But in my present circumstances it seemed that either I was doomed by sheer force of mental habit to thinking systematically false indexical thoughts, or where a person is (and hence where his thoughts are tokened for purposes of semantic analysis) is not necessarily where his brain, the physical seat of his soul, resides. Nagged by confusion, I attempted to orient myself by falling back on a favorite philosopher's ploy. I began naming things.

"Yorick," I said aloud to my brain, "you are my brain. The rest of my body, seated in this chair, I dub 'Hamlet.'" So here we all are: Yorick's my brain, Hamlet's my body, and I am Dennett. Now, where am I? And when I think "where am I?" where's that thought tokened? Is it tokened in my brain, lounging about in the vat, or right here between my ears where it *seems* to be tokened? Or nowhere? Its temporal coordinates give me no trouble; must it not have spatial coordinates as well? I began making a list of the alternatives.

1. Where Hamlet goes, there goes Dennett. This principle was easily refuted by appeal to the familiar brain-transplant thought experiments so enjoyed by philosophers. If Tom and Dick switch brains, Tom is the fellow with Dick's former body—just ask him; he'll claim to be Tom, and tell you the most intimate details of Tom's autobiography. It was clear enough, then, that my current body and I could part company, but not likely that I could be separated from my brain. The rule of thumb that emerged so plainly from the thought experiments was that in a brain transplant operation, one wanted to be the *donor,* not the recipient. Better to call such an operation a *body* transplant, in fact. So perhaps the truth was,

2. Where Yorick goes, there goes Dennett. This was not at all appealing, however. How could I be in the vat and not about to go anywhere, when I was so

obviously outside the vat looking in and beginning to make guilty plans to return to my room for a substantial lunch? This begged the question I realized, but it still seemed to be getting at something important. Casting about for some support for my intuition, I hit upon a legalistic sort of argument that might have appealed to Locke.

Suppose, I argued to myself, I were now to fly to California, rob a bank, and be apprehended. In which state would I be tried: in California, where the robbery took place, or in Texas, where the brains of the outfit were located? Would I be a California felon with an out-of-state brain, or a Texas felon remotely controlling an accomplice of sorts in California? It seemed possible that I might beat such a rap just on the undecidability of that jurisdictional question, though perhaps it would be deemed an interstate, and hence Federal, offense. In any event, suppose I were convicted. Was it likely that California would be satisfied to throw Hamlet into the brig, knowing that Yorick was living the good life and luxuriously taking the waters in Texas? Would Texas incarcerate Yorick, leaving Hamlet free to take the next boat to Rio? This alternative appealed to me. Barring capital punishment or other cruel and unusual punishment, the state would be obliged to maintain the life-support system for Yorick though they might move him from Houston to Leavenworth, and aside from the unpleasantness of the opprobrium, I, for one, would not mind at all and would consider myself a free man under those circumstances. If the state has an interest in forcibly relocating persons in institutions, it would fail to relocate me in any institution by locating Yorick there. If this were true, it suggested a third alternative.

3. Dennett is wherever he thinks he is. Generalized, the claim was as follows: At any given time a person has a *point of view,* and the location of the point of view (which is determined internally by the content of the point of view) is also the location of the person.

Such a proposition is not without its perplexities, but to me it seemed a step in the right direction. The only trouble was that it seemed to place one in a heads-I-win/tails-you-lose situation of unlikely infallibility as regards location. Hadn't I myself often been wrong about where I was, and at least as often uncertain? Couldn't one get lost? Of course, but getting lost *geographically* is not the only way one might get lost. If one were lost in the woods one could attempt to reassure oneself with the consolation that at least one knew where one was: one was right *here* in the familiar surroundings of one's own body. Perhaps in this case one would not have drawn one's attention to much to be thankful for. Still, there were worse plights imaginable, and I wasn't sure I wasn't in such a plight right now.

Point of view clearly had something to do with personal location, but it was itself an unclear notion. It was obvious that the content of one's point of view was not the same as or determined by the content of one's beliefs or thoughts. For

example, what should we say about the point of view of the Cinerama viewer who shrieks and twists in his seat as the roller-coaster footage overcomes his psychic distancing? Has he forgotten that he is safety seated in the theater? Here I was inclined to say that the person is experiencing an illusory shift in point of view. In other cases, my inclination to call such shifts illusory was less strong. The workers in laboratories and plants who handle dangerous materials by operating feedback-controlled mechanical arms and hands undergo a shift in point of view that is crisper and more pronounced than anything Cinerama can provoke. They can feel the heft and slipperiness of the containers they manipulate with their metal fingers. They know perfectly well where they are and are not fooled into false beliefs by the experience, yet it is as if they were inside the isolation chamber they are peering into. With mental effort, they can manage to shift their point of view back and forth, rather like making a transparent Necker cube or an Escher drawing change orientation before one's eyes. It does seem extravagant to suppose that in performing this bit of mental gymnastics, they are transporting *themselves* back and forth.

Still their example gave me hope. If I was in fact in the vat in spite of my intuitions, I might be able to train myself to adopt that point of view even as a matter of habit. I should dwell on images of myself comfortably floating in my vat, beaming volitions to that familiar body *out there.* I reflected that the ease or difficulty of this task was presumably independent of the truth about the location of one's brain. Had I been practicing before the operation, I might now be finding it second nature. You might now yourself try such a *trompe l'oeil*. Imagine you have written an inflammatory letter which has been published in the *Times,* the result of which is that the government has chosen to impound your brain for a probationary period of three years in its Dangerous Brain Clinic in Bethesda, Maryland. Your body of course is allowed freedom to earn a salary and thus to continue its function of laying up income to be taxed. At this moment, however, your body is seated in an auditorium listening to a peculiar account by Daniel Dennett of his own similar experience. Try it. Think yourself to Bethesda, and then hark back longingly to your body, far away, and yet *seeming* so near. It is only with long-distance restraint (yours? the government's?) that you can control your impulse to get those hands clapping in polite applause before navigating the old body to the rest room and a well-deserved glass of evening sherry in the lounge. The task of imagination is certainly difficult, but if you achieve your goal the results might be consoling.

Anyway, there I was in Houston, lost in thought as one might say, but not for long. My speculations were soon interrupted by the Houston doctors, who wished to test out my new prosthetic nervous system before sending me off on my hazardous mission. As I mentioned before, I was a bit dizzy at first, and not surprisingly, although I soon habituated myself to my new circumstances (which were, after all, well nigh indistinguishable from my old circumstances).

My accommodation was not perfect, however, and to this day I continue to be plagued by minor coordination difficulties. The speed of light is fast, but finite, and as my brain and body move farther and farther apart, the delicate interaction of my feedback systems is thrown into disarray by the time lags. Just as one is rendered close to speechless by a delayed or echoic hearing of one's speaking voice so, for instance, I am virtually unable to track a moving object with my eyes whenever my brain and my body are more than a few miles apart. In most matters my impairment is scarcely detectable, though I can no longer hit a slow curve ball with the authority of yore. There are some compensations of course. Though liquor tastes as good as ever, and warms my gullet while corroding my liver, I can drink it in any quantity I please, without becoming the slightest bit inebriated, a curiosity some of my close friends may have noticed (though I occasionally have feigned inebriation, so as not to draw attention to my unusual circumstances). For similar reasons, I take aspirin orally for a sprained wrist, but if the pain persists I ask Houston to administer codeine to me *in vitro.* In times of illness the phone bill can be staggering.

But to return to my adventure. At length, both the doctors and I were satisfied that I was ready to undertake my subterranean mission. And so I left my brain in Houston and headed by helicopter for Tulsa. Well, in any case, that's the way it seemed to me. That's how I would put it, just off the top of my head as it were. On the trip I reflected further about my earlier anxieties and decided that my first postoperative speculations had been tinged with panic. The matter was not nearly as strange or metaphysical as I had been supposing. Where was I? In two places, clearly: both inside the vat and outside it. Just as one can stand with one foot in Connecticut and the other in Rhode Island, I was in two places at once. I had become one of those scattered individuals we used to hear so much about. The more I considered this answer, the more obviously true it appeared. But, strange to say, the more true it appeared, the less important the question to which it could be the true answer seemed, a sad, but not unprecedented, fate for a philosophical question to suffer. This answer did not completely satisfy me, of course. There lingered some question to which I should have liked an answer, which was neither "Where are all my various and sundry parts?" nor "What is my current point of view?" Or at least there seemed to be such a question. For it did seem undeniable that in some sense I and not merely *most of me* was descending into the earth under Tulsa in search of an atomic warhead.

When I found the warhead, I was certainly glad I had left my brain behind, for the pointer on the specially built Geiger counter I had brought with me was off the dial. I called Houston on my ordinary radio and told the operation control center of my position and my progress. In return, they gave me instructions for dismantling the vehicle, based upon my on-site observations. I had set to work with my cutting torch when all of a sudden a terrible thing happened. I went stone deaf. At first I thought it was only my radio earphones that had broken, but when

I tapped on my helmet, I heard nothing. Apparently the auditory transceivers had gone on the fritz. I could no longer hear Houston or my own voice, but I could speak, so I started telling them what had happened. In midsentence, I knew something else had gone wrong. My vocal apparatus had become paralyzed. Then my right hand went limp—another transceiver had gone. I was truly in deep trouble. But worse was to follow. After a few more minutes, I went blind. I cursed my luck, and then I cursed the scientists who had led me into this grave peril. There I was, deaf, dumb, and blind, in a radioactive hole more than a mile under Tulsa. Then the last of my cerebral radio links broke, and suddenly I was faced with a new and even more shocking problem: whereas an instant before I had been buried alive in Oklahoma, now I was disembodied in Houston. My recognition of my new status was not immediate. It took me several very, anxious minutes before it dawned on me that my poor body lay several hundred miles away, with heart pulsing and lungs respirating, but otherwise as dead as the body of any heart-transplant donor, its skull packed with useless, broken electronic gear. The shift in perspective I had earlier found well nigh impossible now seemed quite natural. Though I could think myself back into my body in the tunnel under Tulsa, it took some effort to sustain the illusion. For surely it was an illusion to suppose I was still in Oklahoma: I had lost all contact with that body.

It occurred to me then, with one of those rushes of revelation of which we should be suspicious, that I had stumbled upon an impressive demonstration of the immateriality of the soul based upon physicalist principles and premises. For as the last radio signal between Tulsa and Houston died away, had I not changed location from Tulsa to Houston at the speed of light? And had I not accomplished this without any increase in mass? What moved from A to B at such speed was surely myself, or at any rate my soul or mind—the massless center of my being and home of my consciousness. My *point of view* had lagged somewhat behind, but I had already noted the indirect bearing of point of view on personal location. I could not see how a physicalist philosopher could quarrel with this except by taking the dire and counterintuitive route of banishing all talk of persons. Yet the notion of personhood was so well entrenched in everyone's world view, or so it seemed to me, that any denial would be as curiously unconvincing, as systematically disingenuous, as the Cartesian negation, "non sum."

The joy of philosophic discovery thus tided me over some very bad minutes or perhaps hours as the helplessness and hopelessness of my situation became more apparent to me. Waves of panic and even nausea swept over me, made all the more horrible by the absence of their normal body-dependent phenomenology. No adrenaline rush of tingles in the arms, no pounding heart, no premonitory salivation. I did feel a dread sinking feeling in my bowels at one point, and this tricked me momentarily into the false hope that I was undergoing a reversal of the process that landed me in this fix—a gradual undisembodiment. But the isolation and uniqueness of that twinge soon convinced me that it was

simply the first of a plague of phantom body hallucinations that 1, like any other amputee, would be all too likely to suffer.

My mood then was chaotic. On the one hand, I was fired up with elation of my philosophic discovery and was wracking my brain (one of the few familiar things I could still do), trying to figure out how to communicate my discovery to the journals; while on the other, I was bitter, lonely, and filled with dread and uncertainty. Fortunately, this did not last long, for my technical support team sedated me into a dreamless steep from which I awoke, hearing with magnificent fidelity the familiar opening strains of my favorite Brahms piano trio. So that was why they had wanted a list of my favorite recordings! It did not take me long to Idealize that I was hearing the music without ears. The output from the stereo stylus was being fed through some fancy rectification circuitry directly into my auditory nerve. I was mainlining Brahms, an unforgettable experience for any stereo buff. At the end of the record it did not surprise me to hear the reassuring voice of the project director speaking into a microphone that was now my prosthetic ear. He confirmed my analysis of what had gone wrong and assured me that steps were being taken to re-embody me. He did not elaborate, and after a few more recordings, I found myself drifting off to sleep. My sleep lasted, I later learned, for the better part of a year, and when I awoke, it was to find myself fully restored to my senses. When I looked into the mirror, though, I was a bit startled to see an unfamiliar face. Bearded and a bit heavier, bearing no doubt a family resemblance to my former face, and with the same look of spritely intelligence and resolute character, but definitely a new face. Further self-explorations of an intimate nature left me no doubt that this was a new body, and the project director confirmed my conclusions. He did not volunteer any information on the past history of my new body and I decided (wisely, I think in retrospect) not to pry. As many philosophers unfamiliar with my ordeal have more recently speculated, the acquisition of a new body leaves one's *person* intact. And after a period of adjustment to a new voice, new muscular strengths and weaknesses, and so forth, one's *personality* is by and large also preserved. More dramatic changes in personality have been routinely observed in people who have undergone extensive plastic surgery, to say nothing of sex-change operations, and I think no one contests the survival of the person in such cases. In any event I soon accommodated to my new body, to the point of being unable to recover any of its novelties to my consciousness or even memory. The view in the mirror soon became utterly familiar. That view, by the way, still revealed antennae, and so I was not surprised to learn that my brain had not been moved from its haven in the life-support lab.

I decided that good old Yorick deserved a visit. I and my new body, whom we might as well call Fortinbras, strode into the familiar lab to another round of applause from the technicians, who were of course congratulating themselves, not me. Once more I stood before the vat and contemplated poor Yorick, and on

a whim I once again cavalierly flicked off the output transmitter switch. Imagine my surprise when nothing unusual happened. No fainting spell, no nausea, no noticeable change. A technician hurried to restore the switch to ON, but still I felt nothing. I demanded an explanation, which the project director hastened to provide. It seems that before they had even operated on the first occasion, they had constructed a computer duplicate of my brain, reproducing both the complete information-processing structure and the computational speed of my brain in a giant computer program. After the operation, but before they had dared to send me off on my mission to Oklahoma, they had run this computer system and Yorick side by side. The incoming signals from Hamlet were sent simultaneously to Yorick's transceivers and to the computer's array of inputs. And the outputs from Yorick were not only beamed back to Hamlet, my body; they were recorded and checked against the simultaneous output of the computer program, which was called "Hubert" for reasons obscure to me. Over days and even weeks, the outputs were identical and synchronous, which of course did not prove that they had succeeded in copying the brain's functional structure, but the empirical support was greatly encouraging.

Hubert's input, and hence activity, had been kept parallel with Yorick's during my disembodied days. And now, to demonstrate this, they had actually thrown the master switch that put Hubert for the first time in on-line control of my body—not Hamlet, of course, but Fortinbras. (Hamlet, I learned, had never been recovered from its underground tomb and could be assumed by this time to have largely returned to the dust. At the head of my grave still lay the magnificent bulk of the abandoned device, with the word STUD emblazoned on its side in large letters—a circumstance which may provide archeologists of the next century with a curious insight into the burial rites of their ancestors.)

The laboratory technicians now showed me the master switch, which had two positions, labeled *B*, for Brain (they didn't know my brain's name was Yorick) and H, for Hubert. The switch did indeed point to *H,* and they explained to me that if I wished, I could switch it back to *B*. With my heart in my mouth (and my brain in its vat), I did this. Nothing happened. A click, that was all. To test their claim, and with the master switch now set at *B,* I hit Yorick's output transmitter switch on the vat and sure enough, I began to faint. Once the output switch was turned back on and I had recovered my wits, so to speak, I continued to play with the master switch, flipping it back and forth. I found that with the exception of the transitional click, I could detect no trace of a difference. I could switch in mid-utterance, and the sentence I had begun speaking under the control of Yorick was finished without a pause or hitch of any kind under the control of Hubert. I had a spare brain, a prosthetic device which might some day stand me in very good stead, were some mishap to befall Yorick. Or alternatively, I could keep Yorick as a spare and use Hubert. It didn't seem to make any difference which I chose, for the wear and tear and fatigue on my body did not have any debilitating

effect on either brain, whether or not it was actually causing the motions of my body, or merely spilling its output into thin air.

The one truly unsettling aspect of this new development was the prospect, which was not long in dawning on me, of someone detaching the spare Hubert or Yorick, as the case might be, from Fortinbras and hitching it to yet another body—some johnny-come-lately Rosencrantz or Guildenstern. Then (if not before) there would be *two* people, that much was clear. One would be me, and the other would be a sort of super-twin brother. If there were two bodies, one under the control of Hubert and the other being controlled by Yorick, then which would the world recognize as the true Dennett? And whatever the rest of the world decided, which one would be *me?* Would I be the Yorick-brained one, in virtue of Yorick's causal priority and former intimate relationship with the original Dennett body, Hamlet? That seemed a bit legalistic, a bit too redolent of the arbitrariness of consanguinity and legal possession, to be convincing at the metaphysical level. For suppose that before the arrival of the second body on the scene, I had been keeping Yorick as the spare for years, and letting Hubert's output drive my body—that is, Fortinbras—all that time. The Hubert-Fortinbras couple would seem then by squatter's rights (to combat one legal intuition with another) to be the true Dennett and the lawful inheritor of everything that was Dennett's. This was an interesting question, certainly, but not nearly so pressing as another question that bothered me. My strongest intuition was that in such an eventuality I would survive so long as *either* brain-body couple remained intact, but I had mixed emotions about whether I should want both to survive.

I discussed my worries with the technicians and the project director. The prospect of two Dennetts was abhorrent to me, I explained, largely for social reasons. I didn't want to be my own rival for the affections of my wife, nor did I like the prospect of the two Dennetts sharing my modest professor's salary. Still more vertiginous and distasteful, though, was the idea of knowing *that much* about another person, while he had the very same goods on me. How could we ever face each other? My colleagues in the lab argued that I was ignoring the bright side of the matter. Weren't there many things I wanted to do but, being only *one* person, had been unable to do? Now one Dennett could stay at home and be the professor and family man, while the other could strike out on a life of travel and adventure—missing the family of course, but happy in the knowledge that the other Dennett was keeping the home fires burning. I could be faithful and adulterous at the same time. I could even cuckold myself—to say nothing of other more lurid possibilities my colleagues were all too ready to force upon my overtaxed imagination. But my ordeal in Oklahoma (or was it Houston?) had made me less adventurous, and I shrank from this opportunity that was being offered (though of course I was never quite sure it was being offered to *me* in the first place).

There was another prospect even more disagreeable: that the spare, Hubert or Yorick as the case might be, would be detached from any input from Fortinbras and just left detached. Then, as in the other case, there would be two Dennetts, or at least two claimants to my name and possessions, one embodied in Fortinbras, and the other sadly, miserably disembodied. Both selfishness and altruism bade me take steps to prevent this from happening. So I asked that measures be taken to ensure that no one could ever tamper with the transceiver Connections or the master switch without my (our? no, my) knowledge and consent. Since I had no desire to spend my life guarding the equipment in Houston, it was mutually decided that all the electronic connections in the lab would be carefully locked. Both those that controlled the life-support system for Yorick and those that controlled the power supply for Hubert would be guarded with fail-safe devices, and I would take the only master switch, outfitted for radio remote control, with me wherever I went. I carry it strapped around my waist and—wait a moment—*here it is.* Every few months I reconnoiter the situation by switching channels. I do this only in the presence of friends, *of course,* for if the other channel were, heaven forbid, either dead or otherwise occupied, there would have to be somebody who had my interests at heart to switch it back, to bring me back from the void. For while I could feel, see, hear, and otherwise sense whatever befell my body, subsequent to such a switch, I'd be unable to control it. By the way, the two positions on the switch are intentionally unmarked, so I never have the faintest idea whether I am switching from Hubert to Yorick or vice versa. (Some of you may think that in this case I really don't know *who* I am, let alone where I am. But such reflections no longer make much of a dent on my essential Dennettness, on my own sense of who I *am.* If it is true that in one sense I don't know who I am then that's another one of your philosophical truths of underwhelming significance.)

In any case, every time I've flipped the switch so far, nothing has happened. *So let's give it a try....*

"THANK GOD! I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER FLIP THAT SWITCH! You can't imagine how horrible it's been these last two weeks—but now you know; it's your turn in purgatory. How I've longed for this moment! You see, about two weeks ago-excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, but I've got to explain this to my ... um, brother, I guess you could say, but he's just told you the facts, so you'll understand—about two weeks ago our two brains drifted just a bit out of synch. I don't know whether my brain is now Hubert or Yorick, any more than you do, but in any case, the two brains drifted apart, and of course once the process started, it snowballed, for I was in a slightly different receptive state for the input we both received, a difference that was soon magnified. In no time at all the illusion that I was in control of my body—our body—was completely dissipated. There was nothing I could do—no way to call you. YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I EXISTED! It's been like being carried around in a cage, or

better, like being possessed—hearing my own voice say things I didn't mean to say, watching in frustration as my own hands performed deeds I hadn't intended. You'd scratch our itches, but not the way I would have, and you kept me awake, with your tossing and turning. I've been totally exhausted, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, carried around helplessly by your frantic round of activities, sustained only by the knowledge that some day you'd throw the switch.

"Now it's your turn, but at least you'll have the comfort of knowing I know you're in there. Like an expectant mother, I'm eating—or at any rate tasting, smelling, seeing—for *two* now, and I'll try to make it easy for you. Don't worry. just as soon as this colloquium is over, you and I will fly to Houston, and we'll see what can be done to get one of us another body. You can have a female body—your body could be any color you like. But let's think it over. I tell you what—to be fair, if we both want this body, I promise I'll let the project director flip a coin to settle which of us gets to keep it and which then gets to choose a new body. That should guarantee justice, shouldn't it? In any case, I'll take care of you, I promise. These people are my witnesses.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this talk we have just heard is not exactly the talk I would have given, but I assure you that everything he said was perfectly true. And now if you'll excuse me, I think I'd—we'd —better sit down."

* * *

From *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology* by Daniel C. Dennett. Bradford Books, Publishers, Inc., 1978.

Is Man a Machine?

Raymond Smullyan

"Recently I was with a group of mathematicians and philosophers. One philosopher asked me whether I believed man was a machine. I replied, 'Do you really think it makes any difference?' He most earnestly replied, 'Of course! To me it is the most important question in philosophy.'

"I had the following afterthoughts: I imagine that if my friend had finally come to the conclusion that he *were* a machine, he would be infinitely crest-fallen. I think he would think: 'My God! How horrible! I am *only* a machine!' But if *I* should find out I were a machine, my attitude would be totally different. I would say: 'How amazing! I never before realized that machines could be so marvelous!'"

(From *This Book Needs No Title* [Prentice-Hall], p. 120)

Is There Anything Good About Men?

Roy F. Baumeister

This invited address was given at a meeting the American Psychological Association in San Francisco on August 24, 2007. The thinking it represents is part of a long-range project to understand human action and the relation of culture to behavior. Further information about Prof. Baumeister and his research can be found at the end of the essay.

You're probably thinking that a talk called "Is there anything good about men" will be a short talk! Recent writings have not had much good to say about men. Titles like *Men Are Not Cost Effective* speak for themselves. Maureen Dowd's book was called *Are Men Necessary?* and although she never gave an explicit answer, anyone reading the book knows her answer was no. Louann Brizendine's book, *The Female Brain*, introduces itself by saying, "Men, get ready to experience brain envy." Imagine a book advertising itself by saying that women will soon be envying the superior male brain!

Nor are these isolated examples. Alice Eagly's research has compiled mountains of data on the stereotypes people have about men and women, which the researchers summarized as "The WAW effect." WAW stands for "Women Are Wonderful." Both men and women hold much more favorable views of women than of men. Almost everybody likes women better than men. I certainly do.

My purpose in this talk is not to try to balance this out by praising men, though along the way I will have various positive things to say about both genders. The question of whether there's anything good about men is only my point of departure. The tentative title of the book I'm writing is "How culture exploits men," but even that for me is the lead-in to grand questions about how culture shapes action. In that context, what's good about men means what men are good for, from the perspective of the system.

Hence this is not about the "battle of the sexes," and in fact I think one unfortunate legacy of feminism has been the idea that men and women are basically enemies. I shall suggest, instead, that most often men and women have been partners, supporting each other rather than exploiting or manipulating each other.

Nor is this about trying to argue that men should be regarded as victims. I detest the whole idea of competing to be victims. And I'm certainly not denying that culture has exploited women. But rather than seeing culture as patriarchy, which is to say a conspiracy by men to exploit women, I think it's more accurate

to understand culture (e.g., a country, a religion) as an abstract system that competes against rival systems — and that uses both men and women, often in different ways, to advance its cause.

Also I think it's best to avoid value judgments as much as possible. They have made discussion of gender politics very difficult and sensitive, thereby warping the play of ideas. I have no conclusions to present about what's good or bad or how the world should change. In fact my own theory is built around tradeoffs, so that whenever there is something good it is tied to something else that is bad, and they balance out.

I don't want to be on anybody's side. Gender warriors please go home.

Men on Top

When I say I am researching how culture exploits men, the first reaction is usually "How can you say culture exploits men, when men are in charge of everything?" This is a fair objection and needs to be taken seriously. It invokes the feminist critique of society. This critique started when some women systematically looked up at the top of society and saw men everywhere: most world rulers, presidents, prime ministers, most members of Congress and parliaments, most CEOs of major corporations, and so forth — these are mostly men.

Seeing all this, the feminists thought, wow, men dominate everything, so society is set up to favor men. It must be great to be a man.

The mistake in that way of thinking is to look only at the top. If one were to look downward to the bottom of society instead, one finds mostly men there too. Who's in prison, all over the world, as criminals or political prisoners? The population on Death Row has never approached 51% female. Who's homeless? Again, mostly men. Whom does society use for bad or dangerous jobs? US Department of Labor statistics report that 93% of the people killed on the job are men. Likewise, who gets killed in battle? Even in today's American army, which has made much of integrating the sexes and putting women into combat, the risks aren't equal. This year we passed the milestone of 3,000 deaths in Iraq, and of those, 2,938 were men, 62 were women.

One can imagine an ancient battle in which the enemy was driven off and the city saved, and the returning soldiers are showered with gold coins. An early feminist might protest that hey, all those men are getting gold coins, half of those coins should go to women. In principle, I agree. But remember, while the men you see are getting gold coins, there are other men you don't see, who are still bleeding to death on the battlefield from spear wounds.

That's an important first clue to how culture uses men. Culture has plenty of tradeoffs, in which it needs people to do dangerous or risky things, and so it offers big rewards to motivate people to take those risks. Most cultures have

tended to use men for these high-risk, high-payoff slots much more than women. I shall propose there are important pragmatic reasons for this. The result is that some men reap big rewards while others have their lives ruined or even cut short. Most cultures shield their women from the risk and therefore also don't give them the big rewards. I'm not saying this is what cultures ought to do, morally, but cultures aren't moral beings. They do what they do for pragmatic reasons driven by competition against other systems and other groups.

Stereotypes at Harvard

I said that today most people hold more favorable stereotypes of women than men. It was not always thus. Up until about the 1960s, psychology (like society) tended to see men as the norm and women as the slightly inferior version. During the 1970s, there was a brief period of saying there were no real differences, just stereotypes. Only since about 1980 has the dominant view been that women are better and men are the inferior version.

The surprising thing to me is that it took little more than a decade to go from one view to its opposite, that is, from thinking men are better than women to thinking women are better than men. How is this possible?

I'm sure you're expecting me to talk about Larry Summers at some point, so let's get it over with! You recall, he was the president of Harvard. As summarized in *The Economist*, "Mr Summers infuriated the feminist establishment by wondering out loud whether the prejudice alone could explain the shortage of women at the top of science." After initially saying, it's possible that maybe there aren't as many women physics professors at Harvard because there aren't as many women as men with that high innate ability, just one possible explanation among others, he had to apologize, retract, promise huge sums of money, and not long afterward he resigned.

What was his crime? Nobody accused him of actually discriminating against women. His misdeed was to think thoughts that are not allowed to be thought, namely that there might be more men with high ability. The only permissible explanation for the lack of top women scientists is patriarchy — that men are conspiring to keep women down. It can't be ability. Actually, there is some evidence that men on average are a little better at math, but let's assume Summers was talking about general intelligence. People can point to plenty of data that the average IQ of adult men is about the same as the average for women. So to suggest that men are smarter than women is wrong. No wonder some women were offended.

But that's not what he said. He said there were more men at the top levels of ability. That could still be true despite the average being the same — if there are also more men at the bottom of the distribution, more really stupid men than women. During the controversy about his remarks, I didn't see anybody raise this question, but the data are there, indeed abundant, and they are indisputable.

There are more males than females with really low IQs. Indeed, the pattern with mental retardation is the same as with genius, namely that as you go from mild to medium to extreme, the preponderance of males gets bigger.

All those retarded boys are not the handiwork of patriarchy. Men are not conspiring together to make each other's sons mentally retarded.

Almost certainly, it is something biological and genetic. And my guess is that the greater proportion of men at both extremes of the IQ distribution is part of the same pattern. Nature rolls the dice with men more than women. Men go to extremes more than women. It's true not just with IQ but also with other things, even height: The male distribution of height is flatter, with more really tall and really short men.

Again, there is a reason for this, to which I shall return.

For now, the point is that it explains how we can have opposite stereotypes. Men go to extremes more than women. Stereotypes are sustained by confirmation bias. Want to think men are better than women? Then look at the top, the heroes, the inventors, the philanthropists, and so on. Want to think women are better than men? Then look at the bottom, the criminals, the junkies, the losers.

In an important sense, men really are better AND worse than women.

A pattern of more men at both extremes can create all sorts of misleading conclusions and other statistical mischief. To illustrate, let's assume that men and women are on average exactly equal in every relevant respect, but more men at both extremes. If you then measure things that are bounded at one end, it screws up the data to make men and women seem significantly different.

Consider grade point average in college. Thanks to grade inflation, most students now get A's and B's, but a few range all the way down to F. With that kind of low ceiling, the high-achieving males cannot pull up the male average, but the loser males will pull it down. The result will be that women will get higher average grades than men — again despite no difference in average quality of work.

The opposite result comes with salaries. There is a minimum wage but no maximum. Hence the high-achieving men can pull the male average up while the low-achieving ones can't pull it down. The result? Men will get higher average salaries than women, even if there is no average difference on any relevant input.

Today, sure enough, women get higher college grades but lower salaries than men. There is much discussion about what all this means and what should be done about it. But as you see, both facts could be just a statistical quirk stemming from male extremity.

Trading Off

When you think about it, the idea that one gender is all-around better than the

other is not very plausible. Why would nature make one gender better than the other? Evolution selects for good, favorable traits, and if there's one good way to be, after a few generations everyone will be that way.

But evolution will preserve differences when there is a tradeoff: when one trait is good for one thing, while the opposite is good for something else.

Let's return to the three main theories we've had about gender: Men are better, no difference, and women are better. What's missing from that list? Different but equal. Let me propose that as a rival theory that deserves to be considered. I think it's actually the most plausible one. Natural selection will preserve innate differences between men and women as long as the different traits are beneficial in different circumstances or for different tasks.

Tradeoff example: African-Americans suffer from sickle cell anemia more than white people. This appears to be due to a genetic vulnerability. That gene, however, promotes resistance to malaria. Black people evolved in regions where malaria was a major killer, so it was worth having this gene despite the increased risk of sickle cell anemia. White people evolved in colder regions, where there was less malaria, and so the tradeoff was resolved differently, more avoiding the gene that prevented malaria while risking sickle cell anemia.

The tradeoff approach yields a radical theory of gender equality. Men and women may be different, but each advantage may be linked to a disadvantage.

Hence whenever you hear a report that one gender is better at something, stop and consider why this is likely true — and what the opposite trait might be good for.

Can't Vs. Won't

Before we go too far down that path, though, let me raise another radical idea. Maybe the differences between the genders are more about motivation than ability. This is the difference between can't and won't.

Return for a moment to the Larry Summers issue about why there aren't more female physics professors at Harvard. Maybe women can do math and science perfectly well but they just don't like to. After all, most men don't like math either! Of the small minority of people who do like math, there are probably more men than women. Research by Jacquelynne Eccles has repeatedly concluded that the shortage of females in math and science reflects motivation more than ability. And by the same logic, I suspect most men could learn to change diapers and vacuum under the sofa perfectly well too, and if men don't do those things, it's because they don't want to or don't like to, not because they are constitutionally unable (much as they may occasionally pretend otherwise!).

Several recent works have questioned the whole idea of gender differences in abilities: Even when average differences are found, they tend to be extremely small. In contrast, when you look at what men and women want, what they like,

there are genuine differences. Look at research on the sex drive: Men and women may have about equal "ability" in sex, whatever that means, but there are big differences as to motivation: which gender thinks about sex all the time, wants it more often, wants more different partners, risks more for sex, masturbates more, leaps at every opportunity, and so on. Our survey of published research found that pretty much every measure and every study showed higher sex drive in men. It's official: men are hornier than women. This is a difference in motivation.

Likewise, I mentioned the salary difference, but it may have less to do with ability than motivation. High salaries come from working super-long hours. Workaholics are mostly men. (There are some women, just not as many as men.) One study counted that over 80% of the people who work 50-hour weeks are men.

That means that if we want to achieve our ideal of equal salaries for men and women, we may need to legislate the principle of equal pay for less work. Personally, I support that principle. But I recognize it's a hard sell.

Creativity may be another example of gender difference in motivation rather than ability. The evidence presents a seeming paradox, because the tests of creativity generally show men and women scoring about the same, yet through history some men have been much more creative than women. An explanation that fits this pattern is that men and women have the same creative ability but different motivations.

I am a musician, and I've long wondered about this difference. We know from the classical music scene that women can play instruments beautifully, superbly, proficiently — essentially just as well as men. They can and many do. Yet in jazz, where the performer has to be creative while playing, there is a stunning imbalance: hardly any women improvise. Why? The ability is there but perhaps the motivation is less. They don't feel driven to do it.

I suppose the stock explanation for any such difference is that women were not encouraged, or were not appreciated, or were discouraged from being creative. But I don't think this stock explanation fits the facts very well. In the 19th century in America, middle-class girls and women played piano far more than men. Yet all that piano playing failed to result in any creative output. There were no great women composers, no new directions in style of music or how to play, or anything like that. All those female pianists entertained their families and their dinner guests but did not seem motivated to create anything new.

Meanwhile, at about the same time, black men in America created blues and then jazz, both of which changed the way the world experiences music. By any measure, those black men, mostly just emerging from slavery, were far more disadvantaged than the middle-class white women. Even getting their hands on a musical instrument must have been considerably harder. And remember, I'm saying that the creative abilities are probably about equal. But somehow the men were driven to create something new, more than the women.

One test of what's meaningfully real is the marketplace. It's hard to find anybody making money out of gender differences in abilities. But in motivation, there are plenty. Look at the magazine industry: men's magazines cover different stuff from women's magazines, because men and women like and enjoy and are interested in different things. Look at the difference in films between the men's and women's cable channels. Look at the difference in commercials for men or for women.

This brings us to an important part of the argument. I'm suggesting the important differences between men and women are to be found in motivation rather than ability. What, then, are these differences? I want to emphasize two.

The Most Underappreciated Fact

The first big, basic difference has to do with what I consider to be the most underappreciated fact about gender. Consider this question: What percent of our ancestors were women?

It's not a trick question, and it's not 50%. True, about half the people who ever lived were women, but that's not the question. We're asking about all the people who ever lived who have a descendant living today. Or, put another way, yes, every baby has both a mother and a father, but some of those parents had multiple children.

Recent research using DNA analysis answered this question about two years ago. Today's human population is descended from twice as many women as men.

I think this difference is the single most underappreciated fact about gender. To get that kind of difference, you had to have something like, throughout the entire history of the human race, maybe 80% of women but only 40% of men reproduced.

Right now our field is having a lively debate about how much behavior can be explained by evolutionary theory. But if evolution explains anything at all, it explains things related to reproduction, because reproduction is at the heart of natural selection. Basically, the traits that were most effective for reproduction would be at the center of evolutionary psychology. It would be shocking if these vastly different reproductive odds for men and women failed to produce some personality differences.

For women throughout history (and prehistory), the odds of reproducing have been pretty good. Later in this talk we will ponder things like, why was it so rare for a hundred women to get together and build a ship and sail off to explore unknown regions, whereas men have fairly regularly done such things? But taking chances like that would be stupid, from the perspective of a biological organism seeking to reproduce. They might drown or be killed by savages or catch a disease. For women, the optimal thing to do is go along with the crowd, be nice,

play it safe. The odds are good that men will come along and offer sex and you'll be able to have babies. All that matters is choosing the best offer. We're descended from women who played it safe.

For men, the outlook was radically different. If you go along with the crowd and play it safe, the odds are you won't have children. Most men who ever lived did not have descendants who are alive today. Their lines were dead ends. Hence it was necessary to take chances, try new things, be creative, explore other possibilities. Sailing off into the unknown may be risky, and you might drown or be killed or whatever, but then again if you stay home you won't reproduce anyway. We're most descended from the type of men who made the risky voyage and managed to come back rich. In that case he would finally get a good chance to pass on his genes. We're descended from men who took chances (and were lucky).

The huge difference in reproductive success very likely contributed to some personality differences, because different traits pointed the way to success. Women did best by minimizing risks, whereas the successful men were the ones who took chances. Ambition and competitive striving probably mattered more to male success (measured in offspring) than female. Creativity was probably more necessary, to help the individual man stand out in some way. Even the sex drive difference was relevant: For many men, there would be few chances to reproduce and so they had to be ready for every sexual opportunity. If a man said "not today, I have a headache," he might miss his only chance.

Another crucial point. The danger of having no children is only one side of the male coin. Every child has a biological mother and father, and so if there were only half as many fathers as mothers among our ancestors, then some of those fathers had lots of children.

Look at it this way. Most women have only a few children, and hardly any have more than a dozen — but many fathers have had more than a few, and some men have actually had several dozen, even hundreds of kids.

In terms of the biological competition to produce offspring, then, men outnumbered women both among the losers and among the biggest winners.

To put this in more subjective terms: When I walk around and try to look at men and women as if seeing them for the first time, it's hard to escape the impression (sorry, guys!) that women are simply more likeable and lovable than men. (This I think explains the "WAW effect" mentioned earlier.) Men might wish to be lovable, and men can and do manage to get women to love them (so the ability is there), but men have other priorities, other motivations. For women, being lovable was the key to attracting the best mate. For men, however, it was more a matter of beating out lots of other men even to have a chance for a mate.

Tradeoffs again: perhaps nature designed women to seek to be lovable,

whereas men were designed to strive, mostly unsuccessfully, for greatness.

And it was worth it, even despite the "mostly unsuccessfully" part. Experts estimate Genghis Khan had several hundred and perhaps more than a thousand children. He took big risks and eventually conquered most of the known world. For him, the big risks led to huge payoffs in offspring. My point is that no woman, even if she conquered twice as much territory as Genghis Khan, could have had a thousand children. Striving for greatness in that sense offered the human female no such biological payoff. For the man, the possibility was there, and so the blood of Genghis Khan runs through a large segment of today's human population. By definition, only a few men can achieve greatness, but for the few men who do, the gains have been real. And we are descended from those great men much more than from other men. Remember, most of the mediocre men left no descendants at all.

Are Women More Social?

Let me turn now to the second big motivational difference. This has its roots in an exchange in the Psychological Bulletin about ten years ago, but the issue is still fresh and relevant today. It concerns the question of whether women are more social than men.

The idea that women are more social was raised by S.E. Cross and L. Madsen in a manuscript submitted to that journal. I was sent it to review, and although I disagreed with their conclusion, I felt they had made their case well, so I advocated publishing their paper. They provided plenty of evidence. They said things like, look, men are more aggressive than women. Aggression could damage a relationship because if you hurt someone then that person might not want to be with you. Women refrain from aggression because they want relationships, but men don't care about relationships and so are willing to be aggressive. Thus, the difference in aggression shows that women are more social than men.

But I had just published my early work on "the need to belong," which concluded that both men and women had that need, and so I was worried to hear that men don't care about social connection. I wrote a reply that said there was another way to look at all the evidence Cross and Madsen covered.

The gist of our view was that there are two different ways of being social. In social psychology we tend to emphasize close, intimate relationships, and yes, perhaps women specialize in those and are better at them than men. But one can also look at being social in terms of having larger networks of shallower relationships, and on these, perhaps, men are more social than women.

It's like the common question, what's more important to you, having a few close friendships or having lots of people who know you? Most people say the former is more important. But the large network of shallow relationships might be important too. We shouldn't automatically see men as second-class human

beings simply because they specialize in the less important, less satisfying kind of relationship. Men are social too — just in a different way.

So we reexamined the evidence Cross and Madsen had provided. Consider aggression. True, women are less aggressive than men, no argument there. But is it really because women don't want to jeopardize a close relationship? It turns out that in close relationships, women are plenty aggressive. Women are if anything more likely than men to perpetrate domestic violence against romantic partners, everything from a slap in the face to assault with a deadly weapon. Women also do more child abuse than men, though that's hard to untangle from the higher amount of time they spend with children. Still, you can't say that women avoid violence toward intimate partners.

Instead, the difference is found in the broader social sphere. Women don't hit strangers. The chances that a woman will, say, go to the mall and end up in a knife fight with another woman are vanishingly small, but there is more such risk for men. The gender difference in aggression is mainly found there, in the broader network of relationships. Because men care more about that network.

Now consider helping. Most research finds that men help more than women. Cross and Madsen struggled with that and eventually just fell back on the tired cliché that maybe women don't help because they aren't brought up to help or aren't socialized to help. But I think the pattern is the same as with aggression. Most research looks at helping between strangers, in the larger social sphere, and so it finds men helping more. Inside the family, though, women are plenty helpful, if anything more than men.

Aggression and helping are in some ways opposites, so the converging pattern is quite meaningful. Women both help and aggress in the intimate sphere of close relationships, because that's what they care about. In contrast, men care (also) about the broader network of shallower relationships, and so they are plenty helpful and aggressive there.

The same two-spheres conclusion is supported in plenty of other places. Playground observation studies find that girls pair off and play one-on-one with the same playmate for the full hour. Boys will either play one-on-one with a series of different playmates or with a larger group. Girls want the one-to-one relationship, whereas boys are drawn to bigger groups or networks.

When two girls are playing together and the researchers bring in a third one, the two girls resist letting her join. But two boys will let a third boy join their game. My point is that girls want the one-on-one connection, so adding a third person spoils the time for them, but it doesn't spoil it for the boys.

The conclusion is that men and women are both social but in different ways. Women specialize in the narrow sphere of intimate relationships. Men specialize in the larger group. If you make a list of activities that are done in large

groups, you are likely to have a list of things that men do and enjoy more than women: team sports, politics, large corporations, economic networks, and so forth.

Traded-Off Traits

Again, important personality differences probably follow from the basic motivational difference in the kind of social relationship that interests men and women.

Consider the common finding that women are more emotionally expressive than men. For an intimate relationship, good communication is helpful. It enables the two people to understand each other, appreciate each other's feelings, and so forth. The more the two intimate partners know about each other, the better they can care for and support each other. But in a large group, where you have rivals and maybe enemies, it's risky to let all your feelings show. The same goes for economic transactions. When you are negotiating the price of something, it's best to keep your feelings a bit to yourself. And so men hold back more.

Fairness is another example. Research by Brenda Major and others back in the 1970s used procedures like this. A group of subjects would perform a task, and the experimenter would then say that the group had earned a certain amount of money, and it was up to one member to divide it up however he or she wanted. The person could keep all the money, but that wasn't usually what happened. Women would divide the money equally, with an equal share for everybody. Men, in contrast, would divide it unequally, giving the biggest share of reward to whoever had done the most work.

Which is better? Neither. Both equality and equity are valid versions of fairness. But they show the different social sphere orientation. Equality is better for close relationships, when people take care of each other and reciprocate things and divide resources and opportunities equally. In contrast, equity — giving bigger rewards for bigger contributions — is more effective in large groups. I haven't actually checked, but I'm willing to bet that if you surveyed the Fortune 500 large and successful corporations in America, you wouldn't find a single one out of 500 that pays every employee the same salary. The more valuable workers who contribute more generally get paid more. It simply is a more effective system in large groups. The male pattern is suited for the large groups, the female pattern is best suited to intimate pairs.

Ditto for the communal-exchange difference Women have more communal orientation, men more exchange. In psychology we tend to think of communal as a more advanced form of relationship than exchange. For example, we'd be suspicious of a couple who after ten years of marriage are still saying, "I paid the electric bill last month, now it's your turn." But the supposed superiority of communal relationships applies mainly to intimate relationships. At the level of large social systems, it's the other way around. Communal (including communist)

countries remain primitive and poor, whereas the rich, advanced nations have gotten where they are by means of economic exchange.

There's also the point about men being more competitive, women more cooperative. Again, though, cooperation is much more useful than competition for close relationships. What use is there in competing against your spouse? But in large groups, getting to the top can be crucial. The male preference for dominance hierarchies, and the ambitious striving to get to the top, likewise reflect an orientation toward the large group, not a dislike of intimacy. And remember, most men didn't reproduce, and we're mainly descended from the men who did fight their way to the top. Not so for women.

One more thing. Cross and Madsen covered plenty of research showing that men think of themselves based on their unusual traits that set them apart from others, while women's self-concepts feature things that connect them to others. Cross and Madsen thought that this was because men wanted to be apart from others. But in fact being different is vital strategy for belonging to a large group. If you're the only group member who can kill an antelope or find water or talk to the gods or kick a field goal, the group can't afford to get rid of you.

It's different in a one-to-one relationship. A woman's husband, and her baby, will love her even if she doesn't play the trombone. So cultivating a unique skill isn't essential for her. But playing the trombone is a way to get into some groups, especially brass bands. This is another reason that men go to extremes more than women. Large groups foster the need to establish something different and special about yourself.

Benefits of Cultural Systems

Let's turn now to culture. Culture is relatively new in evolution. It continues the line of evolution that made animals social. I understand culture as a kind of system that enables the human group to work together effectively, using information. Culture is a new, improved way of being social.

Feminism has taught us to see culture as men against women. Instead, I think the evidence indicates that culture emerged mainly with men and women working together, but working against other groups of men and women. Often the most intense and productive competitions were groups of men against other groups of men, though both groups depended on support from women.

Culture enables the group to be more than the sum of its parts (its members). Culture can be seen as a biological strategy. Twenty people who work together, in a cultural system, sharing information and dividing up tasks and so forth, will all live better — survive and reproduce better — than if those same twenty people lived in the same forest but did everything individually.

Culture thus provides some benefit from having a system. Let's call this "system gain," which means how much better the group does because of the

system. Think of two soccer teams. Both sets of players know the rules and have the same individual skills. One group has only that, and they go out to play as individuals trying to do their best. The other works as a team, complementing each other, playing with a system. The system will likely enable them to do better than the group playing as separate individuals. That's system gain.

And one vital fact is that the scope of system gain increases with the size of the system. This is essentially what's happening in the world right now, globalization in the world economy. Bigger systems provide more benefits, so as we expand and merge more units into bigger systems, overall there is more gain.

There is one crucial implication from all this. Culture depends on system gain, and bigger systems provide more of this. Therefore, you'll get more of the benefit of culture from large groups than from small ones. A one-on-one close relationship can do a little in terms of division of labor and sharing information, but a 20-person group can do much more.

As a result, culture mainly arose in the types of social relationships favored by men. Women favor close, intimate relationships. These are if anything more important for the survival of the species. That's why human women evolved first. We need those close relationships to survive. The large networks of shallower relationships aren't as vital for survival — but they are good for something else, namely the development of larger social systems and ultimately for culture.

Men and Culture

This provides a new basis for understanding gender politics and inequality.

The generally accepted view is that back in early human society, men and women were close to equal. Men and women had separate spheres and did different things, but both were respected. Often, women were gatherers and men were hunters. The total contribution to the group's food was about the same, even though there were some complementary differences. For example, the gatherers' food was reliably there most days, while the hunters brought home great food once in a while but nothing on other days.

Gender inequality seems to have increased with early civilization, including agriculture. Why? The feminist explanation has been that the men banded together to create patriarchy. This is essentially a conspiracy theory, and there is little or no evidence that it is true. Some argue that the men erased it from the history books in order to safeguard their newly won power. Still, the lack of evidence should be worrisome, especially since this same kind of conspiracy would have had to happen over and over, in group after group, all over the world.

Let me offer a different explanation. It's not that the men pushed the women down. Rather, it's just that the women's sphere remained about where it was, while the men's sphere, with its big and shallow social networks,

slowly benefited from the progress of culture. By accumulating knowledge and improving the gains from division of labor, the men's sphere gradually made progress.

Hence religion, literature, art, science, technology, military action, trade and economic marketplaces, political organization, medicine — these all mainly emerged from the men's sphere. The women's sphere did not produce such things, though it did other valuable things, like take care of the next generation so the species would continue to exist.

Why? It has nothing to do with men having better abilities or talents or anything like that. It comes mainly from the different kinds of social relationships. The women's sphere consisted of women and therefore was organized on the basis of the kind of close, intimate, supportive one-on-one relationships that women favor. These are vital, satisfying relationships that contribute vitally to health and survival. Meanwhile the men favored the larger networks of shallower relationships. These are less satisfying and nurturing and so forth, but they do form a more fertile basis for the emergence of culture.

Note that all those things I listed — literature, art, science, etc — are optional. Women were doing what was vital for the survival of the species. Without intimate care and nurturance, children won't survive, and the group will die out. Women contributed the necessities of life. Men's contributions were more optional, luxuries perhaps. But culture is a powerful engine of making life better. Across many generations, culture can create large amounts of wealth, knowledge, and power. Culture did this — but mainly in the men's sphere.

Thus, the reason for the emergence of gender inequality may have little to do with men pushing women down in some dubious patriarchal conspiracy. Rather, it came from the fact that wealth, knowledge, and power were created in the men's sphere. This is what pushed the men's sphere ahead. Not oppression.

Giving birth is a revealing example. What could be more feminine than giving birth? Throughout most of history and prehistory, giving birth was at the center of the women's sphere, and men were totally excluded. Men were rarely or never present at childbirth, nor was the knowledge about birthing even shared with them. But not very long ago, men were finally allowed to get involved, and the men were able to figure out ways to make childbirth safer for both mother and baby. Think of it: the most quintessentially female activity, and yet the men were able to improve on it in ways the women had not discovered for thousands and thousands of years.

Let's not overstate. The women had after all managed childbirth pretty well for all those centuries. The species had survived, which is the bottom line. The women had managed to get the essential job done. What the men added was, from the perspective of the group or species at least, optional, a bonus: some mothers and babies survived who would otherwise have died. Still, the

improvements show some value coming from the male way of being social. Large networks can collect and accumulate information better than small ones, and so in a relatively short time the men were able to discover improvements that the women hadn't been able to find. Again, it's not that the men were smarter or more capable. It's just that the women shared their knowledge individually, from mother to daughter, or from one midwife to another, and in the long run this could not accumulate and progress as effectively as in the larger groups of shallower relationships favored by men.

What Men Are Good For

With that, we can now return to the question of what men are good for, from the perspective of a cultural system. The context is these systems competing against other systems, group against group. The group systems that used their men and women most effectively would enable their groups to outperform their rivals and enemies.

I want to emphasize three main answers for how culture uses men.

First, culture relies on men to create the large social structures that comprise it. Our society is made up of institutions such as universities, governments, corporations. Most of these were founded and built up by men. Again, this probably had less to do with women being oppressed or whatever and more to do with men being motivated to form large networks of shallow relationships. Men are much more interested than women in forming large groups and working in them and rising to the top in them.

This still seems to be true today. Several recent news articles have called attention to the fact that women now start more small businesses then men. This is usually covered in the media as a positive sign about women, which it is. But women predominate only if you count all businesses. If you restrict the criteria to businesses that employ more than one person, or ones that make enough money to live off of, then men create more. I suspect that the bigger the group you look at, the more they are male-created.

Certainly today anybody of any gender can start a business, and if anything there are some set-asides and advantages to help women do so. There are no hidden obstacles or blocks, and that's shown by the fact that women start more businesses than men. But the women are content to stay small, such as operating a part-time business out of the spare bedroom, making a little extra money for the family. They don't seem driven to build these up into giant corporations. There are some exceptions, of course, but there is a big difference on average.

Hence both men and women rely on men to create the giant social structures that offer opportunities to both. And it is clear men and women can both perform quite well in these organizations. But culture still relies mainly on men to make them in the first place.

The Disposable Male

A second thing that makes men useful to culture is what I call male expendability. This goes back to what I said at the outset, that cultures tend to use men for the high-risk, high-payoff undertakings, where a significant portion of those will suffer bad outcomes ranging from having their time wasted, all the way to being killed.

Any man who reads the newspapers will encounter the phrase "even women and children" a couple times a month, usually about being killed. The literal meaning of this phrase is that men's lives have less value than other people's lives. The idea is usually "It's bad if people are killed, but it's especially bad if women and children are killed." And I think most men know that in an emergency, if there are women and children present, he will be expected to lay down his life without argument or complaint so that the others can survive. On the Titanic, the richest men had a lower survival rate (34%) than the poorest women (46%) (though that's not how it looked in the movie). That in itself is remarkable. The rich, powerful, and successful men, the movers and shakers, supposedly the ones that the culture is all set up to favor — in a pinch, their lives were valued less than those of women with hardly any money or power or status. The too-few seats in the lifeboats went to the women who weren't even ladies, instead of to those patriarchs.

Most cultures have had the same attitude. Why? There are pragmatic reasons. When a cultural group competes against other groups, in general, the larger group tends to win out in the long run. Hence most cultures have promoted population growth. And that depends on women. To maximize reproduction, a culture needs all the wombs it can get, but a few penises can do the job. There is usually a penile surplus. If a group loses half its men, the next generation can still be full-sized. But if it loses half its women, the size of the next generation will be severely curtailed. Hence most cultures keep their women out of harm's way while using men for risky jobs.

These risky jobs extend beyond the battlefield. Many lines of endeavor require some lives to be wasted. Exploration, for example: a culture may send out dozens of parties, and some will get lost or be killed, while others bring back riches and opportunities. Research is somewhat the same way: There may be a dozen possible theories about some problem, only one of which is correct, so the people testing the eleven wrong theories will end up wasting their time and ruining their careers, in contrast to the lucky one who gets the Nobel prize. And of course the dangerous jobs. When the scandals broke about the dangers of the mining industry in Britain, Parliament passed the mining laws that prohibited children under the age of 10 and women of all ages from being sent into the mines. Women and children were too precious to be exposed to death in the mines: so only men. As I said earlier, the gender gap in dangerous work persists

today, with men accounting for the vast majority of deaths on the job.

Another basis of male expendability is built into the different ways of being social. Expendability comes with the large groups that male sociality creates. In an intimate, one-to-one relationship, neither person can really be replaced. You can remarry if your spouse dies, but it isn't really the same marriage or relationship. And of course nobody can ever really replace a child's mother or father.

In contrast, large groups can and do replace just about everybody. Take any large organization — the Ford Motor Company, the U.S. Army, the Green Bay Packers — and you'll find that the organization goes on despite having replaced every single person in it. Moreover, every member off those groups knows he or she can be replaced and probably will be replaced some day.

Thus, men create the kind of social networks where individuals are replaceable and expendable. Women favor the kind of relationships in which each person is precious and cannot truly be replaced.

Earning Manhood

The phrase "Be a man" is not as common as it once was, but there is still some sense that manhood must be earned. Every adult female is a woman and is entitled to respect as such, but many cultures withhold respect from the males until and unless the lads prove themselves. This is of course tremendously useful for the culture, because it can set the terms by which males earn respect as men, and in that way it can motivate the men to do things that the culture finds productive.

Some sociological writings about the male role have emphasized that to be a man, you have to produce more than you consume. That is, men are expected, first, to provide for themselves: If somebody else provides for you, you're less than a man. Second, the man should create some additional wealth or surplus value so that it can provide for others in addition to himself. These can be his wife and children, or others who depend on him, or his subordinates, or even perhaps just paying taxes that the government can use. Regardless, you're not a man unless you produce at that level.

Again, I'm not saying men have it worse than women. There are plenty of problems and disadvantages that cultures put on women. My point is just that cultures find men useful in these very specific ways. Requiring the man to earn respect by producing wealth and value that can support himself and others is one of these. Women do not face this particular challenge or requirement.

These demands also contribute to various male behavior patterns. The ambition, competition, and striving for greatness may well be linked to this requirement to fight for respect. All-male groups tend to be marked by putdowns and other practices that remind everybody that there is not enough respect to go around, because this awareness motivates each man to try harder to earn respect.

This, incidentally, has probably been a major source of friction as women have moved into the workplace, and organizations have had to shift toward policies that everyone is entitled to respect. The men hadn't originally built them to respect everybody.

One of the basic, most widely accepted gender differences is agency versus communion. Male agency may be partly an adaptation to this kind of social life based on larger groups, where people aren't necessarily valued and one has to strive for respect. To succeed in the male social sphere of large groups, you need an active, agentic self to fight for your place, because it isn't given to you and only a few will be successful. Even the male ego, with its concern with proving oneself and competing against others, seems likely to be designed to cope with systems where there is a shortage of respect and you have to work hard to get some — or else you'll be exposed to humiliation.

Is That All?

I have not exhausted all the ways that culture exploits men. Certainly there are others. The male sex drive can be harnessed to motivate all sorts of behaviors and put to work in a kind of economic marketplace in which men give women other resources (love, money, commitment) in exchange for sex.

Cultures also use individual men for symbolic purposes more than women. This can be in a positive way, such as the fact that cultures give elaborate funerals and other memorials to men who seem to embody its favorite values. It can also be negative, such as when cultures ruin a man's career, shame him publicly, or even execute him for a single act that violates one of its values. From Martin Luther King to Don Imus, our culture uses men as symbols for expressing its values. (Note neither of those two came out the better for it.)

Conclusion

To summarize my main points: A few lucky men are at the top of society and enjoy the culture's best rewards. Others, less fortunate, have their lives chewed up by it. Culture uses both men and women, but most cultures use them in somewhat different ways. Most cultures see individual men as more expendable than individual women, and this difference is probably based on nature, in whose reproductive competition some men are the big losers and other men are the biggest winners. Hence it uses men for the many risky jobs it has.

Men go to extremes more than women, and this fits in well with culture using them to try out lots of different things, rewarding the winners and crushing the losers.

Culture is not about men against women. By and large, cultural progress emerged from groups of men working with and against other men. While women concentrated on the close relationships that enabled the species to survive, men created the bigger networks of shallow relationships, less necessary for survival

but eventually enabling culture to flourish. The gradual creation of wealth, knowledge, and power in the men's sphere was the source of gender inequality. Men created the big social structures that comprise society, and men still are mainly responsible for this, even though we now see that women can perform perfectly well in these large systems.

What seems to have worked best for cultures is to play off the men against each other, competing for respect and other rewards that end up distributed very unequally. Men have to prove themselves by producing things the society values. They have to prevail over rivals and enemies in cultural competitions, which is probably why they aren't as lovable as women.

The essence of how culture uses men depends on a basic social insecurity. This insecurity is in fact social, existential, and biological. Built into the male role is the danger of not being good enough to be accepted and respected and even the danger of not being able to do well enough to create offspring.

The basic social insecurity of manhood is stressful for the men, and it is hardly surprising that so many men crack up or do evil or heroic things or die younger than women. But that insecurity is useful and productive for the culture, the system.

Again, I'm not saying it's right, or fair, or proper. But it has worked. The cultures that have succeeded have used this formula, and that is one reason that they have succeeded instead of their rivals.

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Source: www.denisdutton.com

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What Is Your Life's Blueprint?

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Six months before he was assassinated, King spoke to a group of students at Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia on October 26, 1967.

I want to ask you a question, and that is: What is your life's blueprint?

Whenever a building is constructed, you usually have an architect who draws a blueprint, and that blueprint serves as the pattern, as the guide, and a building is not well erected without a good, solid blueprint.

Now each of you is in the process of building the structure of your lives, and the question is whether you have a proper, a solid and a sound blueprint.

I want to suggest some of the things that should begin your life's blueprint. Number one in your life's blueprint, should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your worth and your own somebodiness. Don't allow anybody to make you feel that you're nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.

Secondly, in your life's blueprint you must have as the basic principle the determination to achieve excellence in your various fields of endeavor. You're going to be deciding as the days, as the years unfold what you will do in life—what your life's work will be. Set out to do it well.

And I say to you, my young friends, doors are opening to you—doors of opportunities that were not open to your mothers and your fathers—and the great challenge facing you is to be ready to face these doors as they open.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great essayist, said in a lecture in 1871, "If a man can write a better book or preach a better sermon or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, even if he builds his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."

This hasn't always been true—but it will become increasingly true, and so I would urge you to study hard, to burn the midnight oil; I would say to you, don't drop out of school. I understand all the sociological reasons, but I urge you that in spite of your economic plight, in spite of the situation that you're forced to live in—stay in school.

And when you discover what you will be in your life, set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it. Don't just set out to do a good job. Set out to do such a good job that the living, the dead or the unborn couldn't do it any better.

If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Leontyne Price sings before the Metropolitan Opera. Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well. If you can't be a pine at the top of the hill, be a shrub in the valley. Be the best little shrub on the side of the hill.

Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be a sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.

Source: the Estate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

What I Lived For

Henry David Thoreau

[Excerpt from *Walden*]

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.

Advice

[Falsely ascribed as Kurt Vonnegut's 1997 commencement address at MIT.]

Ladies and gentlemen of the class of '97:

Wear sunscreen. If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it. The long-term benefits of sunscreen have been proved by scientists, whereas the rest of my advice has no basis more reliable than my own meandering experience. I will dispense this advice now.

Enjoy the power and beauty of your youth. Oh, never mind. You will not understand the power and beauty of your youth until they've faded. But trust me, in 20 years, you'll look back at photos of yourself and recall in a way you can't grasp now how much possibility lay before you and how fabulous you really looked.

You are not as fat as you imagine.

Don't worry about the future. Or worry, but know that worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing bubble gum. The real troubles in your life are apt to be things that never crossed your worried mind, the kind that blindside you at 4 pm on some idle Tuesday.

Do one thing every day that scares you.

Sing.

Don't be reckless with other people's hearts. Don't put up with people who are reckless with yours.

Floss.

Don't waste your time on jealousy.

Sometimes you're ahead, sometimes you're behind. The race is long and, in the end, it's only with yourself.

Remember compliments you receive. Forget the insults. If you succeed in doing this, tell me how.

Keep your old love letters. Throw away your old bank statements.

Stretch.

Don't feel guilty if you don't know what you want to do with your life. The most interesting people I know didn't know at 22 what they wanted to do with their lives. Some of the most interesting 40-year-olds I know still don't.

Get plenty of calcium.

Be kind to your knees. You'll miss them when they're gone.

Maybe you'll marry, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll have children, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll divorce at 40; maybe you'll dance the funky chicken on your 75th wedding anniversary. Whatever you do, don't congratulate yourself too much, or berate yourself either.

Your choices are half chance. So are everybody else's.

Enjoy your body. Use it every way you can. Don't be afraid of it or of what other people think of it. It's the greatest instrument you'll ever own.

Dance, even if you have nowhere to do it but your living room.

Read the directions, even if you don't follow them.

Do not read beauty magazines. They will only make you feel ugly.

Get to know your parents. You never know when they'll be gone for good.

Be nice to your siblings. They're your best link to your past and the people most likely to stick with you in the future.

Understand that friends come and go, but with a precious few you should hold on. Work hard to bridge the gaps in geography and lifestyle, because the older you get, the more you need the people who knew you when you were young.

Live in New York City once, but leave before it makes you hard.

Live in Northern California once, but leave before it makes you soft.

Travel.

Accept certain inalienable truths: Prices will rise. Politicians will philander. You, too, will get old. And when you do, you'll fantasize that when you were young, prices were reasonable, politicians were noble, and children respected their elders.

Respect your elders.

Don't expect anyone else to support you. Maybe you have a trust fund. Maybe you'll have a wealthy spouse. But you never know when either one might run out.

Don't mess too much with your hair or by the time you're 40 it will look 85.

Be careful whose advice you buy, but be patient with those who supply it. Advice is a form of nostalgia. Dispensing it is a way of fishing the past from the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts and recycling it for more than it's worth.

But trust me on the sunscreen.

Undelivered address to Emory University, 1956

John Steinbeck

Well, you are perfectly right. You are going out into the world and it is a frightened, neurotic, gibbering mess. Yes, my young friends, you are going to take your bright and shining faces into a jungle, but a jungle where all the animals are insane.

You haven't the strength for vice. That takes energy and all the energy of this time is needed for fear. That takes energy, too. And what energy is left over is needed for running down the rabbit holes of hatred to avoid thought. The rich hate the poor and taxes. The young hate the draft. The Democrats hate the Republicans, and everybody hates the Russians. Children are shooting their parents and parents are drowning their children when they think they can get away with it. No one can plan one day ahead because all certainties are gone.

If you work very hard and are lucky and have a good tax man, then when you are 50, if your heart permits, you and your sagging wife can make a tired and bored but first-class trip to Europe to stare at the works of dead people who were not afraid. But you won't see it. You'll be too anxious to get home to your worrying.

Excerpt from Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Creeps this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle;
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot; full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Psalm 103:15-16

As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
For the wind passeth over its, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

To His Coy Mistress

Andrew Marvell

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime,
We would sit down and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews;
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near,
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,

And your quaint honor turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now, therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasure with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life;
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

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Would Immortality Be Worth It?

Stephen R. C. Hicks

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying.

Upon realizing the fact of their mortality, people typically respond in one of two completely opposite ways. One common response, exhibited by Robert Herrick, the 17th-century poet of "Gather ye rosebuds" fame, is, *I'm going to die sometime, so I'd better get a move on!* But equally often the response is, *If I'm going to die, what's the use of doing anything?*

These are two very different attitudes toward the very same fact: mortality. And when the very same fact can give rise to such widely divergent reactions, philosophers become interested.

On the former view, the *Gather ye rosebuds* view, life has value despite the fact of death; the realization of impending death is simply a spur to get going on the things that make life worthwhile. We each have a deadline, a limited amount of time to squeeze in as much of the good life as we can—so gather ye rosebuds *now*. Don't wait around, for neither you nor the rosebuds will be here forever. This is also the view paraphrased in the words of a bumper sticker on the car of a woman I know: "So many men, so little time." Or in the academic's version: "So many books, so little time!" The point can be taken universally: we can each change the words to suit our preferences.

The idea here is that mortality means you have to get things done. Your awareness of death is seen, in part, as a negative motivation not to waste time, to get going on the good stuff. You don't want to reach 70 years of age and say "What if I had ... "—and realize that you hadn't because you were too worried or lazy or had just gotten into a groove and let things drift. This is not to say that you suddenly embrace life because you suddenly find death something to fear; it is not a horror at the nothingness of death that, contrary to what some like Unamuno have argued, gives life meaning. The claim is that what the awareness of death does is heighten your appreciation of the value of the limited time you have available. Life is too valuable to sit around and just watch it slip by.

But for the other view, the *What's the use?* view, the same fact of impending death is taken to wipe out any sense that a meaningful life is possible. On this view, the implicit premise is that only immortality could make life worthwhile. Mortality simply makes life meaninglessness. We are all going to die, so what's the value of anything? Consider the seven-year cicadas. They start their lives as eggs laid underground, where they stay buried and unhatched for seven years. During the spring of the seventh year they come out of the ground and go up into the trees for a brief but frenzied bout of reproduction, lay the next generation of eggs, and then die. The next generation of laid eggs stays unhatched and buried underground for seven years, and the cycle is repeated. Is this what we call meaningful life? If you were a philosopher for cicadas, you'd say, "What's the use?" And we humans are no different, on this view, except that our mortal lives are extended for a few more decades. Even those of us who do accomplish a lot die, and all our creations, however magnificent, eventually crumble. So, the argument runs, everything is meaningless.

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow

Creeps this petty pace from day to day,

To the last syllable of recorded time,

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle;

Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more: it is a tale

Told by an idiot; full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing.

Those are Shakespeare's words, if not necessarily his sentiments. Others echo those sentiments: "All we are is dust in the wind," the musical group Kansas pointed out in the late 1970s. Life is transient, so life has no meaning. But then, if life has no meaning, we're just a step away from affirming with Camus that the question of suicide is the only important philosophical question. What difference should it make if you die now or twenty or forty years from now? Either way you end up dead forever. If only the transience of life were eliminated! If only the possibility of death were eliminated!

The *Gather ye rosebuds* advocates hear all this, and ask in a puzzled tone of voice, What on earth are you folks talking about? The world is a beautiful place, life is intrinsically wonderful—so don't just throw it away. Make as much of it as you can, you only go around once, life is too precious to miss a single minute of. The fact that we're mortal is not as important as the fact that we're alive now. Of course, immortality could be great—not because it would make

life worth living, but rather because it would give us more time to do more or get more or enjoy more of those things that do make life worth living.

So we have here a fundamental opposition expressed in completely opposite reactions to a single fact. And this raises our question: *Would* immortality change anything, as say those who say mortality makes life meaningless? And would it be worth it? Is the amount of time one has to live one's life the fundamental question to ask when asking what makes (or would make) life worth living?

* * *

My plan is to set up a thought experiment. The scenario is quite simple. Suppose you were immortal, but limited to continued existence as a human being, on earth. Would it be worth it?

How do we answer this question? In preparing this essay I started, as is normal in philosophy, by doing some field research. I posed this scenario to people and asked them what they thought. As it happened, most of those I asked were young men and women of college age, and invariably instead of an answer I got a worried question in return: At what age would I have to live this immortal life? Would I have to have the body of a 110 year old, or could I have that of a 25 year old athlete? Could I keep my present body and age? Or—horror of horrors—would I start off young and then slowly, ever so slowly, wither away as the centuries ticked by without ever quite withering away into nothingness?

If this is a concern, I responded, for the purposes of this thought experiment suppose that you would retain your faculties and potencies, that you wouldn't deteriorate appreciably either physically or mentally, that you could live forever in your prime, at whatever age you considered your prime to be.

That sounded pretty good to them, but then another question came up: Would you have to eat? I answered this question, Yes. It would be a *conditional* immortality, conditional upon you continuing to fulfill all the normal requirements for human life, including eating, sleeping, keeping warm, and so on.

Another question followed that one: Would the cows and the chickens and the other animal and plant species be immortal too, and thus not be able to die? Because if so, you wouldn't be able to eat anything and our supposed immortality would end rather quickly. To nip this one in the bud, I replied: For the purposes of this thought experiment, suppose that only humans would be immortal.

But—the questions continued—what if we immortal human beings continued to reproduce and produced still more immortal beings and the world became overpopulated? Response: Suppose we found some way to solve this potential problem, by settling other planets, by birth control, or whatever. Our focus, I explained, is on what makes life worth living and whether immortality has anything to do with it, so let us set aside these sorts of considerations.

However, there is one consideration I wish to raise regarding some sort of unconditional immortality. I have this worry: If humans were unconditionally immortal, i.e., if humans were beings who could not die no matter what, would they even be the same sort of being? I ask this with the following in mind. If the alternative of life or death does not face a being in any way whatsoever, can that creature have *values*—can it judge things as good or bad, positive or negative? Think of it this way: Would such an unconditionally immortal being be any different than an indestructible robot? If it literally cannot die, then nothing can harm it, so nothing could be bad to it; and conversely, if it exists unconditionally there is nothing that it has to do, nothing it has to achieve, so nothing could be good to it. So for such an unconditionally immortal creature, there would be no limits, no framework for a value system to get started.[1] And with no value system the question of whether life is good or bad, worth it or not worth it, valuable or not, becomes meaningless. The creature just exists, period. I think values are possible only if one faces, in some form, a life and death alternative; so if one is unconditionally immortal, then no values would be possible.

So all I wish to do in this thought-experiment is lift the limits of our biological clocks. Suppose that we can be immortal, provided we choose to continue to live and to do the things that continued human existence requires, like getting enough food and rest. But if we choose at any point not to live any longer, we can put an end to ourselves. Everything about human life is exactly the same, except that there is no set amount of time one has available to live. Let's call this "conditional immortality."

* * *

Imagine one is now immortal. Isn't it great?

This has not always been thought to be obvious.

Let us consider Potential Problem Number One. I will indicate it to you by means of a quotation from John Steinbeck, a man who has thought a lot about things and come to some definite conclusions. What follows is an excerpt from a commencement address, written to be delivered to young people just graduating from college and about to go out into the real world. Steinbeck is accordingly trying to impart to those young people the most valuable advice he can muster. Here is what he wrote:

> You are going out into the world and it is a frightened, neurotic, gibbering mess. Yes, my young friends, you are going to take your bright and shining faces into a jungle, but a jungle where all the animals are insane.
>
> You haven't the strength for vice. That takes energy and all the energy of this time is needed for fear. That takes energy, too. And what energy is left over is needed for running down the rabbit holes of hatred to

> avoid thought. The rich hate the poor and taxes. The young hate the draft. The Democrats hate the Republicans, and everybody hates the Russians. Children are shooting their parents and parents are drowning their children when they think they can get away with it. No one can plan one day ahead because all certainties are gone.
>
> If you work very hard and are lucky and have a good tax man, then when you are 50, if your heart permits, you and your sagging wife can make a tired and bored but first-class trip to Europe to stare at the works of dead people who were not afraid. But you won't see it. You'll be too anxious to get home to your worrying.

This, I think, is a good example of what philosophy can do to you if you don't get it right.

Berthold Brecht wrote, "The man who laughs is the one who has not heard the terrible news." What is the terrible news? The same news Steinbeck wanted to tell the college students. Fundamentally, the world is hell. We live in a nasty universe. Human beings are incompetents, misfits, neurotics. And we are all, quite rightly, damned scared. So you might as well face up to it, accept your lot, insulate yourself as best you can from life's messes, and hope you die a relatively painless death.

Now suppose we asked Steinbeck and Brecht whether immortality would be worth it. Their response would no doubt be: Are you kidding us? We don't see why *any* amount of life is worth living, let alone an infinite amount of it. Life is pain, depression, and horror.

This certainly poses a problem for the immortal life. How could one tolerate a neurotic mess forever? Wouldn't 70 years or so be quite enough?

What are we to think of this? If we do not agree, then how should we respond to such extreme pessimism? This is a question I raise now only as a teaser, for I would like to set it aside temporarily in order to pursue our main objective, which is to find out exactly what value immortality would add to life, *supposing that it is possible to value life*. So let us suppose we are not in this pessimistic tradition, for such pessimism negates the very question that is the focus of this essay. Suppose (if you don't already believe it) that such Steinbeckian pessimism is some sort of philosophical illness and that you do find or can at least conceive of some positive value to life on earth. The question is, Could this positive value in life, whatever it is, be extended over eternity?

Potential Problem Number Two: What would you do with all that time? Mark Twain's "Extracts from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven" satirically characterizes Heaven as a place of eternal boredom: folks just hang around and play harps. Is this what immortality means? Is it all standing on clouds, wearing a halo and playing a harp? Captain Stormfield gave it his best shot for

a while—after all, that's what you're supposed to do in Heaven. After about sixteen increasingly boring hours he questioned a neighbor who had been doing the same thing: "Now tell me—is this to go on forever? Ain't there anything else for a change?" Immortality is here conceived of as a static state: you don't do anything, or if you do, it's within a very limited range of activities. So after a while there are no new experiences and you start to get bored. An eternity of boredom, I think it is safe to say, would not be worth it.

Now, whether one is immortal in Heaven or on earth, the same potential problem of boredom arises and thus the same question: How does one prevent boredom from making immortality worthless?

But this is an important clue. Two facts—the fact that boredom lessens or negates the value of life and the fact that boredom can result from doing nothing or from doing some limited number of things over and over again—together imply that life is worth living only if there are new things to do. Only if there is a possibility for growth, a potential for discovering new experiences or for enriching current experiences, does life remain valuable. The moment one stops growing, a wise man once said, is the moment one starts dying. Stagnation for an organism means, at best, boredom; at worst, death. *Life is essentially growth*. Another way of putting this point is to say that life is essentially value achievement: setting goals, planning a course of action, executing the plan, overcoming obstacles—hopefully enjoying the process all the while—and then achieving the goal and savoring the beauty or usefulness or pleasurableness of the result. The values to be achieved certainly needn't be limited to any one range of items: they can include increasing your knowledge, enriching your friendships, experiencing art, developing your career, and so on.

Supposing this is so, the question then for our immortal life is: Is there in principle a finite limit to this, a cap on how much you can grow, a limit to the number of new experiences it is possible to have? Yes. The universe is huge, but, say physics and philosophy, it is finite. There's only so much of it, and this is the problem. If there's only so much of it, then there's only so much you can do, and then what do you do when you've done it all—after you've taught physiology for 16,000 years, and after you've won Wimbledon for the 750th time, and after you've gained and lost 1200 fortunes on Wall Street, and after you've composed every possible piece of music for a piano with 88 keys, and then done the same for the harpsichord? We're talking about billions of years here—a big leap from the usual 75-year life-span we think in terms of—but after you've done absolutely everything, and had a great time doing it, there are no more goals. And if there are no more goals, what motivates you to do anything? Nothing. And if you do nothing, what's left except to be bored?

This problem of the limits to growth and the ensuing boredom can be tailored a bit. If there is a limit to growth and new experiences, then there is

certainly a limit to *positive* growth and experiences. For after you have done everything fine and good (you've been a deep-sea diver, a poet, a professor of 19th century Romantic literature, an Austrian pastry chef, a space explorer), then to avoid boredom you would be driven to start working on the bad and evil. Perhaps you would set out to be a peeping-Tom; and then when that began to become boring, maybe you could try your hand as a confidence trickster in Rio de Janeiro; and when that began to pale, you could give the police and citizens a hard time as a serial killer in Montreal; and then when that lost its edge, just for kicks you might move on to a stint as a bullwhip specialist in a New Orleans brothel. We are left with the specter of the immortal life leading us to exhaust the positive possibilities that make life worth living and then forcing us to seek out the evil, the nasty, and the unpleasant in order to avoid boredom. This is an unsavory outcome: life remains worth living only at the cost of embracing evil and destruction.

But even then, once all the possibilities for new experiences of evil have been exhausted, after you've become the consummate criminal and immoralist in every possible way, the identical problem of boredom once again looms large.

Setting aside the problem of resorting to new experiences—any new experiences, including evil ones— what happens when you reach the limit, however many billions of years it takes? There are no new experiences, there are no new challenges, and no growth is possible. There is nothing to do that you haven't done a hundred or a thousand times before, and so boredom sets in. This, I think, would be a state worse than death: death at least is a neutral, a nothing, a zero—while boredom is a negative: boredom is *painful*. This is also a boredom you can't do anything about, as compared with the garden-variety boredoms we encounter nowadays, most of which are our own fault or under our control to change. This is Boredom with a capital **'B**.' So at this point, the point of supreme, irreversible boredom, death would become preferable to life. Your immortality becomes a burden and one aspect of the Myth of Sisyphus becomes true: you would have absolutely no motivation to roll the boulder up the hill one more time.

Supposing you reached this point, I think you would want the capacity to opt out. At the moment of realization of impending, eternal boredom, at the moment you realize that you have done everything, literally everything, you would want the power to end your life.

Unless there is some way to avoid the boredom.

One possibility is this. On any theory of the nature of the mind, there is at the very least held to be an intimate connection between mind and brain. In some form or other, our memories, our knowledge, our characteristic emotions and thought patterns—in short, everything that makes each of us a unique individual personality—are dependent upon the physical brain. The brain, however, is a finite physical organ. However much it can retain, it can only retain so much. I

have no idea how much that is, but I would venture a guess that it is much less than what it would take to know and retain absolutely everything that can be known and experienced. And that means that before you could reach the end of the new experiences and challenges you could try, you would reach the point at which, in order to store and retain the new experiences you would have to forget some of the old ones. Think for a moment of the brain as a huge hard disk drive. Once it is filled up, the only way to store new information on it is to write over the old information, which means that the old information is lost.

This could be our saving grace with regard to boredom, for it opens up the following possibility: after you've done everything and are looking for something interesting to do, there will be things that you have already done but forgotten having done them. And since you've forgotten having done them, you can therefore approach and do them again with all the zest and freshness of the first time. So even if you already spent, as a young pup back in your early millions, twenty-two thousand years learning everything there is to know about volcanoes, you've forgotten all about it; so now volcanoes can be incredibly interesting again.

Could the built-in limits to our brain capacity prevent an immortal life from becoming boring?

But another potential problem arises. What if at some point along the line you discovered that this forgetting was happening? Perhaps during your three million year stint as a neurophysiologist you found out exactly what the limits of the human brain are, and you found out that you have lived longer and experienced more than your brain could possibly have retained. This would mean that you must have forgotten things, that some major portions of your life are no longer accessible to you. *This* opens up a potential worry: whatever it is you are doing right now and perhaps enjoying seemingly for the first time, maybe you've already done it a thousand times before but forgotten all about it. This, I think, would start to take the edge off the pleasure of whatever it is you are doing right now. There's a parallel here to how one reacts to the thought of Nietzsche's concept of the Eternal Recurrence:[2] If the cycle of world history repeats itself over and over again in the exact same pattern, forever—if, for example, you have read this essay a jillion times before, only you don't remember the other times, and you will read it a jillion times again in the future, and then a jillion times again, and so on without end—coming to know that this is going on would, I think, detract from whatever enjoyment you are getting out of this particular portion of the cycle. The new experience isn't genuinely new, you come to realize; it only seems new because you've forgotten all the other times.

If you discovered that this necessary forgetting was happening, how much would it detract? I don't know. But it is a counter-problem for the solution to the boredom problem. And probably once you discovered that you were forgetting

major portions of your past life, for fear of repeating yourself you would start devising other ways to store the information about your past life—other than in your brain, that is; in a computer or a diary, or whatever—and before embarking upon a new career in quasar physics at age 13 trillion you would check your computer or diary to see whether you had done it before. If you found that you had and that you had spent 211 thousand years at it, would you want to do it again? What if you couldn't find a single thing to do other than the things that you had forgotten having done but had done nevertheless? Eventually you would reach this point, the same abyss of eternal boredom would confront you again, and you would have a choice: to do again things you know you've done already but forgotten, or to decide that the only new experience worth having is a genuinely new experience and not just one that you happen to have forgotten about—and that therefore you would rather stop right there.

That choice is a long way away in the future, and it is not obvious which choice is preferable, or even whether the same choice would be preferable to every conditionally immortal person. However, for our purposes the situation that gives rise to this choice serves to sharpen up our initial question about the value of the immortal life. What if, in the context of the boredom problem, we now asked those who feel that only immortality would make life worth living: What exactly would make the immortal life worth living? What exactly does the mortal life lack that you think makes it meaningless? The answer would have to be along the lines of pointing out that if you were immortal you could continue to grow and learn and enjoy the manifold activities life has to offer; that such growth is what makes life valuable is the lesson boredom teaches us. But this is not a satisfactory answer, for it is the same one given by those who think life has value even with without immortality. Why then is the fact that humans are mortal a problem, if in any case it is growth that makes life worth living and growth is possible whether one is mortal or not? Because, the answer comes back, mortality means that at some point the growth has to stop. One eventually dies, so one cannot grow forever, and so why even start? Only, in other words, a capacity for infinite growth would make any growth worthwhile.

But this sort of response is also problematic. The trouble is that one cannot grow forever, even if one is immortal. That is also what considering the problem of boredom teaches us. We are finite, reality is finite, and that's a fact. So immortal or mortal, there is always going to be a finite limit to growth. Thus, what makes life valuable cannot be cashed out in terms of an infinite capacity for growth. And if this is the case, then it cannot be that having an infinite amount of time available, i.e., an immortal life, is what makes life worth living. An infinite amount of time would only give you more time to do more of those things that make life worth living in the first place. But that is to say that life *is* worth living in the first place, that life has value independently of the amount of time available to live.

For actually mortal creatures, then, the point has to be to recognize that the amount of time available to each of us is necessarily limited, to accept the fact that that's the way the life is, and not to let that fact interfere with our enjoyment of the positive values life has to offer. The moral has to be, in other words, not to be trapped and paralyzed in the attitude of the young boy in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* who explains to his bewildered parents the reasons for his crippled sense of life with these words, "I am very, very sorry, father and mother. But please don't mind!—I can't help it. I should like the flowers very very much, if I didn't keep on thinking they'd all be withered in a few days." Whether your life is to be 75 years long, or 200 years, or several millennia, the principle is still the same: time considerations are at the very least of secondary import if not irrelevant to the value of life.

This is where we must pick up once again the challenge of Steinbeckian pessimism. Why should we think life worth it at all, the pessimist retorts, if life is essentially futile suffering and defeat? Immortality and boredom are not the real problems of life; futility and pain are. This has been a dominating theme for the past century in the works of the great pessimists—Hardy, Camus, Dostoevsky in some moods, Chekhov.

Is life useless suffering and defeat? This is, perhaps, the point at which, as with all fundamental philosophical starting points, one either agrees or not—and nothing more can be said. If you think life is better than death but your interlocutor can't see the point, what can you say to convince him? You can always point to *x*, *y*, and *z* (nature, friends, lovers, family, advances in technology, puzzle-solving, art, exploration), but if this leaves him fundamentally indifferent and unconvinced, what more can be said? There is no value outside of life that makes it good, and if the values you see within life are not also seen as worthwhile by your pessimist, then no argumentative recourse is left. The only thing possible is to affirm the fundamental values you find that living involves and go your separate ways when he claims, as all pessimists ultimately do, that he finds "value" to be an empty concept. You can then only forge your own values and seek them out.

I do think, with Herrick, that each of us mortals should get out there and gather as many rosebuds as we may, that any amount of life is preferable to none at all, that human life is the most precious thing in the world. But it is because what makes life precious is that it allows for growth, for development and change, for constantly having new worlds to seek—it is for this reason that I do not think immortality would be worth it. Barring some satisfactory solution to the problem of boredom, immortality would have to become a burden. And then, after having had enough time to do everything worthwhile and knowing that you've done it, having the capacity to bow out would be essential. But until you do bow out, under whatever circumstances that happens, gather ye rosebuds!

The next question is, of course, Which rosebuds? It is here that ethical philosophy gets down to business.

Let me close with the final lines from Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," which I think speak directly to our theme.

Now let us sport us while we may,

And now, like amorous birds of prey,

Rather at once our time devour,

Than languish in his slow-chapped power.

Let us roll all our strength and all

Our sweetness up into one ball,

And tear our pleasure with rough strife

Through the iron gates of life;

Thus, though we cannot make our sun

Stand still, yet we will make him run.

That, I think, is the ideal. So to give my answer to the question of the essay, Would Immortality Be Worth It?—I would say No, but a billion years would be great.

* * *

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About the Author

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* * *

The Great Lover

Rupert Brooke

I have been so great a lover: filled my days
So proudly with the splendour of Love's praise,
The pain, the calm, and the astonishment,
Desire illimitable, and still content,
And all dear names men use, to cheat despair,
For the perplexed and viewless streams that bear
Our hearts at random down the dark of life.
Now, ere the unthinking silence on that strife
Steals down, I would cheat drowsy Death so far,
My night shall be remembered for a star
That outshone all the suns of all men's days.
Shall I not crown them with immortal praise
Whom I have loved, who have given me, dared with me
High secrets, and in darkness knelt to see
The inenarrable godhead of delight?
Love is a flame; –we have beaconed the world's night.
A city: –and we have built it, these and I.
An emperor. –we have taught the world to die.
So, for their sakes I loved, ere I go hence,
And the high cause of Love's magnificence,
And to keep loyalties young, I'll write those names
Golden for ever, eagles, crying flames,
And set them as a banner, that men may know,
To dare the generations, burn, and blow
Out on the wind of Time, shining and streaming....

These I have loved:
White plates and cups, clean-gleaming,

Ringed with blue lines; and feathery, faery dust;
Wet roofs, beneath the lamp-light; the strong crust
Of friendly bread; and many-tasting food;
Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood;
And radiant raindrops couching in cool flowers;
And flowers themselves, that sway through sunny hours,
Dreaming of moths that drink them under the moon;
Then, the cool kindliness of sheets, that soon
Smooth away trouble; and the rough male kiss
Of blankets; grainy wood; live hair that is
Shining and free; blue-massing clouds; the keen
Unpassioned beauty of a great machine;
The benison of hot water; furs to touch;
The good smell of old clothes; and other such
The comfortable smell of friendly fingers,
Hair's fragrance, and the musty reek that lingers
About dead leaves and last year's ferns. . . . Dear names
And thousand others throng to me! Royal flames;
Sweet water's dimpling laugh from tap or spring;
Holes in the ground; and voices that do sing:
Voices in laughter, too; and body's pain,
Soon turned to peace; and the deep-panting train;
Firm sands; the little dulling edge of foam
That browns and dwindles as the wave goes home;
And washen stones, gay for an hour; the cold
Graveness of iron; moist black earthen mould;
Sleep; and high places; footprints in the dew;
And oaks; and brown horse-chestnuts, glossy-new;
And new-peeled sticks; and shining pools on grass;-
All these have been my loves. And these shall pass.
Whatever passes not, in the great hour,
Nor all my passion, all my prayers, have power

To hold them with me through the gate of Death.
They'll play deserter, turn with traitor breath,
Break the high bond we made, and sell Love's trust
And sacramented covenant to the dust.

–Oh, never a doubt but, somewhere, I shall wake,
And give what's left of love again, and make
New friends, now strangers.... But the best I've known,
Stays here, and changes, breaks, grows old, is blown
About the winds of the world, and fades from brains
Of living men, and dies. Nothing remains.

O dear my loves, O faithless, once again
This one last gift I give: that after men
Shall know, and later lovers, far-removed
Praise you, 'All these were lovely'; say, 'He loved.'

* * *