

This Page:

**Human Nature -Who are We?**

- 1 **Are Humans Significant in a Special Way?**

## **Mind Games Survival Course Manual**



Table of Contents

---

# **Human Nature**

## **Who Are We?**

**Don Closson**

---

A key aspect of being human is the desire to know who we are and why we behave the way we do. We want to explain the events of life and to discover what model of human nature best fits the actions we observe. In your studies, these may be the most important questions you will face. Having a biblical response will be vital to your Christian testimony and academic integrity. It is obvious that presuppositions, or world views, have a significant influence.

### **I. Are humans significant or special in anyway? Are we here for a purpose?**

#### **A. Naturalism**

##### **1. Natural Sciences: Sociobiology - Edward O. Wilson**

Edward Wilson is a professor of entomology (insects) at Harvard University. He has written a number of books on the topic of sociobiology since 1975. He defines sociobiology as "the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior," {1}

If humankind evolved by Darwinian natural selection, genetic chance and environmental necessity, not God, made the species. Deity can still be sought in the origin of the ultimate units of matter, in quarks and electron shells (Hans Kung was right to ask atheists why there is something instead of nothing) but not in the origin of species. {2}

No species, ours included, possesses a purpose beyond the imperatives created by its genetic history. {3}

The first dilemma, in a word, is that we have no particular place to go. The species lacks any goal external to its own biological nature. {4}

## 2. Psychology: Psychoanalysis - Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

No other person in recent history has influenced the way we think about ourselves more than Freud. His theories on psychoanalysis spread world-wide and have been applied to both pathological conditions as well as everyday life. Beginning his career as a student of biology and physiology, he later established a private practice in nervous diseases in 1886 at the Vienna General Hospital which he maintained until his death.

- a. "All phenomena are determined by the laws of physics and chemistry, and even man himself is a product of natural evolution, ultimately subject to the same laws." {5}
2. One of Freud's primary principles was determinism. He concluded that nothing we do is accidental or caused by a free will. Instead, he argued that every thought and action has its cause in the mind, which in turn is affected by every previous event it has been exposed to. Freud would say that there are unyielding reasons for our decisions, reasons that we are often unaware of.
3. Later in life, Freud wrote *The Future of an Illusion* about religion. In it, he relegates religious thought to false beliefs which could be explained psychologically.

## 3. Philosophy: Existentialism - Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980)

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) helped to popularize existentialism during the 1940s and 1950s. His books, plays, and other writings were works of philosophical activism. His work is still very influential among young leftists.

- a. Sartre's major philosophy text, *Being and Nothingness*, was composed in the winter of 1942-43. His philosophy centers around the actions a person takes. He argues that a man's character and significance (essence) are determined by his actions, not his views; by his deeds, not his words. Ultimately, there is no reason for acting. This is mankind's dilemma: he is totally free to act, but there is no significance to his actions. Mankind is sentenced to total freedom. The self exists only as a mind that is conscious of a series of objects. Sartre's most famous saying is that our "being precedes our essence." Humans are nothing until they act; their actions then define who they are.
2. Author John Gerassi said this about Sartre and Beauvoir [Note: The names Beauvoir and Castor in the following quote are references to Simone de Beauvoir, the mistress and companion of Sartre]:

Like any other intellectuals, they (Sartre and Beauvoir) found it extremely difficult to accept the contingency of their individual deaths. But

unlike the thinkers of all time who have spent centuries creating (or discovering if you wish) explanations, Sartre and Castor rejected all such artifices-god, hereafters, external souls, self-evident causes, perfect purposes, not to mention ideas-in-themselves, hidden universals, reincarnations, transmigrations, transubstantiations, and every kind of karma imaginable. Realists to the core, they faced their contingency with dogged determination-and refused to shun the very real possibility that their lives, all our lives, were indeed absurd.{6}

3. Sartre determined that human beings are unique only in their ability to think of something that isn't real, of alternatives to what is actually happening, of nothingness. This, according to Sartre, is what gives us the freedom which other animals do not possess.
4. Political Science: Marxism - Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Karl Marx (1818-1883) wrote a blistering critique of capitalism in 1859. His ideas have now spread all over the world and have been used to change the way hundreds of millions of people live. People in Russia, China, much of Eastern Europe, Cuba, and other countries have-been forced to live out his theories. This is remarkable considering the fact that Marx himself was never a politician or even very influential during his lifetime.

- a. Marx argues that the real nature of man is found in his relationships; there is no such thing as individual human nature. This has become the founding thesis of sociology. The only common aspect to all men is that they tend to work for their living. In a capitalistic society this causes alienation because someone else benefits from your labor.
2. Although Marx stressed man as a social being, he argued that it is wrong to "use" humans as a means to an end. "Industry is made for man, not man for industry-and 'man' here must mean all the human beings involved." {7} The problem with this position is that he fails to tell us why humans are so valuable.

## 2. Pantheism

1. Natural Sciences: Holistic Medicine - W. Brugh Joy, M.D.

Dr. Joy is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Southern California and the USC School of Medicine. He has written a number of books on healing energies since his conversion to an Eastern view of reality in 1974.

- a. In describing his conversion to a new way of viewing human nature Dr. Joy says this about his discoveries: The supposedly solid human body turns out to be an intricate interweaving of energy fields; where disease is not an entity but rather a fixated warp of energy fields; where the experience of Unconditional Love transcends the limitations of personal love; where mortality itself dies-and becomes immortality-and where I accept the Divine nature of all life forms, simultaneously physical and nonphysical, structured and nonstructured, existing and not existing in any particular form at any given moment.{8}
  2. Dr. Joy and a growing number of other doctors trained in orthodox medicine have rejected the materialistic model for disease and human essence and replaced it with an Eastern view that everything consists of a universal force.
2. Psychology: Transpersonal Psychology - Gerald Jampolsky M.D.

Dr. Jampolsky and others have been promoting a view that psychology should go beyond traditional Freudian or Skinnerian views of the self towards one that is interested in "ultimate human capacities."

- a. Advocates of transpersonal psychology are delving into a whole series of new capacities that they believe exist in individuals. These capacities include unitive consciousness, peak experiences, mystical experiences, self-actualization, oneness, cosmic awareness, and transcendental phenomena.
2. As Dr. Jampolsky says,

Love is the part of us that is real. Because love itself is our potential, we are not limited by the body and are not subject to any of the body's conditions or 'laws.'... What, then, is love? Because it is experienced in order to be meaningful, I can't define it for you except to say that it is the total absence of fear and the recognition of complete union with all life.{9}

3. Religion: New Age--Ram Dass and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh
  - a. Ram Dass:

You are the Ancient One. Everything that ever was, is, or will be is part of the dance of your being. You are all of the universe and so you have Infinite Wisdom, you appreciate all of the feelings of the universe so you have Infinite Compassion. Let the boundaries of your being disintegrate now and merge yourself into that which is beyond

compassion, beyond love, beyond God.... Let it all be, perfectly. {10}

2. Rajneesh:

There is no purpose to life; existence is nonpurposive. That is why it is called a leela, a play. Existence itself has no purpose to fulfill. It is not going anywhere-there is no end that it is moving toward-but still it is moving, still much is happening. {11}

**3. Christianity** -Man is complex unity of physical and immaterial natures

1. Naturalism tends to reduce human nature to purely materialistic explanations. Pantheism reduces it to spiritual forces. Christianity portrays both our spiritual and physical existence as significant. As a person, these natures form a complex unity, the physical body and immaterial aspects impact each other continuously, they both constitute who we are.
2. The Bible refers to the heart, spirit, soul, thoughts, emotions, will, conscience, etc. The key is to avoid over-simplifying the complexity of our nature or creating divisions that are not real. The emphasis here must be on our unity as whole creatures. Each of these immaterial aspects reflects part of God's glory in humanity. We are multi-faceted creatures of great complexity.
3. God created mankind as image-bearers. This taken-for-granted idea has vast implications. Genesis 1:26 states, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'" From this passage we see that our ruling over other creatures is part of our image-bearing responsibilities.
4. Mankind was created to reflect God's glory. Psalm 8 gives further perspective on our relationship with our Creator:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man  
that you care for him? You made him a little lower than  
the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and  
honor. You made him ruler over the works of your  
hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and  
herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and  
the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas  
(vv.3-8).

5. Man is crowned with *glory*, a term normally associated with God. It signifies the authority and capacity to rule. This confers upon mankind a special dignity that is not shared by the rest of creation. We are significant because we share, God's authority as vice-regents on earth and reflect His glory.

---

©1998 Probe Ministries

[Table of Contents](#)



[Return to Probe Home](#)