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**Human Nature -Who are We?**

- | Are Humans Good, Evil or Blank Slates?

## **Mind Games Survival Course Manual**



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# **Human Nature**

## **Who Are We?**

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### **II. Are humans good, evil, or blank slates? How do we get people to act "good"?**

#### **A. Naturalism**

1. Natural Sciences: Sociobiology - Edward O. Wilson
  - a. "In order to search for a new morality based upon a more truthful definition of man, it is necessary to look inward, to dissect the machinery of the mind and to retrace its evolutionary history." {12}
  2. "Human emotional responses and the more general ethical practices based on them have been programmed to a substantial degree by natural selection over thousands of generations. The challenge to science is to measure the tightness of the constraints caused by the programming, to find their source in the brain, and to decode their significance through the reconstruction of the evolutionary history of the mind." {13}
2. Psychology: Behaviorism vs Humanistic Psychology - Skinner, Maslow
  - a. B. F. Skinner (1904-1992), a professor of psychology at Harvard, promoted the theory of behaviorism which views man as an electrochemical machine not capable of free-will decisions.
  2. Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), Carl Rogers, and Rollo May are known as the founders of Humanistic Psychology. Their faith was in a perfectible man. They argued that mankind is

good by nature and capable of evolving into people that will usher in a new utopia on planet earth.

(1) B. F. Skinner and behaviorism assert that a person's environment is the only important factor in determining his behavior. J.B. Watson (Skinner's partner) stated,

Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any kind of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief, and yes even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors. { 14 }

(2) Skinner experimented with rats and pigeons and applied his observations to human behavior. He argued that we cannot assume human behavior is based on motivations that are different from other animals.

(3) Skinner believed that if we would only give up our false views of free will and human dignity and submit to a technology of behavior, we would create a heaven on Earth. He also believed that science can tell us all we need to know about human nature. Mankind's survival is the only moral absolute one can be sure of.

(4) Maslow proclaimed that humans are evolved animals that can reach peak experiences in a self-actualized state. Humanistic psychologists talk about "becoming a person" in the sense that each of us is free to be whatever we choose as we get in touch with our "inner self." { 15 }

(5) What keeps all of us from becoming self-actualized is society and the constraints it puts on us via parents, schools, and churches.

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

- a. Man must accept the fact that there are no values to be found outside of mankind itself. Nature holds no evidence of good and evil. Science cannot tell us what we *ought* to do, only what we *can* do.
2. People often run from the responsibility of choosing by acting in bad faith or self-deception; that is, by unthinkingly accepting the values of the surrounding culture as being actually true or real. Life goes on as normal. Authentic people must create their own values *ex nihilo*, completely aware that there is nothing to guide them in their decisions.

3. "All human activities are equivalent and all are on the principle doomed to failure. Thus it amounts to the same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations." {16}
4. Political Science: Marxism - Karl Marx (1818-1883)
  - a. The ultimate evil is capitalism, which robs workers of the value of their labor. Marx argues that history is moving towards a future where capitalism will be removed and men will live in peace, no longer oppressed by those who own the tools of production (money, land, and equipment). This will occur when capitalists are overthrown, violently if necessary.
  2. Man is basically good; capitalism and the greed it produces make him act badly. Only a classless society will solve man's problems, a society where individuals cannot own the tools of production but instead contribute according to their skills and receive according to their needs.

## 2. Pantheism

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

In the totality of Beingness there is no absolute anything-no rights or wrongs, no higher or lower aspects-only the infinite interaction of forces, subtle and gross, that have meaning only in relationship to one another.{17}

In order to experience the oneness that brings a superconsciousness called Beingness we must go through the "Transformational Process." {18}

2. Psychology: Transpersonal Psychology - Gerald Jampolsky, M.D.

Ethics becomes irrelevant if all is one. Decisions are made by learning to listen to the preference of peace within us. There is no right or wrong behavior. The only meaningful choice is between fear and love. {19}

3. New Age Religion: Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

I am totally passive. Whatsoever happens, happens. I never question why, because there is no one to be asked. Even if you find God somewhere, He will just laugh at the question. Even He cannot answer it. He cannot answer it because existence has no causality. {20}

## 3. Christianity

1. Created Good

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.  
And there was evening, and there was morning-the sixth  
day (Genesis 1:31).

## 2. The Fall

- a. When we as Christians say that we are fallen, what do we mean? Some seem to be saying it is just our flesh or bodies. Others argue that our body and soul have been damaged, but our spirit is untouched. If we look at ourselves as a unity of physical and immaterial aspects it will have an important effect on our view of fallen humanity. Our whole self, physical and immaterial, is fallen. We are remarkably complex creatures, but marred by sin.
2. Christianity offers a unique view of human nature. While all other views see man as either basically good or morally neutral, the Bible argues that mankind was created morally innocent but chose to disobey God. Romans 5:12 states, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."
3. It needs to be understood that Adam and Eve lacked nothing. As one author has said,

There were no deprivations, and Adam and Eve had everything they needed and wanted. To go against this command [not to eat of the fruit] was not to satisfy some need or add to their experience some pleasure the Creator had withheld. To break this command would be a simple act of rebellion with nothing actually to gain.{21}

4. Mankind was given authority to rule over God's creation but chose to upset the created order by giving in to the temptation offered by Satan.
5. The Fall occurred when temptation caused God's authority over creation to be questioned. Satan, in the form of an animal, enticed Eve who enticed Adam. At all levels God's authority was challenged, and pride, or the desire to be like God, was evident. This is the essence of sin.
6. The results of the Fall were immediate and devastating. No longer was mankind innocent. The best term to describe the new state of humanity is *alienation* ; the result was pain in all aspects of existence.
7. The result of the Fall has been a world where oppression (in such forms as slavery, racism, and sexism) has been the norm among every people. War, poverty, and constant struggle has been the rule for humanity. No people or nation is exempt from the effects of the Fall.
8. The cure for the alienation and pain of the Fall comes via a

restoration of mankind's relationship with God and the removal of the judgment that has been placed upon him.

### 3. Common Grace

When mankind acts in a way that is harmonious with God's moral nature, when his laws and institutions honor moral law even if the individuals themselves are not believers, people benefit from common grace. A just government is better than an unjust one. A people who do not steal are better off than a society that encourages stealing. Sexually chaste cultures avoid the disease and heartache of sexually promiscuous ones.

### 4. Saving Grace/Justification

- a. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we find reference to our transformation (and restoration) into Christlikeness as believers: "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." This is the result of placing our trust in Christ and accepting the salvation offered by God and paid for by Jesus. Second Corinthians 4:4 specifically describes Jesus as the image of God: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." As we are being conformed to the likeness of Jesus we experience a restoration of the image of God within us (Rom. 8:29).
2. Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age."

5. Sanctification At the time of belief, a Christian is justified (God's wrath is removed from him), and sanctification is begun. There are three aspects to sanctification. First, something definitive happens when we believe. Colossians 3 tells us that we have both died and been raised with Christ and that we are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Second, we must continue to be set apart. Colossians 3:9-10 puts the emphasis on the growth of the new self "which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." Finally, we will be completely sanctified in God's presence according to Ephesians 5:25-27, when we are presented without stain or blemish to God.

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