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Mind Games Survival Course Manual



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Human Nature

Who Are We?

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III. What happens when we die?

A. Naturalism

1. Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) wrote over seventy books on everything from geometry to marriage. Historian Paul Johnson says of Russell that no intellectual in history offered advice to humanity over so long a period as Bertrand Russell.

According to Russell people are "tiny lumps of impure carbon and water dividing their time between labor to postpone their normal dissolution and frantic struggle to hasten it for others." {22}

2. Little else needs to be said concerning the naturalistic position. If man is merely part of the machine of the universe, his death results in physical extinction. Since the physical world is all that there is, the extinction is complete.

2. Pantheism

1. Reincarnation: Hinduism & Buddhism

Indian philosopher Shankara, writing in the eighth century, argues that the soul *jiva* is attached to a body (gross body). At death, the "gross body" dies and the *jiva* lives on in another body bearing the *karma* of its previous lives. *Karma* means "deeds, actions, or work." *Karma* then becomes the cause for what one is now experiencing. One might become attached to an upper class human because of good *karma*, or an outcast human or animal because of bad *karma*. {23}

2. *Moksha* and *Nirvana*

Moksha is the liberation from the wheel of continual rebirth. *Nirvana* is the state of one's existence after liberation. Some Hindus believe that the self eventually loses its identity when its karmic debt is paid and it merges with an impersonal God. Others believe that we maintain our personhood and are liberated from reincarnation to be in constant relationship with the personal God. {24}

3. Christianity

1. Resurrection

Christianity argues that God himself became flesh and paid the penalty for sin. Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice who was a substitute on the cross for each of us. As a result, although every person will eventually be resurrected, only those who have had their sins atoned for will spend eternity with God.

2. Final Judgment Hebrews 9:27 states plainly that "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

4. Conclusion

- A. By contrasting the ideas expressed by naturalists and pantheists we do not mean to imply that all of their concepts of human nature are wrong. Marx was right to point out abuses in unrestrained capitalism; Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the notion that we all strive towards self-actualization have some merit. The problem we have with most of these theories is that they are reductionistic, they simplify all of human nature into one of its aspects. Naturalists see only the physical part of our nature, pantheists recognize only the spiritual.
2. Biblical Christianity gives the most complete and satisfactory answers to explain our complexity, our potential for good and our propensity for evil. It also leaves us with the only answer to humanity's alienation from both itself and its Creator. That answer lies in the hope of the Gospel and the promise of our future resurrection with Christ.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Pe. 1:13).

... and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead - Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath (1 Th. 1:10).

But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord

Jesus Christ (I Th. 5:8-9).

Notes

1. Ray Bohlin, "Sociobiology: Cloned from the Gene Cult," *Christianity Today* (23 January 1981), 16.
2. Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 1.
3. *Ibid.*, 2.
4. *Ibid.*, 3.
5. Leslie Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 72.
6. John Gerassi, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Hated conscience of His Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 118.
7. Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature*, 65.
8. Brugh W. Joy, *Joy's Way* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1979), 4.
9. Gerald G. Jampolsky, *Teach Only Love* (New York: Bantam, 1983), 52.
10. Ram Dass, *Grist for the Mill* (New York: Bantam, 1976), 71.
11. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, *I Am the Gate* (Philadelphia: Harper Colophon, 1977), 5
12. Wilson, *On Human Nature*, 4.
13. *Ibid.*, 6.
14. Stevenson, *Seven Theories of Human Nature*, 105.
15. See the discussion of humanistic psychology and the "self" in Paul Vitz's book *Psychology as Religion* or in William Kilpatrick's *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong*. An interesting example on how this attitude is applied to the classroom is found on page 53 of Kilpatrick's book: "It's Friday afternoon and the students are leaving a class in 'social living.' The teacher's parting words are, 'Have a great weekend. Be safe. Buckle up. Just say "No"... and if you can't say "No," then use a condom! The teacher explains her philosophy: 'I try to give support to everyone's value system. So I say, "If you're a virgin, fine. If you're sexually active, fine. If you're gay, fine.'"
16. Robert D. Cumming, *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Random House, 1965), 363.
17. Joy, *Joy's Way*, 7.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Jampolsky, *Teach Only Love*, 99.
20. Rajneesh, *I Am the Gate*, 5.
21. William H. Baker, *In the Image of God* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1991), 58.
22. Israel Shenker, "The provocative progress of a pilgrim polymath," *Smithsonian* (May 1993), 128.
23. Norman L. Geisler and J. Yutaka Amano, *The Reincarnation Sensation* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1986), 29
24. *Ibid.*, 29-30.

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