

An Easy Route to Peace

Why is our society always in a state of boil? A small perturbation can lead to a world war, which could exterminate the race itself. I think humans were always aware of this, since we always have a few who are strong advocates of peace, who keep prescribing various do's and don'ts. In fact these restrictions yield nothing but making life a bit more uncomfortable.

Is there a better way?

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Introduction

I think, since long, humans are aware of the tumul-

tuous nature of their society and the impending danger arising out of it, which could result in extermination of the race itself. Our history is in fact a chronological account of the damages we human race have inflicted on human race itself, and the collateral ruins, it caused. As time go forward, more and more people are waking up to this as a real possibility. And to counter this, we always have many philosophers and other public figures who advocate the need to cultivate impeccable personal qualities, peace, and harmony, in a society. Such ones keep prescribing various do's and don'ts in this regard, which effectively yield nothing but making life a bit more uncomfortable for all. And it hasn't changed a bit, ever since.

Commotion keep on occurring, at all times, and for various reasons. Our reaction also vary.

We overlook it, or see it as a celebration, whenever the reason is a dear one. Like winning a coveted trophy, or electing, one who champions what is close to us. We despise it, call it unruly behavior and urge strong action, when it is truly unworthy and dangerous, is a real one, and is directed on us. Like a hijack. But we take a philosophic view, close our eyes, and talk of commotion as a universal part of life, in all other cases, whether the reason is a worthy one or not. Like disruption of a

public service, closing a road for religious events or ceremonies, or organized elimination of those promoting a progressive view.

In fact, in all such instances, we need to work with the same tempo, if commotion is to be brought to an end.

Or look for some activities or a way of conduct, that can make peace prevail. And then fashion our life and living around those.

Chapter 1

The Issues

I think we can make a fresh start with this question.

What can we do to make human societies peaceful, while not restricting people from progressing with their call? How to allow and encourage their natural propensities to bloom unhindered?

In fact humans are never at ease, as it has been since ages. The unease may originate anywhere, like religion, love, or other matters like politics. Those specializing in each of such entities regularly come up with some remedy, which always fail. Rather than investigating into it, it seems humans have accepted that their society is a turbulent one. And for reassurance, they compare the same with the disorder existing among all other forms of life, and find that we are better off. (Perhaps in the past, they looked for some reasons, and failed to find any!)

We are wrong here. There is a culprit, and I think it is human nature. Common sense tells me it is correct to think so, human nature being the only common factor of all such particularities or priorities of life. And the fact that human nature essen-

tially is a set of abstractions, and that each of those have the power to derail any steps for correction or moderation, makes it all the more difficult, if not impossible, to remedy this. The most potent one among all these, which is also a global favorite, is nothing but ‘the ultimate aim of life’.

How are we dealing with this currently? We in fact are addressing each individual component of human nature carefully and making an elaborate system of justice that consist of rules, punishments, etc. Thereafter we need to make an assumption, like what we presently do. That such corrective steps on individual components shall result in making desired changes to one’s nature. A better way is to manipulate directly, the parameter that encompasses all those components, namely, human nature. And it makes sense to do this.

For, when we issue lengthy, cumbersome advices to keep one odd facet of human nature in check, we are bound to face the brunt of the uproar and turbulence caused by other facets. Which, in addition to suppressing the potency of our control efforts, may give wrong feedback about the nature and extent of the uproar, eliciting disproportionate or misplaced corrective actions, to say the least. (Think of adverse reactions to a medicine, and how it could be confused with the symptoms of interest)

But, when we approach human nature holistically, one can expect comprehensive and steady progress in all aspects of whatever social turmoil we may be reacting to.

However, owing to the style of living adopted by us so far, I think, the most potent component of human nature has become powerful enough to sustain its influence on its own merit. Hence it will be more appropriate to address this particular issue, namely, the ultimate aim of life, as a separate one.

Thus, these are the two issues, this book will discuss. Human nature, especially why it is far different from the nature exhibited by any other form of life. And the leaning, humans show to invent at the earliest, an ultimate aim for life.

Chapter 2

What ails human nature?

Let me see how the real and abstract variables of life play out, while beginning with an examination of human nature.

What is human nature, but a set of basic assumptions, the humans have about themselves? And it seems, we all have reached a conclusion that these are of fundamental importance to our life. What is its significance to the race as a whole? Have we examined this question?

Clearly, in all other areas we dwell upon, like the living and non-living objects, we apply every possible argument and reason, however far-fetched, to test conclusively, whatever assumptions we happen to make. Thereafter we may incorporate those assumptions on a trial basis. If and only if no abnormality could be found during this time and proven beyond doubt, we accept such assumptions as a part of our life. But, when it comes to human nature, sadly, such prudence is not there at all. We merrily accept all the basic assumptions as proven facts.

I therefore think, there is room for two questions. One, how come we landed up in such a state, as far

as this question go? And two, how to extricate ourselves. That is, what should be human nature? Since the second question points to an urgent need, let me address it first, leaving the first one, which perhaps is more of academic importance.

While writing down my thoughts on a variety of topics that are intrinsically linked to our day to day life, what I could find was that we humans have a penchant for rather hasty generalizations. These always lead to error, and for correction and prevention of which, we have an elaborate structure that is always in the making, of collecting and processing information, and acting on it. Which could time to time necessitate the issue of certain guide lines, for the future, for acting on fresh errors, and for getting the structure itself augmented. And we take enormous pride in this structure, calling it the unique part of human.

I have a question. If being in error, is not a part of human nature, where is the need for such a structure as this? Rather than maintaining an elaborate structure for locating and administering remedies to a myriad of activities, occurrences, or events, why can't we think of specifying correctly, a single entity, namely, human nature.

I think it makes sense. When we need to learn hu-

man nature, just as we do for all other aspects of life, where we learn either by being taught or by experience, here too, we can specify ourselves to be, say, error free.

Now, what exactly is human nature?

I feel, currently we think of humans to be differing greatly from all the other forms of life. But, do they? As far as the functions essential for the maintenance and progression of life is concerned, there is no great difference. Both are well equipped to perform all such functions, each following its own style and extent. But on closer look, there is a difference. One's nature, for all other species of life, support unfettered growth. For humans, unless they keep their nature in check, they will be meeting their doom, very soon. And humans perpetually are busy doing something, where, each one will be busy with something that is in consonance with their nature. All this points to a big difference. And this difference is the one, which has come to known by the term human nature. This I think needs some explanation, since a few questions arise instantly. What is it? How did humans acquire it? What effect does its have on the fortunes of human race? And, What is the optimum way of handling it?

How do machines acquire a nature

Let us tackle a simpler issue. Think of inanimate objects. I think mainly owing to the environmental particularities of use and the personal priorities of the user, one can say, things acquire a sort of personality. To mention an example, think of a kitchen, a workshop, or some such place having many knives of the same type. For a particular use, one will be relying more on a specific one. And, because of this, it could get used more often, fortifying its position as an apt knife for a particular need. In some time, each piece of implement shall acquire certain peculiarity of its own, which incidentally can be noticed in its rate of wear or the frequency of replacement. When a necessity arrives, the chosen knife, or any other implement, shall be the one, where the particular peculiarity is apt for the current need.

Things are a little more clear when we deal with more complex objects. Think about putting to use, a machine, an instrument, or some other expedient. Say, a mechanism to pump water.

As we install it, we shall be learning of many requirements necessary to put the particular pumping system to work satisfactorily. Like appropriate fittings, joints, and connectors to fabricate and match

various elements of installation, provision of electrical power, incorporation of safety devices, or protection from weather. As a result of which, quite a few devices, systems or equipment shall form a part of this installation. And to this, some more will get added up, as and when we face bottlenecks, both while installing it and during the run-in-period thereafter.

Thinking in a similar manner, each and every living being acquire its nature while growing up in its environment, which, over many generations, the environment being more or less the same, becomes attached permanently. However it is susceptible to changes, domestication, for example. We can say, it is not at all difficult for a living being to be freed of its nature, provided, we feel the need.

How the Machines are Freed of its Nature

Over a period of time, these issues shall be getting sorted out, which shall be rendering many of the elements that have become a part of the installation, redundant. What normally happens in a well run case is that we would strive to utilize some of these redundancies, sometimes as spares, sometimes for improvisation, or for selling as scrap. However, when the machine undergoes a planned overhaul, we discard all these and bring the ma-

chine to its specified consistency. This in fact is the main purpose behind an overhaul, which is an essential part of all such systems.

How do Humans Acquire a Nature

Something similar is true, in the case of human race too. In our long journey, which we now imagine as one from the state of a primate-like being to the relatively civilized ones of today, human race must have added quite a few particularities, whether of lifestyle, of behaviour, of ambition, or of outlook. (Even if it began with an intelligent design, situation need not be much different) We continue to cling on to these, though none are relevant, and quite a few are rather dangerous, as far as the needs, desirability, and the appropriate living style for our current environment goes. But, quite non-intuitively we have been hanging on to these. Labelling these as the unquestionable elements of human nature, we make it rather everlasting.

In fact each of these elements are snippets of whatever was the current events of significance, some time in the past. These would have been serving an actual purpose then. And later, even after getting replaced, these continue to remain with the human society, joining a vast kitty of abstractions. And does not leave us, even when situation

demands so.

Why we are Never Freed of our Nature

As mentioned, many of these would be the ones that got discarded at opportune moments in the past, when external or internal forces made our forefathers view some part of the current living style as superfluous, inconvenient or dangerous. And remained with the human society, though redundant. But, unlike the way mechanical elements got treated, there was never a planned attempt to identify and eliminate the redundancies of life. On the contrary, later generations started holding these in very high esteem.

In fact it is worth noting here, how, while dealing with machines, the full range and power of human intelligence always come to fore. We very well know, everywhere, some form of routine repair is necessary, at intervals based on the conditions and circumstances of use. Note also, how we take pride in our ability for identifying the cardinal as well as for overlooking the insignificant. But all these are missing, when we deal with our own fortune!

Chapter 3

How can we manipulate human nature

We have found it profitable to learn and adopt various facets of human nature. But, for its practical implementation and further usage, or for deriving more mileage, we need to define it. For, definition of an entity makes it easy to know that entity. Rather than a broad idea incorporating all we can feel, see, or hear in our way, this permits us to overlook a few, while noticing clearly and closely, few others.

Here we can consider it as consisting of two parts. One, common with all other forms of life, which could account for the vast majority of emotional or other characteristic traits, like love, anger, playfulness, etc. Two, what is found only in humans, which perhaps is language, and the ability to use it for abstract transactions like thought, expression, and communication.

As far as the traits common with other forms of life go, there is no absolute necessity, to define human nature. For, inferences can be drawn by comparison, and we have suitable references available aplenty. But, for the traits unique to humans, want of a definition shall give rise to disorder, to

say the least. For, humans being a form of life, the responses of which are guided more by reason than instinct, commotion is an easy possibility when a multitude of responses thrive. You see, no two individuals will have the same reaction to the same event. And here, if there exists a unique definition, all humans can take the easy path of aligning with it, making commotion a rarity.

Thus, let us limit our definition of human nature to matters related to thought and expression. In his best-selling book 'Thinking fast and Slow', Daniel Kahneman puts forward the idea of thinking as a mixture of two different activities. 'thinking fast', and 'thinking slow'. To put it in a simplified way, each of us is constituted by two individuals, one identifiable as the experiencing self and the other, as the remembering self. Appropriate combination of the nature, or the intended effects, of the acts of thinking and the 'self' who performs it, is the need of the hour, any time. For example, when exposed to a situation, one needs to quickly decide, who will answer it or take action. The thinking self, if it needs to be a comprehensive one, and the experiencing self, if the reaction needs to be instantaneous.

I think we can think of 'Thinking fast', for immediate reactions, or instinctive response. Which also is

what is done by all forms of life excepting humans, where, every stimulus is reacted upon instantly. 'Thinking slow' points to studied responses, perhaps the appropriate ones, when we consider humans. Where, rather than reacting instantly, the focus is on the effectiveness of the response, or the desirability of whatever real or abstract consequences it may lead to. Which could entail some amount of reflection, with the help of symbolic logic or various form of language. In fact, the prime function of a language is nothing but this.

Now what is remaining is only a logical conclusion. 'Thinking fast' denotes animal instinct, what can be called instant reactions. And 'thinking slow' is what we should have been having in our minds, whenever we use the word, thinking. And in that case, there will be some thought even behind our instinctive responses.

And human nature can now be defined as the affinity towards thinking slow, except where it is not possible to do so.

Chapter 4

The part is larger than the whole.

This is most true, for the mother of all abstractions, the ultimate aim of life. This is omnipotent, and it can justify any action however unreasonable, while making it easy to defend, even the worst instance of inaction.

Is there an ultimate aim for life?

I think there are many answers. Theology specializes in dealing with this issue. It links the ultimate aim with a short fall that can happen to one at add times. And how, this shortfall (sin) is to be compensated. It overlooks the significance of immediate gains. Science looks at all the aspects of immediate gains. But it leaves the ultimate one to winds. Literature tries to meet both, but I think, never crosses the half way mark. Let me now face the question for both.

How are we to answer a question? In, say, a verbal exchange, both the words and its setting are equally important for formulating a good and appropriate answer. And, the answer should depend on how, this question was originated, or its context. I also feel, questions generally does not have a meaning unless qualified by accompanying state-

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