

go greater good presents...

GREATER WRITINGS



- + Perceptions of Peace
- + Primary Purposes

edited by Thomas Francine

Introduction —

I have **hitchhiked** 26,000 miles, through most U.S. states and in 14 countries (Mexico, Netherlands, Turkey, to name a few), often leaving myself vulnerable yet encountering extreme kindness time and again. I have also spent countless hours **researching** positive psychology and behavioral economics.

In my **travels** and **research**, I have noticed a stark contrast between what the world is in reality and what many perceive it to be. I put together this booklet to share what I have learned. The **brilliant** excerpts featured here form the foundation of *go greater good*.

Addressed are **2** common misconceptions:

The **1st** section deals with the perception that violence is getting worse and worse (really, **peace** is prevailing in many ways).

The **2nd** section deals with the **primary purposes** of man. “Social Darwinism,” that selfishness is *the* primary drive in humanity, is a popular belief. Selfishness *is* a primary drive... but is it the *sole* primary drive? Perhaps for a few, but not for the vast majority of people. We will take a close look at the broader range of primary human drives: **altruism**, **reason**, **selfishness**, **meaning**, and **recognition**.

— Thomas, 2018
gogreatergood.com



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I. *Perceptions of Peace*

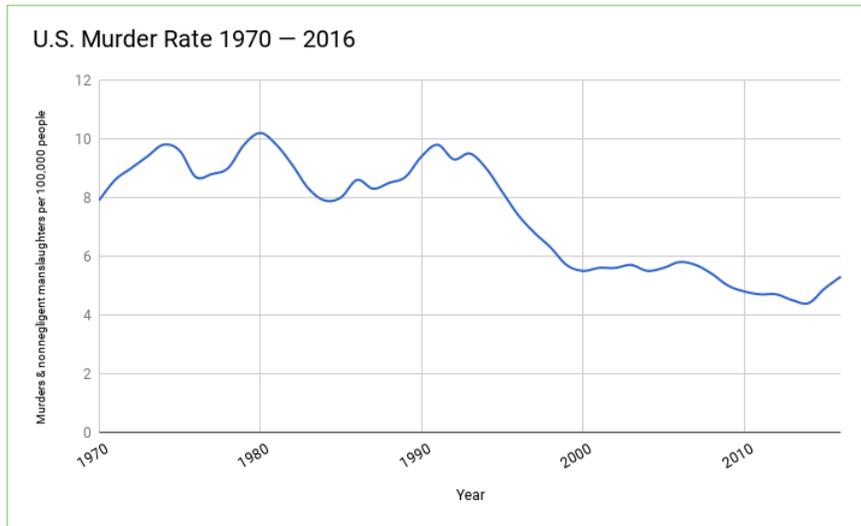
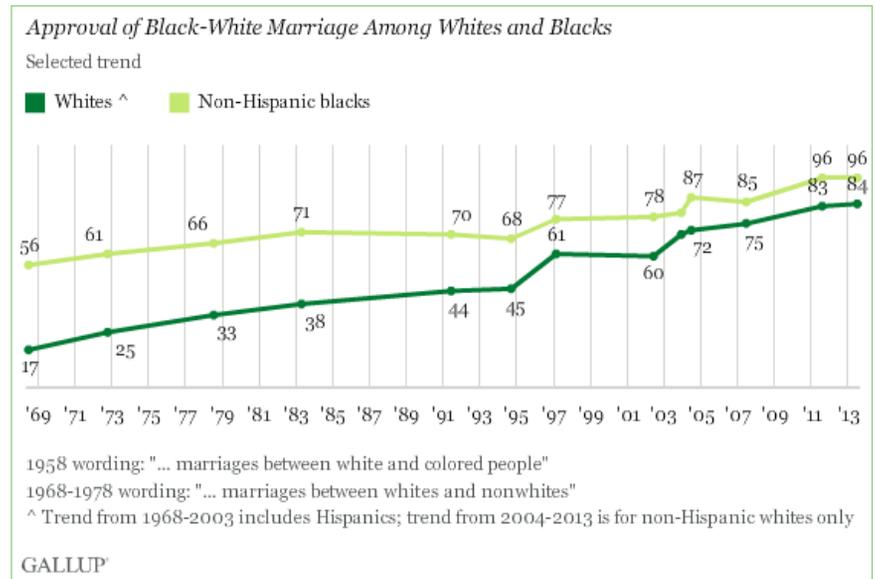
The Better Angels of our Nature *by Steven Pinker*

Even with all these reasons why no romantic would really step into a time machine, the nostalgic have always been able to pull out one moral card: the profusion of *modern violence*. At least, they say, our ancestors did not have to worry about muggings, school shootings, terrorist attacks, holocausts, world wars, killing fields, napalm, gulags, and nuclear annihilation. Surely no Boeing 747, no antibiotic, no iPod is worth the suffering that modern societies and their technologies can wreak.

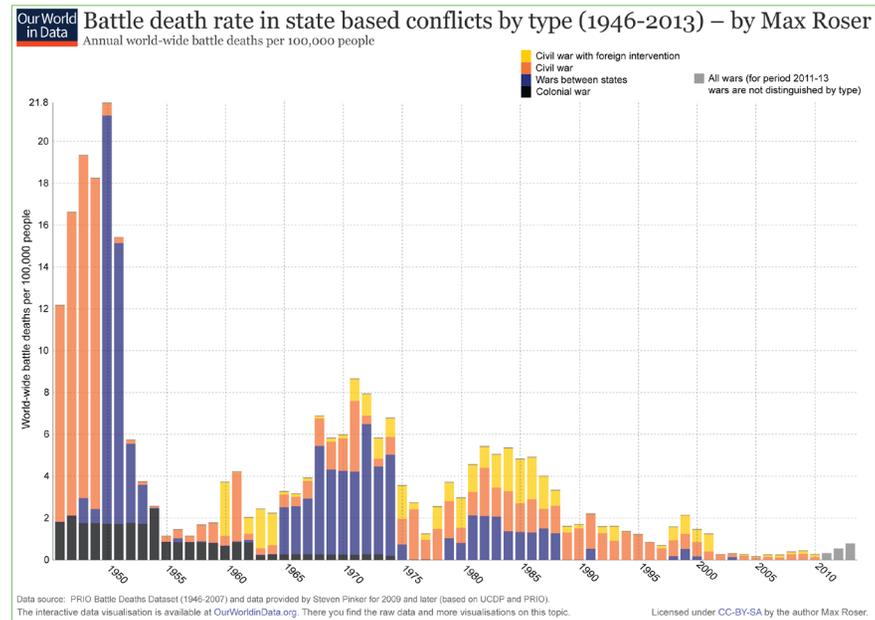
And here is where unsentimental history and statistical literacy can change our view of modernity. For they show that nostalgia for a peaceable past is the biggest delusion of all. We now know that [some] native peoples, whose lives are so romanticized in today's children's books, had rates of death from warfare that were greater than those of our world wars. The romantic visions of medieval Europe omit the exquisitely crafted instruments of torture and are innocent of the thirtyfold greater risk of murder in those times. The centuries for which people are nostalgic were times in which the wife of an adulterer could have her nose cut off, a seven-year-old could be hanged for stealing a petticoat, a prisoner's family could be charged for easement of irons, a witch could be sawn in half, and a sailor could be flogged to a pulp. The moral commonplaces of our age, such as that slavery, war, and torture are wrong, would have been seen as saccharine sentimentality, and our notion of universal human rights almost incoherent. Genocide and war crimes were absent from the historical record only because no one at the time thought they were a big deal. From the vantage point of almost seven decades after the world wars and genocides of the first half of the 20th century, we see

that they were not harbingers of worse to come, nor a new normal to which the world would grow inured, but a local high from which it would bumpily descend. And the ideologies behind them were not woven into modernity but atavisms that ended up in the dustbin of history.

The forces of modernity—reason, science, humanism, individual rights— have not, of course, pushed steadily in one direction; nor will they ever bring about a Utopia or end the frictions and hurts that come with being human. But on top of all the benefits that modernity has brought us in health, experience, and knowledge, we can add its role in the reduction of violence.



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting



Should Women Travel Alone?

by *Nina Nooit*

Should women travel alone? Should they hitchhike? Here is my answer, once and for all, to this supposed “societal question.”

Of course, it goes without saying that every single woman must decide for herself if she hitchhikes, and every single personal decision is respected.

But I strongly disagree with making any generalizations.

What’s dangerous is not hitchhiking as a woman alone or hiking, camping etc. as a woman alone; what’s dangerous is being a woman in a misogynistic world.

Statistically, one of the most dangerous places in the world for a woman is actually her home. And that’s not only because rapists actually climb into houses to find women. Domestic violence kills hundreds every day around the world. And all those women undoubtedly thought that they chose their husbands well, that they were good men.

If we apply the logic that because of one terrible incident happening to one woman during one activity, no woman should engage in that activity, there would be one logical advice to give women in the world: Don’t hang out with men, don’t flirt with men, don’t have sex with men and don’t enter longer relationships with men – that is for sure the most reasonable advice to give in order to avoid rape and battering. And by all means, don’t get dependent on men by moving in together, having children or getting legally married! Then it is so much harder to get away.

By making rules like “women should not hitchhike,” you are not making a safer world at all.

A society where women travelling independently and taking their own

decisions is a normal thing is most certainly a safer society for women, than a society where a woman who does these things is considered doing something inappropriate for her gender.

If I am on the streets in Pakistan (a country I know fairly well) and I am being harassed, putting on a headscarf is a reasonable thing to do to stop that (up to a certain extent). Yet I would never give the advice, “if you don’t want to be harassed, just put on a headscarf.” The fact that insulting women on the streets and grabbing them is so much more common in Pakistan than it is where I live in Western Europe, very clearly correlates to the fact that Pakistani society upholds the idea that women should be segregated, should stay home, and if they have to leave the house, that they should cover as much as they can. Read the article by the Guardian talking about exactly this in the case of another country: “How the Hijab has made sexual harassment worse in Iran.”

Most of all, if we start shaping our society in the way that we prescribe what women should and should not do, that is first of all telling women that they cannot use their own minds in taking their own decisions, that their minds are somehow not developed enough for them to assess their own risks. Murder rates on the streets are higher for men, yet no one ever got the idea to say, “men will only be safe if they stay home!”

For some reason (well, ...patriarchy) men’s decisions are seen as their own and never as open to societal discussion.

What telling women “not to hitchhike” really is, is telling 100s of women who are hitchhiking that they are not mentally mature enough to make their own decisions, and that is taking away an integral part of their personhood and adulthood, and society does not have that right, as simple as that.

II. Primary Purposes

The Expanding Circle (altruism and reason) by Peter Singer

“There can be no doubt...
a tribe including many members...
always ready to aid one another,
and to sacrifice themselves for the common good,
would be victorious over most other tribes;
and this would be natural selection.”

— Charles Darwin
The Descent of Man, 1871

Animal Altruism

Let us look at some examples of altruistic behavior in non-human animals. We can start with the **warning calls** given by blackbirds and thrushes when hawks fly overhead. These calls benefit other members of the flock, who can take evasive action; but giving a warning call presumably also gives away the location of the bird giving the call, thus exposing it to additional risk... If, as we would expect, birds who give warning calls are eaten at a higher rate than birds who act to save themselves without warning the rest of the flock, how does such altruism survive?

...Nor is altruism limited to warnings. Some animals **threaten** or **attack** predators to protect other members of their species. African wild dogs have been observed attacking a cheetah at considerable risk to their own lives in order to save a pup. Male baboons threaten predators, and cover the rear as the troop retreats. Parent birds frequently lead predators away from their nests with bizarre dances and displays which distract the predator's attention from the nest to the parent itself.

Food sharing is another form of altruism. Wolves and wild dogs bring meat back to members of the pack who were not in on the kill. Gibbons and chimpanzees without food gesture for, and usually receive, a portion of the food that another ape has. Chimpanzees also lead each other to trees with ripe fruit; indeed, their altruism extends beyond their own group, for when a whole group of chimpanzees is at a good tree, they make a loud booming noise which attracts

other groups up to a kilometer away.

Several species **help injured animals** survive. Dolphins need to reach the surface of the water to breathe. If a dolphin is wounded so severely that it cannot swim to the surface by itself, other dolphins group themselves under it, pushing it upward to the air. If necessary they will keep doing this for several hours. The same kind of thing happens among elephants. A fallen elephant is likely to suffocate from its own weight, or it may overheat in the sun. Many elephant hunters have reported that when an elephant is felled, other members of the group try to raise it to its feet.

Finally, the **restraint** shown by many animals in combat with their fellows might also be a form of altruism. Fights between members of the same social group rarely end in death or even injury. When one wolf gets the better of another, the beaten wolf makes a submissive gesture, exposing the soft underside of its neck to the fangs of the victor. Instead of taking the opportunity to rip out the jugular vein of his foe, the victor trots off, content with the symbolic victory. From a purely selfish point of view, this seems foolish. How is it that wolves who fight to kill, never giving a beaten enemy a second chance, have not eliminated those who pass up opportunities to rid themselves of their rivals forever?

...[Sociobiologists] have suggested that **two forms of altruism** can be explained in terms of natural selection: kin altruism and reciprocal altruism. Some also allow a minor role for group altruism, but this is more controversial [*and not discussed in this excerpt*]...

Kin Altruism

...strictly selfish behavior—behavior aimed at furthering my own survival without regard for anyone else—will not be favored by evolution. I am doomed in any case. The survival of my genes depends largely on my having children, and on my children having children, and so forth. Evolution will favor, other things being equal, behavior which improves the prospects of my children surviving and reproducing. Thus the first and most obvious way in which evolution can produce altruism is **the concern of parents for their children**. This is so widespread and natural a form of altruism that we do not usually think of it as altruism at all. Yet the sacrifices that humans as well as many non-human animals constantly make for their children represent a tremendous effort for the benefit of beings other than themselves. Thus they must count as altruism...

So genes that lead parents to take care of their children are, other things being equal, more likely to survive than genes that lead parents to abandon their children. But taking care of one's children is only one way of increasing the chances of one's genes surviving. ...in genetic terms my siblings are as closely related to me as my children; there is no special significance in the fact that the genes my children share with me replicate through my own body, whereas those I share with my sister did not. Assisting my brothers and sisters will enhance the prospects of my genes surviving, in much the same way as assisting my children will...

This is the basis of kin altruism: **the genetically based tendency to help one's relatives**. The relationship does not have to be as close as that of parents to their children or siblings to each other. The proportion of genes in common does fall off sharply as it becomes more distant... but what is lacking in quality can be made up for by an increased quantity. Risking my life will not harm the prospects of my genes surviving if it eliminates a similar risk to the lives of two of my children, four of my nieces, or eight of my first cousins. Thus kin selection can explain why altruism should extend beyond the immediate family. In close-knit groups, where most members are related to other members, kin selection may explain altruistic behavior like giving the alarm when predators are near, which benefits the entire group.

Kin altruism does not imply that animals know how closely related they are to each other... only that animals can be expected to act roughly *as if* they were aware of these relationships...

Reciprocal Altruism

Kin altruism exists because it promotes the survival of one's relatives; but not all altruistic acts help relatives. Monkeys spend a lot of their time grooming each other, removing parasites from those awkward places a monkey cannot itself reach. Monkeys grooming each other are not always related. Here reciprocal altruism offers an explanation: **you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours**...

Reciprocal altruism is most common among, and perhaps limited to, birds and mammals; its clearest cases come from highly intelligent social animals like wolves, wild dogs, dolphins, baboons, chimpanzees, and human beings. In addition to grooming each other, members of these species often share food on a reciprocal basis and help each other when threatened by predators or other enemies...

From our positive feelings for those who help us spring the bonds of friendship and the loyalty that we feel we owe to friends; from our negative feelings for those who do not reciprocate we get moral indignation and the desire to punish. If reciprocal altruism played a significant role in human evolution, an aversion to being cheated would be a distinct advantage. Humans have this aversion; indeed, we have it to such an extent that it often seems counterproductive. People who could not be induced to work an hour's overtime for ten dollars will spend an hour taking back defective goods worth five dollars. Nor is this lack of proportion unique to our culture. Anthropologists observing many different societies report bloody fights arising from apparently trivial causes. "It isn't the five dollars," we say in defense of our conduct, "it's the principle of the thing." No doubt the San "Bushmen" of the Kalahari say much the same when they fight over the distribution of the spoils of a hunt. But why do we care so much about the principle? One possible explanation is that while the cost of being cheated in a single incident may be very slight, over the long run constantly being cheated is much more costly. Hence it is worth going to some lengths to identify cheaters and make a complete break with them...

That the practice of reciprocal altruism should be the source of many of our attitudes of moral approval and disapproval, including our ideas of fairness, cheating, gratitude, and retribution, would be easier to accept if it were not that this explanation seems to put these attitudes and ideas on too self-interested a footing. Reciprocal altruism seems not really altruism at all; it could more accurately be described as enlightened self-interest. One might be a fully reciprocating partner in this practice without having the slightest concern for the welfare of the person one helps. Concern for one's own interests, plus the knowledge that exchanges of assistance are likely to be in the long-term interests of both partners, is all that is needed. **Our moral attitudes, however, demand something very different.** If I am drowning in a raging surf and a stranger plunges in and rescues me, I shall be very grateful; but my gratitude will diminish if I learn that my rescuer first calculated the probability of receiving a sizable reward for saving my life, and took the plunge only because the prospects for the reward looked good. Nor is it only gratitude that diminishes when self-interested motives are revealed; moral approval is always warmest for acts which show either spontaneous concern for the welfare of others or else a conscientious desire to do what is right. Proof that an action we have praised had a self-interested motive almost always leads us to withdraw or qualify our praise...

Robert Trivers has offered a sociobiological explanation for our moral preference for altruistic motivation. People who are altruistically motivated will make more reliable partners than those motivated by self-interest. After all, one day the calculations of self-interest may turn out differently. Looking at the shabby clothes I have left on the beach, a self-interested potential rescuer may decide that the prospects of a sizable reward are dim. In an exchange in which cheating is difficult to detect, a self-interested partner is more likely to cheat than a partner with real concern for my welfare. Evolution would therefore favor people who could distinguish self-interested from altruistic motivation in others, and then select only the altruistic as beneficiaries of their gifts or services.

Psychologists have experimented with the circumstances that lead people to behave altruistically, and their results show that we are more ready to act altruistically toward those we regard as genuinely altruistic than to those we think have ulterior motives for their apparently altruistic acts. As one review of the literature concludes: "When the legitimacy of the apparent altruism is questioned, reciprocity is less likely to prevail." Another experiment proved something most of us know from our own attitudes: we find genuine altruism a more attractive character trait than a pretense of altruism covering self-interested motives.

Here an intriguing and important point emerges; if there are advantages in being a partner in a reciprocal exchange, and if one is more likely to be selected as a partner if one has genuine concern for others, there is an evolutionary advantage in having **genuine concern** for others. (This assumes, of course, that potential partners can see through a pretense of altruism by those who are really self-interested—something that is not always easy, but which we spend a lot of time trying to do, and often can do. Evolutionary theory would predict that we would get better at detecting pretense, but at the same time the performance of the

pretenders would improve, so the task would never become a simple one.)

This conclusion is highly significant for understanding ethics, because it cuts across the tendency of sociobiological reasoning to explain behavior in terms of self-interest or the interests of one's kin...

The First Step

As we have seen, many non-human animals assist their own kin, or refrain from harming them. In some species this is true of unrelated animals as well. So the first steps toward ethics, like the first steps toward mathematics, were taken by our pre-human ancestors. Ethics starts with social animals prompted by their genes to help, and to refrain from injuring, selected other animals. On this base we must now superimpose **the capacity to reason...**

...several species [are] capable of reasoning; but the reasoning powers of normal human beings far exceed those of any other species. This is not to say that humans always do reason well, but that they are capable of reasoning well. How has this capacity affected the development of ethics?..

Reason

...altruistic impulses once limited to one's kin and one's own group might be extended to a wider circle by **reasoning** creatures who can see that they and their kin are one group among others, and from an impartial point of view no more important than others. Biological theories of the evolution of altruism through kin selection, reciprocity, and group selection can be made compatible with the existence of non-reciprocal altruism toward strangers if they can accept this kind of extension of the circle of altruism.

To be sure, this explanation of the broadening of the circle of altruism is not the only possible account. Earlier in this century Edward Westermarck noted the tendency of the circle of morality to expand, but he attributed it not to our capacity to reason, but to an expansion of the altruistic sentiments that he thought were the foundation of all morality. He pointed to **the increasing size of our community**—from the village to the nation, and now to the world as a whole—as a factor in the breakdown of narrower limits to our concerns and sympathies.

Should we accept the account I have offered rather than an account like Westermarck's? We do not have to choose one or the other; we can accept both explanations. The expansion of the community must have played a role in the expansion of altruism. Once one group starts to interact with another, perhaps hunting or gathering food together, or exchanging goods, the advantages of a reciprocal altruism begin to play a role between groups as well as within each group. So notions of gratitude, of fairness, and of not harming those who do not harm you may extend beyond the group. The plausibility of this account of the expansion of the circle of morality, however, is no ground for denying a role to reason. For it is independently plausible that reasoning should lead us to a more and more universal view of ethics. It is plausible—as I have already argued—

in view of the nature of reason and the way in which it logically extends itself beyond narrow bounds. It is also plausible in the light of what we know about the **development of ethical thought** in a wide variety of cultures.

The idea of an impartial standard for ethics has been expressed by the leading thinkers of the major ethical and religious traditions. In Judaism the rule is to love your neighbor as yourself; a rule which Jesus elevated to the status of one of the two great commandments. About the same time, Rabbi Hillel said: “What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor; that is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary thereof.” Jesus also put it another way: “As you would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.” When Confucius was asked for a single word which could serve as a rule of practice for all one’s life, he replied: “Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” In Indian thought we find the Mahabharata saying:

Let no man do to another that which would be repugnant to himself; this is the sum of righteousness; the rest is according to inclination. In refusing, in bestowing, in regard to pleasure and to pain, to what is agreeable and disagreeable, a man obtains the proper rule by regarding the case as like his own.

Among the Stoic philosophers of the Roman Empire, Marcus Aurelius argued that our common reason makes us all fellow citizens, and Seneca claimed that the wise man will esteem the community of all rational beings far above any particular community in which the accident of birth has placed him.

It hardly seems necessary to follow the progress of this idea into modern times, where it has become central to popular moral teaching as well as to the ethical writings of a wide range of contemporary philosophers. That the idea of treating others as one would like to be treated oneself should often be repeated is not surprising; what is surprising is the way in which the idea crops up independently in quite different ethical and cultural traditions and is, in each case, seized on as something fundamental to ethical living, a foundation from which all else can be derived. Or rather: this would be surprising if reason had no rule to play in ethics. If ethics were simply the product of our evolved tendencies to help our kin, those who help us, and perhaps our own small group, the fact that ethical teachers have, again and again, independently emphasized a higher and wider standard of conduct would be puzzling. (Note that the reciprocity these ethical thinkers advocate is not that which the “reciprocal altruism” of the sociobiologists would lead us to expect—it is not a recommendation that we do to others as they have done to us, but that we do to them what we would wish them to do to us. Nor is anything said about doing this only if they are likely to respond in kind.) Once reason is admitted to have a role to play in ethics, however, there is nothing at all surprising in the fact that, despite immense cultural differences, outstanding thinkers in different periods and places should extrapolate beyond more limited forms of altruism to what is essentially the same fundamental principle of an impartial ethic.

...few of us will dismiss the ethical point of view altogether. Yet our self-centered desires (including our desires for our kin and close friends) remain strong. The result is a tension between these desires and our ethical commitment... I have suggested that reason is not powerless. On the collective level, **once we have begun to justify our conduct publicly**, reason leads us to develop and expand our moral concerns, drawing us on toward an objective point of view.

from new *Preface to the 2011 Edition*:

...In conclusion, I will mention one apparently trivial way in which this book has dated, which could turn out to be much more significant than it appears. In chapter 4, as part of an incidental example, I mention the typewriter I was using to write the book. Three years later the typewriter was abandoned and I started writing on a computer. That made editing easier, saved paper, and avoided the need to use unhealthy-smelling correction fluid. But the digital revolution turned out to be much more far-reaching than that. Recording our thoughts digitally, rather than on paper, means that they can be sent electronically, and the availability of instant, virtually free communication all over the world is affecting every aspect of our lives, including our ethics. In another passage from chapter 4 I quote Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma*, a major study of attitudes about race and racism published in 1944. In Myrdal’s view, greater **social mobility**, more **intellectual communication**, and more **public discussion** were already then contributing to a change in the racist attitudes that had existed for so long in some parts of the United States. If more mobility and more communication were already making a difference in 1944, what should we expect from the vastly greater changes that are happening now, linking people all over the world, and opening up communities that hitherto had little access to ideas from outside? The experiment is under way, and there will be no stopping it. What it will do for the rate at which we make moral progress and expand the circle of those about whom we are concerned, remains to be seen.

The Selfish Gene (selfishness and reason) by Richard Dawkins

Whole shelves in libraries are devoted to the ramifications of this beguiling game. Many influential people think it holds the key to strategic defence planning, and that we should study it to prevent a third world war. As a biologist, I agree with Axelrod and Hamilton that many wild animals and plants are engaged in ceaseless games of **Prisoner's Dilemma**, played out in evolutionary time.

In its original, human, version, here is how the game is played. There is a 'banker', who adjudicates and pays out winnings to the two players. Suppose that I am playing against you (though, as we shall see, 'against' is precisely what we don't have to be). There are only two cards in each of our hands, labelled COOPERATE and DEFECT. To play, we each choose one of our cards and lay it face down on the table. Face down so that neither of us can be influenced by the other's move: in effect, we move simultaneously. We now wait in suspense for the banker to turn the cards over. The suspense is because our winnings depend not just on which card we have played (which we each know), but on the other player's card too (which we don't know until the banker reveals it). Since there are 2 x 2 cards, there are four possible outcomes. For each outcome, our winnings are as follows:

Outcome I: *We have both played cooperate.* The banker pays each of us \$300. This respectable sum is called the Reward for mutual cooperation.

Outcome II: *We have both played defect.* The banker fines each of us \$10. This is called the Punishment for mutual defection.

Outcome III: *You have played cooperate; I have played defect.* The banker pays me \$500 (the Temptation to defect) and fines you (the Sucker) \$100.

Outcome IV: *You have played defect; I have played cooperate.* The banker pays you the Temptation payoff of \$500 and fines me, the Sucker, \$100.

Outcomes III and IV are obviously mirror images: one player does very well and the other does very badly. In outcomes I and II we do as well as one another, but I is better for both of us than II. The exact quantities of money don't matter. What matters, for the game to qualify as a true Prisoner's Dilemma, is their rank order. The Temptation to defect must be better than the Reward for mutual cooperation, which must be better than the Punishment for mutual defection, which must be better than the Sucker's payoff. The four outcomes are summarized in the payoff matrix in *Figure A*.

| | | What you do | |
|-----------|-----------|--|---|
| | | Cooperate | Defect |
| What I do | Cooperate | Fairly good REWARD (for mutual cooperation) e.g. \$300 | Very bad SUCKER'S PAYOFF e.g. \$100 fine |
| | Defect | Very good TEMPTATION (to defect) e.g. \$500 | Fairly bad PUNISHMENT (for mutual defection) e.g. \$10 fine |

Figure A. Payoffs to me from various outcomes of the Prisoner's Dilemma game.

Now, why the 'dilemma'? To see this, look at the payoff matrix and imagine the thoughts that might go through my head as I play against you. I know that there are only two cards you can play, COOPERATE and DEFECT. Let's consider them in order. If you have played DEFECT (this means we have to look at the right hand column), the best card I could have played would have been DEFECT too. Admittedly I'd have suffered the penalty for mutual defection, but if I'd cooperated I'd have got the Sucker's payoff which is even worse.

Now let's turn to the other thing you could have done (look at the left hand column), play the COOPERATE card. Once again DEFECT is the best thing

I could have done. If I had cooperated we'd both have got the rather high score of \$300. But if I'd defected I'd have got even more—\$500. The conclusion is that, regardless of which card you play, my **best move is Always Defect**.

So I have worked out by impeccable logic that, regardless of what you do, I must defect. And you, with no less impeccable logic, will work out just the same thing. So when two rational players meet, they will both defect, and both will end up with a fine or a low payoff. Yet each knows perfectly well that, if only they had both played COOPERATE, both would have obtained the relatively high reward for mutual cooperation (\$300 in our example). That is why the game is called a dilemma, why it seems so maddeningly paradoxical, and why it has even been proposed that there ought to be a law against it...

Is there any way out of the dilemma? Both players know that, whatever their opponent does, they themselves cannot do better than DEFECT; yet both also know that, if only both had cooperated, each one would have done better. If only ... if only ... if only there could be some way of reaching agreement, some way of reassuring each player that the other can be trusted not to go for the selfish jackpot, some way of policing the agreement.

In the simple game of Prisoner's Dilemma, there is no way of ensuring trust. Unless at least one of the players is a really saintly sucker, too good for this world, the game is doomed to end in mutual defection with its paradoxically poor result for both players. **But, there is another version of the game**. It is called the 'Iterated' or 'Repeated' - Prisoner's Dilemma. The iterated game is more complicated, and in its complication lies hope.

The **iterated game** is simply the ordinary game repeated an indefinite number of times with the same players. Once again you and I face each other, with a banker sitting between. Once again we each have a hand of just two cards, labelled COOPERATE and DEFECT. Once again we move by each playing one or other of these cards and the banker shells out, or levies fines, according to the rules given above. But now, instead of that being the end of the game, we pick up our cards and prepare for another round. The successive rounds of the game give us the opportunity to build up trust or mistrust, to reciprocate or placate, forgive or avenge. In an indefinitely long game, the important point is that **we can both win** at the expense of the banker, rather than at the expense of one another...

Spectator sports like football are normally zero sum games [someone wins, someone loses] for a good reason. It is more exciting for crowds to watch players striving mightily against one another than to watch them conniving amicably. But real life, both human life and plant and animal life, is not set up for the benefit of spectators. Many situations in real life are, as a matter of fact, equivalent to nonzero sum games [everyone can win]. Nature often plays the role of 'banker', and individuals can therefore benefit from one another's success. They do not have to do down rivals in order to benefit themselves. Without departing from the fundamental laws of the selfish gene, we can see how **cooperation and mutual assistance can flourish** even in a basically selfish world. We can see how... nice guys may finish first.

Man's Search for Meaning (meaning)

by Viktor E. Frankl

The Will to Meaning

Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning. There are some authors who contend that meanings and values are "nothing but defense mechanisms, reaction formations and sublimations." But as for myself, I would not be willing to live merely for the sake of my "defense mechanisms," nor would I be ready to die merely for the sake of my "reaction formations." Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values!

A public-opinion poll was conducted a few years ago in France. The results showed that 89 percent of the people polled admitted that man needs "something" for the sake of which to live. Moreover, 61 percent conceded that there was something, or someone, in their own lives for whose sake they were even ready to die. I repeated this poll at my hospital department in Vienna among both the patients and the personnel, and the outcome was practically the same as among the thousands of people screened in France; the difference was only 2 percent.

Another statistical survey, of 7,948 students at forty-eight colleges, was conducted by social scientists from Johns Hopkins University. Their preliminary report is part of a two-year study sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health. Asked what they considered "very important" to them now, 16 percent of

the students checked “making a lot of money”; 78 percent said their first goal was “finding a purpose and meaning to my life.”

Of course, there may be some cases in which an individual’s concern with values is really a camouflage of hidden inner conflicts; but, if so, they represent the exceptions from the rule rather than the rule itself. In these cases we have actually to deal with pseudovalues, and as such they have to be unmasked. Unmasking, however, should stop as soon as one is confronted with what is authentic and genuine in man, e.g., man’s desire for a life that is as meaningful as possible. If it does not stop then, the only thing that the “unmasking psychologist” really unmasks is his own “hidden motive”— namely, his unconscious need to debase and depreciate what is genuine, what is genuinely human, in man...

Noö-Dynamics

To be sure, man’s search for meaning may arouse inner tension rather than inner equilibrium. However, precisely such tension is an indispensable prerequisite of mental health. There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one’s life. There is much wisdom in the words of Nietzsche: “He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.” I can see in these words a motto which holds true for any psychotherapy. In the Nazi concentration camps, one could have witnessed that those who knew that there was a task waiting for them to fulfill were most apt to survive. The same conclusion has since been reached by other authors of books on concentration camps, and also by psychiatric investigations into Japanese, North Korean and North Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camps.

As for myself, when I was taken to the concentration camp of Auschwitz, a manuscript of mine ready for publication was confiscated. Certainly, my deep desire to write this manuscript anew helped me to survive the rigors of the camps I was in. For instance, when in a camp in Bavaria I fell ill with typhus fever, I jotted down on little scraps of paper many notes intended to enable me to rewrite the manuscript, should I live to the day of liberation. I am sure that this reconstruction of my lost manuscript in the dark barracks of a Bavarian concentration camp assisted me in overcoming the danger of cardiovascular collapse.

Thus it can be seen that mental health is based on a certain degree of tension, the tension between what one has already achieved and what one still ought to accomplish, or the gap between what one is and what one should become. Such a tension is inherent in the human being and therefore is indispensable to mental well-being. We should not, then, be hesitant about challenging man with a potential meaning for him to fulfill. It is only thus that we evoke his will to meaning from its state of latency. I consider it a dangerous misconception of mental hygiene to assume that what man needs in the first place is equilibrium or, as it is called in biology, “homeostasis,” i.e., a tensionless state. What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost but

the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him. What man needs is not homeostasis but what I call “noö-dynamics,” i.e., the existential dynamics in a polar field of tension where one pole is represented by a meaning that is to be fulfilled and the other pole by the man who has to fulfill it. And one should not think that this holds true only for normal conditions; in neurotic individuals, it is even more valid. If architects want to strengthen a decrepit arch, they increase the load which is laid upon it, for thereby the parts are joined more firmly together. So if therapists wish to foster their patients’ mental health, they should not be afraid to create a sound amount of tension through a reorientation toward the meaning of one’s life.

Having shown the beneficial impact of meaning orientation, I turn to the detrimental influence of that feeling of which so many patients complain today, namely, the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives. They lack the awareness of a meaning worth living for. They are haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves; they are caught in that situation which I have called the “existential vacuum.”

The Existential Vacuum

The existential vacuum is a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century. This is understandable; it may be due to a twofold loss which man has had to undergo since he became a truly human being. At the beginning of human history, man lost some of the basic animal instincts in which an animal’s behavior is imbedded and by which it is secured. Such security, like Paradise, is closed to man forever; man has to make choices. In addition to this, however, man has suffered another loss in his more recent development inasmuch as the traditions which buttressed his behavior are now rapidly diminishing. No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead, he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism).

A statistical survey recently revealed that among my European students, 25 percent showed a more-or-less marked degree of existential vacuum. Among my American students it was not 25 but 60 percent.

The existential vacuum manifests itself mainly in a state of boredom. Now we can understand Schopenhauer when he said that mankind was apparently doomed to vacillate eternally between the two extremes of distress and boredom. In actual fact, boredom is now causing, and certainly bringing to psychiatrists, more problems to solve than distress...

Not a few cases of suicide can be traced back to this existential vacuum. Such widespread phenomena as depression, aggression and addiction are not understandable unless we recognize the existential vacuum underlying them. This is also true of the crises of pensioners and aging people.

Moreover, there are various masks and guises under which the existential vacuum appears. Sometimes the frustrated will to meaning is vicariously

compensated for by a will to power, including the most primitive form of the will to power, the will to money. In other cases, the place of frustrated will to meaning is taken by the will to pleasure. That is why existential frustration often eventuates in sexual compensation. We can observe in such cases that the sexual libido becomes rampant in the existential vacuum...

Let us now consider what we can do if a patient asks what the meaning of his life is.

The Meaning of Life

I doubt whether a doctor can answer this question in general terms. For the meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour. What matters, therefore, is not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person's life at a given moment. To put the question in general terms would be comparable to the question posed to a chess champion: "Tell me, Master, what is the best move in the world?" There simply is no such thing as the best or even a good move apart from a particular situation in a game and the particular personality of one's opponent. The same holds for human existence. One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it.

As each situation in life represents a challenge to man and presents a problem for him to solve, the question of the meaning of life may actually be reversed. Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being **responsible**. Thus, logotherapy sees in responsibility the very essence of human existence.

The Essence of Existence

...By declaring that man is responsible and must actualize the potential meaning of his life, I wish to stress that the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system. I have termed this constitutive characteristic "the self-transcendence of human existence." It denotes the fact that being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself—be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. What is called self-actualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of **self-transcendence**.

Thus far we have shown that the meaning of life always changes, but that

it never ceases to be. According to logotherapy, we can discover this meaning in life in three different ways: (1) **by creating a work or doing a deed**; (2) **by experiencing something or encountering someone**; and (3) **by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering**. The first, the way of achievement or accomplishment, is quite obvious. The second and third need further elaboration.

The second way of finding a meaning in life is by experiencing something—such as goodness, truth and beauty—by experiencing nature and culture or, last but not least, by experiencing another human being in his very uniqueness—by loving him.

The Meaning of Love

Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. Furthermore, by his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualize these potentialities. By making him aware of what he can be and of what he should become, he makes these potentialities come true.

In logotherapy, love is not interpreted as a mere epiphenomenon of sexual drives and instincts in the sense of a so-called sublimation. Love is as primary a phenomenon as sex. Normally, sex is a mode of expression for love. Sex is justified, even sanctified, as soon as, but only as long as, it is a vehicle of love. Thus love is not understood as a mere side-effect of sex; rather, sex is a way of expressing the experience of that ultimate togetherness which is called love.

The third way of finding a meaning in life is by suffering.

The Meaning of Suffering

We must never forget that we may also find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed. For what then matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a personal tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into a human achievement. When we are no longer able to change a situation—just think of an incurable disease such as inoperable cancer—we are challenged to change ourselves.

Let me cite a clear-cut example: Once, an elderly general practitioner consulted me because of his severe depression. He could not overcome the loss of his wife who had died two years before and whom he had loved above all else. Now, how could I help him? What should I tell him? Well, I refrained from telling him anything but instead confronted him with the question, "What would have happened, Doctor, if you had died first, and your wife would have had to survive you?" "Oh," he said, "for her this would have been terrible; how she would have suffered!" Whereupon I replied, "You see, Doctor, such a suffering has been spared

her, and it was you who have spared her this suffering—to be sure, at the price that now you have to survive and mourn her.” He said no word but shook my hand and calmly left my office. In some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice.

Of course, this was no therapy in the proper sense since, first, his despair was no disease; and second, I could not change his fate; I could not revive his wife. But in that moment I did succeed in changing his attitude toward his unalterable fate inasmuch as from that time on he could at least see a meaning in his suffering. It is one of the basic tenets of logotherapy that man’s main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life. That is why man is even ready to suffer, on the condition, to be sure, that his suffering has a meaning.

But let me make it perfectly clear that in no way is suffering necessary to find meaning. I only insist that meaning is possible even in spite of suffering—provided, certainly, that the suffering is unavoidable. If it were avoidable, however, the meaningful thing to do would be to remove its cause, be it psychological, biological or political. To suffer unnecessarily is masochistic rather than heroic.

Edith Weisskopf-Joelson, before her death professor of psychology at the University of Georgia, contended, in her article on logotherapy, that “our current mental-hygiene philosophy stresses the idea that people ought to be happy, that unhappiness is a symptom of maladjustment. Such a value system might be responsible for the fact that the burden of unavoidable unhappiness is increased by unhappiness about being unhappy.” And in another paper she expressed the hope that logotherapy “may help counteract certain unhealthy trends in the present-day culture of the United States, where the incurable sufferer is given very little opportunity to be proud of his suffering and to consider it ennobling rather than degrading” so that “he is not only unhappy, but also ashamed of being unhappy.”

...An active life serves the purpose of giving man the opportunity to realize values in creative work, while a passive life of enjoyment affords him the opportunity to obtain fulfillment in experiencing beauty, art, or nature. But there is also purpose in that life which is almost barren of both creation and enjoyment and which admits of but one possibility of high moral behavior: namely, in man’s attitude to his existence, an existence restricted by external forces. A creative life and a life of enjoyment are banned to him. But not only creativeness and enjoyment are meaningful. If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete.

The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of or to forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not.

Do not think that these considerations are unworldly and too far removed from real life. It is true that only a few people are capable of reaching such high moral standards. Of the prisoners only a few kept their full inner liberty and obtained those values which their suffering afforded, but even one such example is sufficient proof that man’s inner strength may raise him above his outward fate. Such men are not only in concentration camps. *Everywhere man is confronted with fate, with the chance of achieving something through his own suffering.*

Take the fate of the sick—especially those who are incurable. I once read a letter written by a young invalid, in which he told a friend that he had just found out he would not live for long, that even an operation would be of no help. He wrote further that he remembered a film he had seen in which a man was portrayed who waited for death in a courageous and dignified way. The boy had thought it a great accomplishment to meet death so well. Now—he wrote—fate was offering him a similar chance.

Those of us who saw the film called *Resurrection*—taken from a book by Tolstoy—years ago, may have had similar thoughts. Here were great destinies and great men. For us, at that time, there was no great fate; there was no chance to achieve such greatness. After the picture we went to the nearest cafe, and over a cup of coffee and a sandwich we forgot the strange metaphysical thoughts which for one moment had crossed our minds. But when we ourselves were confronted with a great destiny and faced with the decision of meeting it with equal spiritual greatness, by then we had forgotten our youthful resolutions of long ago, and we failed.

Perhaps there came a day for some of us when we saw the same film again, or a similar one. But by then other pictures may have simultaneously unrolled before one’s inner eye; pictures of people who attained much more in their lives than a sentimental film could show. Some details of a particular man’s inner greatness may have come to one’s mind, like the story of the young woman whose death I witnessed in a concentration camp. It is a simple story. There is little to tell and it may sound as if I had invented it; but to me it seems like a poem.

This young woman knew that she would die in the next few days. But when I talked to her she was cheerful in spite of this knowledge. “I am grateful that fate has hit me so hard,” she told me. “In my former life I was spoiled and did not take spiritual accomplishments seriously.” Pointing through the window of the hut, she said, “This tree here is the only friend I have in my loneliness.” Through that window she could see just one branch of a chestnut tree, and on the branch were two blossoms. “I often talk to this tree,” she said to me. I was startled and didn’t quite know how to take her words. Was she delirious? Did she have occasional hallucinations? Anxiously I asked her if the tree replied. “Yes.” What did it say to her? She answered, “It said to me, ‘I am here—I am here—I am life, eternal life.’”

The Drum Major Instinct (recognition)

by Martin Luther King Jr.

This morning I would like to use as a subject from which to preach “The Drum Major Instinct.” And our text for the morning is taken from a very familiar passage in the tenth chapter as recorded by Saint Mark; beginning with the thirty-fifth verse of that chapter, we read these words: *“And James and John the sons of Zebedee came unto him saying, ‘Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire.’ And he said unto them, ‘What would ye that I should do for you?’ And they said unto him, ‘Grant unto us that we may sit one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand in thy glory.’ But Jesus said unto them, ‘Ye know not what ye ask. Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ And they said unto him, ‘We can.’ And Jesus said unto them, ‘Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized with all shall ye be baptized. But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.”*

And then, Jesus goes on toward the end of that passage to say, *“But so shall it not be among you, but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.”*

The setting is clear. James and John are making a specific request of the master. They had dreamed, as most Hebrews dreamed, of a coming king of Israel who would set Jerusalem free. And establish his kingdom on Mount Zion, and in righteousness rule the world. And they thought of Jesus as this kind of king, and they were thinking of that day when Jesus would reign supreme as this new king of Israel. And they were saying now, *“when you establish your kingdom, let one of us sit on the right hand, and the other on the left hand of your throne.”*

Now very quickly, we would automatically condemn James and John, and we would say they were selfish. Why would they make such a selfish request? But before we condemn them too quickly, let us look calmly and honestly at ourselves, and we will discover that we too have those same basic desires for recognition, for importance, that same desire for attention, that same desire to be first. Of course the other disciples got mad with James and John, and you could understand why, but we must understand that we have some of the same James and John qualities. And there is, deep down within all of us, an instinct. It's a kind of **drum major instinct**—a desire to be out front, a desire to lead the parade, a desire to be first. And it is something that runs a whole gamut of life.

And so before we condemn them, let us see that we all have the drum major instinct. We all want to be important, to surpass others, to achieve distinction, to lead the parade. Alfred Adler, the great psychoanalyst, contends that this is the dominant impulse. Sigmund Freud used to contend that sex was the dominant impulse, and Adler came with a new argument saying that this quest for recognition, this desire for attention, this desire for distinction is the basic impulse, the basic drive of human life—this drum major instinct.

And... we begin early to ask life to put us first. Our first cry as a **baby** was a bid for attention. And all through childhood the drum major impulse or instinct is a major obsession. **Children** ask life to grant them first place. They are a little bundle of ego. And they have innately the drum major impulse, or the drum major instinct.

Now in **adult life**, we still have it, and we really never get by it. We like to do something good. And you know, we like to be praised for it. Now if you don't believe that, you just go on living life, and you will discover very soon that you like to be praised. Everybody likes it, as a matter of fact. And somehow this warm glow we feel when we are praised, or when our name is in print, is something of the vitamin A to our ego. Nobody is unhappy when they are praised, even if they know they don't deserve it, and even if they don't believe it. The only unhappy people about praise is when that praise is going too much toward somebody else. But everybody likes to be praised, because of this real drum major instinct.

Now the presence of the drum major instinct is why so **many people are joiners**. You know there are some people who just join everything. And it's really a quest for attention, and recognition, and importance. And they get names that give them that impression. So you get your groups, and they become the grand patron, and the little fellow who is henpecked at home needs a chance to be the most worthy of the most worthy of something. It is the drum major impulse and longing that runs the gamut of human life. And so we see it everywhere, this quest for recognition. And we join things, over-join really, that we think that we will find that recognition in.

Now the presence of this instinct explains why we are so often **taken by advertisers**. You know those gentlemen of massive verbal persuasion. And they have a way of saying things to you that kind of gets you into buying. In order to be a man of distinction, you must drink this whiskey. In order to make your neighbors envious, you must drive this type of car. In order to be lovely to love you

must wear this kind of lipstick or this kind of perfume. And you know, before you know it you're just buying that stuff. That's the way the advertisers do it.

I got a letter the other day. It was a new magazine coming out. And it opened up, "Dear Dr. King, As you know, you are on many mailing lists. And you are categorized as highly intelligent, progressive, a lover of the arts, and the sciences, and I know you will want to read what I have to say." Of course I did. After you said all of that and explained me so exactly, of course I wanted to read it.

But very seriously, it goes through life, the drum major instinct is real. And you know what else it causes to happen? It often causes us to **live above our means**. It's nothing but the drum major instinct. Do you ever see people buy cars that they can't even begin to buy in terms of their income? You've seen people riding around in Cadillacs and Chryslers who don't earn enough to have a good Model-T Ford. But it feeds a repressed ego...

There comes a time that the drum major instinct can become destructive. And that's where I want to move now. I want to move to the point of saying that if this instinct is not harnessed, it becomes a very dangerous, pernicious instinct. For instance, if it isn't harnessed, it causes one's personality to become distorted. I guess that's the most damaging aspect of it—what it does to the personality. If it isn't harnessed, you will end up day in and day out trying to deal with your ego problem by **boasting**.

Have you ever heard people that—you know, and I'm sure you've met them—that really become sickening because they just sit up all the time talking about themselves. And they just boast, and boast, and boast, and that's the person who has not harnessed the drum major instinct.

And then it does other things to the personality. It causes you to **lie about who you know** sometimes. There are some people who are influence peddlers. And in their attempt to deal with the drum major instinct, they have to try to identify with the so-called big name people. And if you're not careful, they will make you think they know somebody that they don't really know. They know them well, they sip tea with them. And they... this and that. That... that happens to people.

And the other thing is that it causes one to engage ultimately in activities that are merely used to get attention. Criminologists tell us that some people are **driven to crime** because of this drum major instinct. They don't feel that they are getting enough attention through the normal channels of social behavior, and others turn to anti-social behavior in order to get attention, in order to feel important. And so they get that gun. And before they know it they rob the bank in a quest for recognition, in a quest for importance.

And then the final great tragedy of the distorted personality is the fact that when one fails to harness this instinct, he ends by trying to **push others down in order to push himself up**. And whenever you do that, you engage in some of the most vicious activities. You will spread evil, vicious, lying gossip on people, because you are trying to pull them down in order to push yourself up.

And the great issue of life is to harness the drum major instinct.

Now the other problem is when you don't harness the drum major instinct, this uncontrolled aspect of it, is that it leads to snobbish exclusivism...

The drum major instinct can lead to **exclusivism** in one's thinking, and can lead one to feel that because he has some training, he's a little better than that person that doesn't have it, or because he has some economic security, that he's a little better than the person who doesn't have it. And that's the uncontrolled, perverted use of the drum major instinct.

Now the other thing is that it leads to tragic—and we've seen it happen so often—**tragic race prejudice**. Many have written about this problem—Lillian Smith used to say it beautifully in some of her books. And she would say it to the point of getting men and women to see the source of the problem. Do you know that a lot of the race problem grows out of the drum major instinct? A need that some people have to feel superior. A need that some people have to feel that they are first, and to feel that their white skin ordained them to be first. And they have said it over and over again in ways that we see with our own eyes. In fact, not too long ago, a man down in Mississippi said that God was a charter member of the White Citizens Council. And so God being the charter member means that everybody who's in that has a kind of divinity, a kind of superiority.

And think of what has happened in history as a result of this perverted use of the drum major instinct. It has led to the most tragic prejudice, the most tragic expressions of man's inhumanity to man.

I always try to do a little converting when I'm in jail. And when we were in jail in Birmingham the other day, the white wardens all enjoyed coming around to the cell to talk about the race problem. And they were showing us where we were so wrong demonstrating. And they were showing us where segregation was so right. And they were showing us where intermarriage was so wrong. So I would get to preaching, and we would get to talking—calmly, because they wanted to talk about it. And then we got down one day to the point—that was the second or third day—to talk about where they lived, and how much they were earning. And when those brothers told me what they were earning, I said, now "You know what? You ought to be marching with us. You're just as poor as Negroes." And I said, "You are put in the position of supporting your oppressor. Because through prejudice and blindness, you fail to see that the same forces that oppress Negroes in American society oppress poor white people. And all you are living on is the satisfaction of your skin being white, and the drum major instinct of thinking that you are somebody big because you are white. And you're so poor you can't send your children to school. You ought to be out here marching with every one of us every time we have a march."

Now that's a fact. That the poor white has been put into this position—where through blindness and prejudice, he is forced to support his oppressors, and the only thing he has going for him is the false feeling that he is superior because his skin is white. And can't hardly eat and make his ends meet week in and week out.

And not only does this thing go into the racial struggle, it goes into the **struggle between nations**. And I would submit to you this morning that what is wrong in the world today is that the nations of the world are engaged in a bitter, colossal contest for supremacy. And if something doesn't happen to stop this trend I'm sorely afraid that we won't be here to talk about Jesus Christ and about God and

about brotherhood too many more years. If somebody doesn't bring an end to this suicidal thrust that we see in the world today, none of us are going to be around, because somebody's going to make the mistake through our senseless blundering of dropping a nuclear bomb somewhere, and then another one is going to drop. And don't let anybody fool you, this can happen within a matter of seconds. They have twenty-megaton bombs in Russia right now that can destroy a city as big as New York in three seconds with everybody wiped away, and every building. And we can do the same thing to Russia and China.

But this is where we are drifting, and we are drifting there, because nations are caught up with the drum major instinct. I must be first. I must be supreme. Our nation must rule the world. And I am sad to say that the nation in which we live is the supreme culprit. And I'm going to continue to say it to America, because I love this country too much to see the drift that it has taken.

God didn't call America to do what she's doing in the world now. God didn't call America to engage in a senseless, unjust war, as the war in Vietnam. And we are criminals in that war. We have committed more war crimes almost than any nation in the world, and I'm going to continue to say it. And we won't stop it because of our pride, and our arrogance as a nation.

But God has a way of even putting nations in their place. The God that I worship has a way of saying, *"Don't play with me."* He has a way of saying, as the God of the Old Testament used to say to the Hebrews, *"Don't play with me, Israel. Don't play with me, Babylon. Be still and know that I'm God. And if you don't stop your reckless course, I'll rise up and break the backbone of your power."* And that can happen to America. Every now and then I go back and read Gibbons' *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. And when I come and look at America, I say to myself, the parallels are frightening.

And we have perverted the drum major instinct. But let me rush on to my conclusion, because I want you to see what Jesus was really saying. What was the answer that Jesus gave these men? It's very interesting. One would have thought that Jesus would have said, *"You are out of your place. You are selfish. Why would you raise such a question?"*

But that isn't what Jesus did. He did something altogether different. He said in substance, *"Oh, I see, you want to be first. You want to be great. You want to be important. You want to be significant. Well you ought to be. If you're going to be my disciple, you must be."* But he reordered priorities. And he said, *"Yes, don't give up this instinct. It's a good instinct if you use it right. It's a good instinct if you don't distort it and pervert it. Don't give it up. Keep feeling the need for being important. Keep feeling the need for being first. But I want you to be first in love. I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity. That is what I want you to do."*

And he transformed the situation by giving a new definition of greatness. And you know how he said it? He said now, *"Brethren, I can't give you greatness. And really, I can't make you first."* This is what Jesus said to James and John. *"You must earn it. True greatness comes not by favoritism, but by fitness. And the right hand and the left are not mine to give, they belong to those who are prepared."*

And so Jesus gave us a new norm of greatness. If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that *he who is greatest among you shall be your servant*. That's your new definition of greatness. And this morning, the thing that I like about it... by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great. Because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love. And you can be that servant.

I know a man, and I just want to talk about him a minute, and maybe you will discover who I'm talking about as I go down the way, because he was a great one. And he just went about serving. He was born in an obscure village, the child of a poor peasant woman. And then he grew up in still another obscure village, where he worked as a carpenter until he was thirty years old. Then for three years, he just got on his feet, and he was an itinerant preacher. And then he went about doing some things. He didn't have much. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never owned a house. He never went to college. He never visited a big city. He never went two hundred miles from where he was born. He did none of the usual things that the world would associate with greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. They called him a rabble-rouser. They called him a troublemaker. They said he was an agitator. He practiced civil disobedience; he broke injunctions. And so he was turned over to his enemies, and went through the mockery of a trial. And the irony of it all is that his friends turned him over to them. One of his closest friends denied him. Another of his friends turned him over to his enemies. And while he was dying, the people who killed him gambled for his clothing, the only possession that he had in the world. When he was dead, he was buried in a borrowed tomb, through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today, he stands as *the most influential figure that ever entered human history*. All of the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary life. His name may be a familiar one. But today I can hear them talking about him. Every now and then somebody says, *"He's king of kings."* And again I can hear somebody saying, *"He's lord of lords."* Somewhere else I can hear somebody saying, *"In Christ there is no east nor west."* And they go on and talk about... *"In him there's no north and south, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide world."* He didn't have anything. He just went around serving, and doing good.

This morning, you can be on his right hand and his left hand if you serve. It's the only way in.

Every now and then I guess we all think realistically about that day

when we will be victimized with what is life's final common denominator—that something we call death. We all think about it. And every now and then I think about my own death, and I think about my own funeral. And I don't think of it in a morbid sense. Every now and then I ask myself, "What is it that I would want said?" And I leave the word to you this morning.

If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. Every now and then I wonder what I want them to say. Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize, that isn't important. Tell them not to mention that I have three or four hundred other awards, that's not important. Tell him not to mention where I went to school.

I'd like somebody to mention that day, that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say that day, that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody. I want you to say that day, that I tried to be right on the war question. I want you to be able to say that day, that I did try to feed the hungry. And I want you to be able to say that day, that I did try, in my life, to clothe those who were naked. I want you to say, on that day, that I did try, in my life, to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity.

Yes, if you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice; say that I was a drum major for peace; I was a drum major for righteousness. And all of the other shallow things will not matter. I won't have any money to leave behind. I won't have the fine and luxurious things of life to leave behind. But I just want to leave a committed life behind.

And that's all I want to say... if I can help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, if I can show somebody he's traveling wrong, then my living will not be in vain. If I can do my duty as a Christian ought, if I can bring salvation to a world once wrought, if I can spread the message as the master taught, then my living will not be in vain.

Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right side or your left side, not for any selfish reason. I want to be on your right or your best side, not in terms of some political kingdom or ambition, but I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in commitment to others, so that we can make of this old world a new world.



change the world (for 1 person)

Some say they want to change the world. Would a permanent utopia need to be reached for this to be accomplished? Really, each of us has her own world. The world exists entirely within my own mind. And for you, entirely within your own mind. It is easy for anyone to change the entire world from hell to heaven... if only "just" for a single person, "just" for the present moment.