ANTHOLOGY: A Collection of Essays

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ANTHOLOGY
A Collection of Essays

by

Kathleen McGowan
Honors Senior Project
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THE APATHY CLUB
Last month, my roommate asked me if I wanted to join a new club she was forming. When I responded, "I really don't care," I was instantly initiated as Vice President and quickly put to work. My assignment was recruitment. Aimlessly I wandered around the Utah State University campus randomly seeking out students to join the club. I asked them questions about their interests and aspirations. If they had any, they couldn't join. I asked them questions such as, "would you come to meetings?" and anyone who responded, "yes," was instantly rejected for caring too much. Within one week, I had recruited 714 uncaring students into the "Apathy Club." I was promoted at once to Divine Leader, but you know, I really didn't care. To apathetic people, nothing really matters. The club's motto is, "It just doesn't matter, it just doesn't matter."

Within three weeks, the club had recruited over half of the campus population. Our efforts were very successful, but nobody cared. No meetings were ever held because nobody cared enough to come. Recruitment stopped, but nobody cared. Posters were put up around campus inviting people to join, but nobody bothered. With over half of the campus population in the club, who cares whether or not anyone else joins? Apathy. It just doesn't matter. Apathy. Apathy runs rampant. It is an epidemic sweeping not only the Utah State University, but the nation and perhaps the entire world as well. Nobody cares enough to be involved in anything anymore. Each year fewer and fewer people vote and even less are bothering to register. Few people truly care about politics or social rights.
or nuclear weapons. Very few care enough to make their voice heard. People are content to sit back in their living room watching *Dallas*. It is easier to allow the world to go on as it is then to get involved in efforts to make life better for everyone. People hear screams and cries for help from the apartment downstairs, but don't care enough to call the police because they don't want to get involved. People witness murders, rapes, and robberies, and say nothing because they don't care. Businesses pollute the air and dump wastes into streams because they don't care what effects it may have. Students drop out of school because they don't care if they become educated. Employees steal from their employers because they don't care if it raises the price of a product which they can steal, rather than buy. Apathy.

People don't care enough to care, just for the sake of caring. Caring has vested interests. People care when a pay cut affects them or when a tax hike moves them into a higher tax bracket. They care when it is their daughter who is raped or murdered. They care when toxic wastes are found on their property. They care when they lose their job and cannot collect unemployment compensation. People care when they are directly affected. When something happens to them, they care. When something happens to someone else, they couldn't care less. Caring has lost any intrinsic values it may have possessed. Caring exists when it is self-beneficial.

Apathy is an epidemic. It may be worse than herpes or aids or even the plague itself. Do you think herpes and aids would be epidemics if people really cared? Apathy is an epidemic affecting more people than any epidemic before. It is harsh and cruel, and affects
people of all ages and social classes. It is characterized by listlessness, lack of sensitivity, lack of interest, lack of involvement, and loneliness.

The apathy epidemic sweeping our nation and our world is destroying the foundations of benevolence. Apathy continues to draw people apart. It is time for people to get out of their living rooms, quit watching Lallas, and start watching the world around them. It is time to call the police when screams are heard, to vote, to try to control pollution, to finish school, and to change our world. It is time to care. More and more people are joining the "Apathy Club" every day and no one cares. There is apathy everywhere, but who cares? I don't know whether or not you have gotten my point, and I really don't care because, it just doesn't matter.
DOES NATURE HAVE RIGHTS
In Genesis, God commanded mankind to "Go forth, multiply replenish the earth and subdue it." The Biblical mandate to subdue the earth is deeply socialized into Western man's culture. It provides justification for our values and ethics concerning nature and the environment. We have commonly used this dictum in combination with our inherited Greek tradition of private property and dominance over nature, as the basis for our beliefs in the conquest of man over nature.

Most Westerners tend to believe the earth is here solely for the use of mankind. The value of nature has been to provide for man's needs, and therefore, we have perceived nature to be void of intrinsic values. We have seen the earth primarily from our utilitarian viewpoint without considering the value of nature in and of itself. Consequently we believe mankind is free to use the earth as he desires.

His desires have been to conquer the forces of nature and to use the resources of the earth however he wants. To these ends we have dammed the mighty rivers and harnessed their power. We have stripped the earth's surface of its minerals to produce jewelry and building of steel. We cut the forests and left the soil bare to wash away. We used the air, water, and soil as a depository for our wastes. We cultivated the rolling prairies and farmland with concrete. And God told us to do so in the name of subduing the earth. Or did He? When He commanded us to subdue the earth did He give us the right to do anything we
wanted to the earth or did He intend us, or perhaps expect us, to treat the earth with respect and stewardship? Unfortunately, we cannot ask God what He intended so we must determine for ourselves what subdue means. We must decide for ourselves whether or not nature has laws and rights we should respect. Then we can decide about the meaning of the phrase "subdue the earth."

The matter of intrinsic values of nature is extremely complex and clouded with controversy. Does nature, the earth itself, have value? More precisely, outside of providing for man's needs does the earth have any values in its own right? From our utilitarian, anthropocentric viewpoint it is hard to conceive that the earth has any intrinsic value. Without man, of what good or value is the earth?

If we look deeply, openly at the earth without consideration of ourselves, then we see that the earth does have intrinsic values. It has value in providing habitat for wildlife, and in growing magnificent trees to hold the soil and be a home for birds and other wildlife. The earth has value in producing majestic mountains, rolling hills, and clear, free-flowing streams stretching towards the sea. If nothing else, the earth has value in that it keeps the moon from floating off into the abyss of space. It has value in its beauty and its power. It has value whether man ever experiences its beauty and power or not. It has value in simply existing.

If we assume that by its very existence the earth does have intrinsic value, then we must decide if these values dictate rights for the earth. In the past values have been transformed
Western men value things such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Because of values we assign certain rights to make sure these values are respected. We have rights to free speech, due process, and equal treatment. Values become rights.

It has been our tradition to assign rights to things we value. Therefore, if the earth has intrinsic values should it have intrinsic laws or rights? Nature seems to have answered this question herself. She has relentlessly shown her rights. The laws of nature have prevailed despite our efforts to subdue the earth. She has destroyed dams and exhibited her right to flow unrestrained. She has pounded seemingly weak sprouts through inches of concrete. She has rained acid back to those who have given it to her. She has made her laws her own rights. But, do we owe her rights also? Due to the intrinsic values of the earth surely we owe her the right to be treated with respect. The trees and the birds, the grasses and the weeds, the air and the water, have the right to be free from man's domination and over-exploitation. They should have the right to exist for themselves not just for our use. They deserve the right to be respected. If we truly value the earth, then we owe her these rights.

Because the earth has intrinsic values and rights, we need to reinterpret and reexamine the mandate to "subdue the earth." Perhaps God did not mean for us to conquer the earth, but rather, to use the resources of the earth with respect for them, with love and care. Perhaps we are to be the stewards, not the subduers, of the earth. Whatever happened to the importance of the
command to "replenish the earth"? We have been so busy subduing the earth we forgot we were to replenish it also. But, the time has come to replenish the earth before it is too late to do so. In the long run, if we continue to subdue and conquer the earth without respect for nature, without some form of stewardship, we will find ourselves being subdued by floods, acid rain, toxic wastes, fire and famine. The earth and the forces of nature will never be completely subdued by mankind. They were part of the universe long before man arrived on earth. When we are gone, the flowers will still force their way through the concrete.
HUMAN NATURE
The sun burns brightly on the backs of two neighbor boys playing in a backyard sandbox. They are building a sand castle with buckets and shovels in hand. One boy grabs for the others shovel. They are tugging and yelling, each wants the same shovel. One mother asks, "They are fighting, should we go break them up?" The other mother quietly replies, "No don't worry, it's only human nature." One of the boys lets go of the shovel. The other boy now has both. They finish the sand castle.

In the most basic analysis of human nature, two theories can be easily distinguished. These theories have been classified as egoism and altruism. Egoism is the doctrine that self-interest and preservation is the proper goal of all human action. In contrast, altruism is the doctrine that the general welfare of society is the proper goal of individual's actions. In essence, these two theories provide the basis for understanding human behaviors.

The theory of egoism holds that every individual is fundamentally selfish, and therefore, is guided by self-interest. Man's real goal in life is to look after himself without consideration of secondary impacts his actions may have upon others. Egoism tends to make men competitive and ruthless. Niccolo Machiavelli supports this theory by stating, "It may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful and covetous of gain." Herbert Spencer takes this statement one step further by claiming that egotistical behavior is in fact, proper. He states, "Among
men the fittest survive, indeed, they are the only ones entitled to survive." He suggests that if an individual does not take care of his own self-interest and preservation, then he is not "entitled" to live. Robert Ardrey, another supporter of egoism, believes for men to preserve their own interests, and to survive they have "the instinct to kill." Killing, even killing fellow humans, becomes a justifiable means of self-preservation.

Underlying the rationale of egoism is the assumption that men are basically evil and bad. According to Sigmund Freud, "The primitive, savage, and evil impulses of mankind have not vanished in any individual." Freud believed because man is fundamentally evil, his nature, and subsequent behavior, tend to be egotistical. All of these people believe that human nature is guided by self-interest and preservation. These ends are the proper and essential mode of behavior. They believe it is man's human nature to be egotistical, and therefore, his behaviors will be directed towards self-interests.

In contrast to egoism, the altruistic theory believes it is man's human nature to care about the general welfare of all men. The altruistic theory believes men are basically good, non-selfish, and concerned with the public interests rather than his own interests. Men are willing to make sacrifices and cooperate for the good of everyone. John Locke feels, "that reason itself established cooperation, and therefore, it is rational for men to be altruistic." Cicero also supported the altruistic theory of human nature. He believed men survive "on the assumption of mutual advantage, they come together in obedience"
to form a "commonwealth for the benefit of all." Furthermore, "man by nature believes in goodness and well doing." Ashley Montagu supports Cicero's statement, "All of man's natural inclinations are toward the development of goodness." Through altruism men are driven towards cooperation and mutual interests.

These theories present two distinct and conflicting views of human nature. They are similar because they both focus on behaviors and motivations. They both believe that they are the proper direction for mankind. However, they are inherently in contrast with each other. In effect, they are complete opposites. Egoism deals with self-interest, self-preservation, competition, and the evil instincts of mankind. On the other hand, altruism deals with the public interests, the preservation of mankind as a whole, cooperation, and the goodness of mankind.

These basic assumptions about human nature affect our behavior in many ways. People who believe in egoism tend to be selfish. For example, we would commonly think of a big executive as egotistical, and therefore, his behavior would tend to be selfish. He might do anything to make a quick buck for the company. He would tend to be competitive, ruthless, and self-interested. Football coaches could also be considered to behave under the confines of egoism. They push and drive their players to perform and to win. Some coaches might even instruct their players to hurt a key member of the other team so his team could win. They might make shady deals for good players or to keep a player on the team. Because some people tend to be egotistical, their behaviors tend to be selfish.
On the other hand, police officers are thought of as being altruistic. Their behavior is for the good of others. They put themselves in situations of danger for the sake of others. They may even go so far as to kill a person who is threatening someone else's life. They help people for the sake of the common good, not their own self-interests. Their actions to prevent crime benefit society as a whole. Boy Scout leaders also fit into the altruistic category. Their behavior is designed to benefit the young boys and indirectly to benefit all of society by helping the boys to develop into good individuals. They give their time and effort to help the boys. Their interests and subsequent actions are directed towards helping the boys and society, rather than themselves.

Although these generalizations relating behaviors and motivations cannot be applied to people across the board, they do serve as an indication of why people act as they do. Furthermore, some people's actions may seem to be egotistical at times and altruistic at other times. However, there can be no denying the connections between underlying motivations and behaviors. These two theories of human nature help us understand the connections between the basic human motivation and behavior. The theories of egoism and altruism provide a comprehensive study of the basic motivations of mankind. One believes in self-interest while the other favors public interests. Our actions are guided by the type of human nature which has the strongest hold over our personality.
WEAKNESS OF THE WILL
How many times have we wanted to do something, but did not have the willpower to do it? Weakness of the will is of concern because often people fail to do something even though they want to and know how to. One way of viewing the issue of weakness of the will has been to deny the existence of weakness of the will on the basis of rationality. According to theories of rationality, people are rational and will only act with reason. A rational person would always perform an action which he thought, all things considered, to be the best among all possible alternatives. On the basis of theories of rationality, the existence of weakness of the will is rejected because people will rationally do what they want to do according to what they judge to be the best thing to do.

Another way of viewing weakness of the will has been offered by Christian religions which see weakness of the will as a conflict between the forces of human nature. One force must have greater strength than the other, and subsequently the individual may fall prey to weakness of the will due to the relative power of the conflicting forces within himself. Examination of these two philosophies of weakness of the will reveals that neither explanation is adequate enough to explain why a person wants to do something, but does not do it.

Theories of rationality are congruent with a weak and somewhat tangible form of internalism which suggest that people want to do something, know how to, and therefore, are provided with reasons to act. Rationalists assert that people want to do what they judge to
be best, they know how to, and therefore, the reason people act is because they do what they freely want to do. Based on this principle of rationality people would always perform the action they judged best on the basis of all available, relevant reasons, and would not be subject to weakness of the will.

To illustrate this concept let's consider a situation in which the problem is not necessarily a moral problem of right or wrong, nor a problem if conflicting elements of mankind such as good versus evil, but a problem of rational choice. For example, consider the situation faced by millions of cigarette smokers everyday. For every smoker there are always at least two alternatives everytime they think of having a cigarette. One choice is to smoke and the other is not to smoke. Smokers are faced with a variety of reasons both for and against smoking. A smoker may believe he should do what he finds enjoyable and may also believe he should not harm his body. These two principles would lead the individual to believe that he should smoke if he finds it enjoyable, and that he should not smoke if it is harmful to his body. Believing that one should smoke and that one should not smoke appears to be logically contradictory.

In this case it appears that the individual may be face with a situation in which rationality offers two answers to the same question. According to rationalist theories the individual must apply rationality to the situation so that he will perform the action judged to be best on the basis of all available, relevant evidence. In this context, a person's beliefs in smoking and not smoking are not viewed as contradictory beliefs but rather, they
are seen as reasons, with varying strengths, for different alternatives. This suggests that judgments based on principles of rationality consider all the relevant reasons according to their strength. All things considered, one rational person may find it best not to smoke while another rational person may find it best to smoke, if he considers the reasons for smoking to have greater strength then the reasons not to smoke. By rational standards, neither individual, although making different conclusions about the same situation, was subject to irrationality. Rather, both people acted on principles in which they rationally considered all reasons, but reached different conclusions on what they judged to be best because they weighed the reasons with different strengths. Consequently, there is no room for weakness of the will because people do what they want to do.

This theory appears very precise and plausible on the surface, but there are some serious problems with it. Let's consider the possibility that a rational person judges it to be in his best interest not to smoke. Many smokers freely admit this and yet continue to smoke anyway. Is this weakness of the will? In this position the individual is subject to irrationality and weakness of the will if he knows he should not smoke but does anyway. Theories based on the ability of people to rationally consider all available and relevant reasons for all alternatives asserts men will act on what they judge to be best. However, this situation seems to contradict this principle. I do not find it rational to believe that smokers rationally based what they want to do on what they judged to be best all things considered.
Furthermore, I am very sceptical about the practical ability of people to be rational. In order for people to be characterized as rational, we must view rationality as a characteristic of human nature. Such a classification is very shaky. Due to all of the people who smoke, even though they admit it is not the rationally best thing to do, I am sceptical about the rationality of mankind to control their will. Weakness of the will must enter into the situation somewhere if a rational person cannot do what he judges to be rational. Therefore, it is implausible to deny the existence of weakness of the will on the basis that people act rationally.

Another way to explain the problem of weakness of the will is in a religious context. Christian religions tend to view weakness of the will by splitting man into two parts, the mind and the spirit or soul. Most religions have explained weakness of the will as a struggle between these two parts leading to conflicts between the emotions of men and the reasons of men. These two parts are always in conflict, and therefore, the will of one must win out over the other. A person may want to do something, but may not have the will to do it if the spirit is not strong enough.

This view or explanation seems perfectly sensible for religions which believe that God is three people, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in one body. If God is three people in one body, then why shouldn't men be two people in one body? Although to the religious believer this explanation of weakness of the will may be perfectly satisfactory, this view fails to give any way to solve the problem. Simply knowing that men consist of two conflicting beings gives no indication of how to resolve the conflicts or how to resolve weakness.
of the will. Furthermore, religion seems to imply that weakness of the will is due to the spirit being weaker than the body. Yet, the spirit of man is viewed as an extension of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it seems implausible that the spirit should be weaker than the body. It would make more sense that the spirit, an extension of God, would be much stronger than the desires of the body. Religion offers no solution except to pray to God for guidance.

If we apply this religious explanation of weakness of the will to the cigarette scenario, then we see that the conflict over smoking is a manifestation of the conflicts between the internal forces of men. The mind may want to stop smoking, but the spirit is not strong enough to overcome the desires to smoke. The solution is to pray to God and have faith in his power.

The philosophies of Christian religions and rational theories do not adequately explain the phenomenon of weakness of the will. The traditional religious perspective offers no more of a solution to the problem than does the denial of the problem by rational theorists. Neither of these perspectives satisfies the question about why a person wants to do something, but does not do it. Until we go beyond the limitations of religion and rationality, the understanding of weakness of the will will remain illusive.
READ THIS:

It Could Effect Your Grades
Starting fall quarter 1983, the USU grading policy changed to include the use of pluses and minuses. This new system is unfair, and as such, should not be tolerated by the students. It is time for the students to stand up and make their opinions known about the new policy.

The unfair nature of the new policy stems from several problems. My primary objection is that the new policy is discriminatory. The use of pluses and minuses discriminates USU students from students at most other universities. Across the country, almost every college and university uses the standard A/B/C/D/F grading system. The new USU system is not in accordance with standard, nationwide grading policy, and therefore, discriminates USU students. For example, supposes a USU student receives a grade of 91% on all of his work and is given A-'s. Under the new system the student's GPA is 3.67. However, under the old system or at another institution the student's GPA would have been 4.0.

I ask you, which grade does the student deserve? I suppose for some of you, based on his actual merit, he deserves a 3.67. However, I believe he deserves a 4.0. If the student had accomplished the same level of achievement, 91%, at almost any other institution his grade would have been a 4.0. Two students with the same level of merit are not given the same grade. This blatant discrimination is completely unfair to USU students. If two students accomplish the same percentile of work, then they should both receive the same grade even if it may have been more
difficult for a student at another institution to have accomplished that grade then for the USU students. After all, if the courses at USU are not as difficult as the same classes at other institutions it is not the student's fault, but the fault of the teachers and the university. Students should not have to sacrifice their grades if the difficulty of USU courses does not stack up to the rest of the academic community. The point is that two students with the same merit should receive the same grade regardless of the difficulty of the courses. If two students do 91% work then it is only fair that they both receive the same grade. The level of difficulty, as well as the level of quality, are matters that need to be resolved by the university and the teachers, not by the student's grades.

You may be wondering whether or not it is all that important if a student receives a 3.67 or a 4.0 for his efforts. For me, and I would think for many of you also, it makes a big difference. After I graduate from USU I hope to attend law school. To a law school admissions officer it may make a significant difference whether my GPA is 3.67 or 4.0. Even though law school admissions are not based solely of GPA, if my GPA is 3.67 and another applicant's GPA is 4.0, although my actual grade may have been 93% and his grade 90%, then I am at a disadvantage in competing with that student. Discrimination.

In addition to the discriminatory aspects of the new policy, I object to the plus/minus grading system because it creates more room for disagreement between students and teachers. Before the use of pluses and minuses students were generally graded on the
basis of 90%, 80%, and so on. Now, who knows where the real cut off lines are? Rather than grouping students into five distinctive categories a teacher has twelve categories to choose from. Although this may make it easier for teachers to decide which grade the student actually deserves, it also creates more room for disagreement. What about the student with a 93.5 average? Does he receive an A or an A-? Borderline students have always been a grading problem for teachers. Now with more borders, there are even more borderline students, and subsequently, more room for disputes between teachers and students over the actual grade a student deserves.

My final argument against the new grading system is that the implementation of the policy is not universal. Throughout the university professors are resisting the change by continuing to use the old grading system. The new policy does not require professors to use the new system, and therefore not all teachers are assigning pluses and minuses. If some teachers use the pluses and minuses and some do not, then the discriminatory aspects of the system become further compounded. Even USU students are not graded by the same standards. I ask you, how efficient and fair is a system which is not uniformly implemented?

From the points I have made I hope it is plain to see that the new grading policy is unfair. The system is discriminatory. The system creates more disputes over grades. The system is not uniformly implemented. Therefore, the system is unfair. As students at USU we are the ones who are affected by the injustice. We are the ones with the responsibility to stand up for our grades. We are the ones with the responsibility to stand up for justice.
Hidden in the infiniteness of the human mind, exists that means of thought through which we come to understand the daily experiences we encounter. We commonly call this means of thought—rationality. Rationality is the primary tool we use to explain the mysteries of the world. It is through reasonable and rational thought that we are able to observe various phenomenon and come to an understanding of their functions and meanings. It is through rationality that we are able to reason with our lives.

Rationality has come to play a very important part of life. Rationality is the basis of understanding. It is reason and the power of rationality which have enabled men to look at two or more premises and draw a single, direct conclusion from those facts. Rationality has helped the human race to view the world and classify it with consistency and order. Reason provides the basis for mathematics, medicine, and the sciences. Reason is the basis of cognitive understanding.

Rationality leads to understanding, however, the power and extent of reason and rational thought have their boundaries and limitations. Reason does not explain everything. Many phenomenon or experiences occur without reason. When a young child dies in an automobile accident, we can reason that it was the impact of the crash which caused the child's death. But, we cannot rationalize the legitimacy of an innocent child's death. It seems senseless for a child to die. We feel that there is no reason for it. We try to find a reason which simply does not exist.
During intense, emotional moments such as the death of a loved one, reason may offer little or no consolation. Rationality has no bearing on the actuality of the situation. Rationality is powerless to offer an acceptable reason. Throughout everyone’s life many experiences occur, not just the death of a loved one, which we do not understand. We find ourselves in bewilderment over our very own lives. The power of rationality to offer us reasons may fail. Often there are no reasons for us to rationalize. When rationality does not explain something, we are left clueless, unsure, and unstable. We try to turn to our beliefs or faith to help us accept what we cannot understand with rationality. When dealing with intense and powerful emotions, rationality often falls short of satisfaction. Rationality does not always offer reasons to things we cannot understand.

In some instances, the extent of rational thought to explain the unexplainable is limited by our usage of it. We can use rationality to understand concrete occurrences, but often we cannot use rationality to understand things such as feelings, or fears, or faith. At other times the usage of reason is limited because it offers rational, but contradictory alternatives to the same situation. Consider the individual who rationalizes that it is not fair to cheat on his income taxes, but also rationalizes that it is fair to do what everyone else does. Reason offers the individual two rational, yet contradictory alternatives.

Rationality does not mean that we have the power to reason with everything we encounter. Nor does rationality guarantee fairness or rightness. Rationality simply offers us a way to reason with our
lives. Rationality usually serves us well until we interject values and opinions. Values and opinions can exist without reasons, and therefore, the power of rationality to reason with value judgments is very limited. Simply because we can reason and rationalize things does not guarantee our reasons are fair, just, or wise.

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The power and extent of rationality has helped us to understand our world. However, it is limited by our usage of it and because reasons do not exist for everything. Rationality is limited by its very nature. It assumes everything occurs within the confines of a cause/effect relationship. The cause provides the reason for the effect. By its very nature, when a cause cannot be identified there is no reason which rationalizes the effect. The extent to which we can apply rationality is limited to causal relationships.

Rationality cannot reason with all occurrences, feelings, and values. Rationality does not provide a reason for everything. How then do we understand what we cannot rationalize with reasons? Rationality can be very instrumental in helping us understand our world, however, often things happen which we cannot rationalize. Rationality does not explain emotions, feelings, or values because these things are not by nature, rational. Therefore, the power and extent of reason cannot rationalize everything we do not understand. We need something more than just pure reason to completely deal with life, we need acceptance. If we can accept everything as it is, then perhaps we do not need any other reasons for something to exist. Beyond the limits of rationality lies a world of gentle, free acceptance of the way things are, rather than the way we try to rationalize them.
According to Webster's Dictionary, truth means the quality of being in accordance with experience, facts, or reality. Truth is derived from actual existence. However, truth has no meaning or relevancy when men believe what they want to believe. When a person believes something to be true, what matters to him is what he believes and not necessarily what actually exists. For example, when a person is told that he has a serious illness and that he will die soon he tries to deny the truth. He believes he is not dying, and he may continue to believe this until the day he dies. He may never except the truth. If he cannot accept that he is dying, then the truth has no meaning.

In actuality, truth depends more upon people's perceptions of reality, rather than on reality itself. The way we perceive something determines what we believe. A color blind person may come to a stop light and believe the signal is green when in reality it is red. His perception of reality leads him to believe something even though it is contrary to what actually exists. His perception determines what he believes to be true. Similarly, how people perceive abortion determines what they believe to be true about abortion. For example, a woman who wants to have an abortion probably believes that a woman has the right to abort and unwanted pregnancy. She perceives this to be the truth about abortion. She truly beleives she is right. On the other hand, the person who is opposed to abortion perceives abortion as morally wrong. To him, the truth is that abortions
should not be permitted.

What we see expressed by the dilemma of the rightness or wrongness of abortion is that truth depends upon what people perceive and believe, and not necessarily upon what actually exists. If existence is to be the basis of truth, then we must conclude that abortions are right because they exist, they are reality. However, in this case we find one reality, but two truths. Truth is no longer closely related to facts or reality. Rather, truth becomes related to perceptions and beliefs.

The underlying problem to the issue of truth is that there is not one, single, absolute truth which everyone believes or accepts. People cannot even agree upon the existence of God. Our views about the same reality are continually conflicting. Truth becomes lost in our own perceptions and beliefs. In this sense then truth is relative to what each individual believes to be true. Experience, facts, and reality may have very little bearing on what people actually believe to be true. In reality, truth has no meaning when men believe what they want to believe.
STAND-BY
Off the coast of Sicily, two hundred and fifty-three men are stationed on the USS Connecticut naval ship. They spend their energy practicing defensive maneuvers. The crew is composed of carefully trained specialists. They have learned to follow orders, and to do as they are told without any questions. They are prepared to respond at any instance. They are prepared to take whatever measures they may be called upon. Currently, the ship is practicing maneuvers to destroy an attacking ship. Two missiles are locked on target. The Captain radios to his crew, "stand-by."

In New York City Dan Rather sits in a CBS studio preparing for the evening broadcast. His script is finished, he has on a new grey suit, and his hair and make-up are flawless. The set and crew are prepared for the taping. Dan Rather moves towards his anchor position. He sits, and with script in hand looks up at the main camera. On top of the camera a neon sign flashes, "STANL-BY."

One hundred and twenty miles above the earth's surface orbits the space shuttle Columbia. The crew has been on a week long mission to launch two satellites and to collect data on the effects of weightlessness on the human nervous system. The mission has been completed and the space shuttle is preparing to return to earth. As the crew readies to land, Commander Crippen radios NASA headquarters to report that the crew is, "standing-by."

In a Chicago suburb, a four year old boy sits in front of the television putting Cheerios in a Tonka truck. His father enters the room and yells at the boy to go to his room immediately. The
boy continues playing. "Go to your room, now" he yells again in a harsh, angry tone of voice. The child looks up at his father and his face freezes with terror. The furious father grabs him by the arm and slaps him across the face. The child starts to scream. His father yells at him to, "shut up." The boy cries louder. In a fit of rage the father hits him twice and hurls him across the room. The boy slams into the fireplace mantle and falls to the floor. The mother is at the door to the room, standing-by.

On a Miami beach a young couple sits on the sand enjoying their first date. The young man runs his hand through the girl's hair. He kisses her. His hand moves from her hair to her blouse. As he starts unbuttoning her shirt, she stands up quickly, says she is not interested, and asks him to take her home. He grabs her forcefully and says he does not care if she is interested or not. Ripping off her blouse he pulls her onto the beach. She screams for help. With a hateful look in his eyes, he rapes her. She screams again and looks around to see six other people along the beach, standing-by.

In Los Angeles a thirty-two year old women enters the Blue Note, a locally popular lounge. She scans the bar for her ex-husband. She spots him at the end of the bar and approaches him. Standing in front of him, she angrily shouts, "I hate you. You have ruined my life. Now I am going to ruin yours. Finish your drink, honey. It will be your last." She steps back ten feet and pulls a Colt 45 revolver out of her purse. "So long, sucker," she says as she fires three times. The man falls to the floor in a pool of blood. She returns the gun to her purse and walks out. Thirty-six people were in the bar, standing-by.
There are many different aspects or interpretations to the phrase "standing-by," but none seems so important as the idea of apathetically standing-by when a person is in need. There are a countless number of scenarios similar to that of the innocent Chicago boy or the Miami rape victim. Time and time again people stand-by and watch people who need help. Very few of those times people care enough to help. People do not want to get involved or they have something else more important to do. They simple stand-by watching robberies, rapes, and murders. They stand-by and think up excuse after excuse to justify standing-by.

Standing-by has gone much further than people merely standing-by when crimes are committed. People also stand-by while children are starving, the defense budget takes a larger and larger share of government spending, the deficit explodes, businesses dump wastes into the streams and the air, and the energy companies rape the land of its resources. They stand-by and watch the world around them deteriorate. They wonder why things are so bad. They get mad at the police or the President and blame all of the problems of the world on everyone else. They stand-by in silent disgust over the state of our world. Standing-by.

In this world where everyone seems to be on stand-by, are we among those who are standing-by, or are we among those who care? We must decide. Those who are on stand-by are not some obscure, intangible group, but rather, they are each one of us every time we litter, or do not call the police when we see something wrong, or we do not vote. Each of us is part of that army on stand-by. We must decide if we are willing to do more than just stand-by in
apathy as our world deteriorates. But first, we must decide if we care enough to be involved. We must decide for ourselves if we care about the starving children, the defense budget, and the pollution.

If we can find within ourselves the will to care, then perhaps we can also find the strength and commitment to do more than stand-by. Perhaps if we care, then we will stand-up and make our voices heard rather than stand-by in apathy. Through caring and commitment we can help the starving children, the rape victims and the rapists, and we can preserve the beauty on our world. If we care enough to care about others, then we can do more than stand-by, we can stand-up and make our world a better, more caring world to live in. Do you care enough to care?
SOCIAL JUSTICE
Human nature is the driving force which has brought humanity to its present state of affairs. Our world is characterized by social injustice because people are not treated equally and fairly. We have not developed social justice. Human nature refers to tendencies or patterns of human existence and interactions which appear throughout the race as a whole. The lack of social justice is a function of human nature. By examining these patterns we see why the world exists as it does, and why people are not treated equally and fairly. We may also discover if human nature has the potential to develop social justice and make the world a better place to live.

Diversity is one of the patterns of human nature. Each person exists as a separate and diverse individual with unique characteristics. One need only to look at two individuals to realize that every human being is unique. Yet, every person is part of the entire human race. Uniqueness is an universal characteristic. Diversity has developed as a function of human nature.

Another tendency of human nature has been the inability of men to understand their relationships to mankind and to the universe. Men were born ignorant into an environment which requires intelligence, equality, and sympathy to achieve social justice. The inability of men to understand their relationships developed from and promoted some very drastic misconceptions. The environment which men were born into was beyond human understanding. A basic misconception evolved from the realization that the environment was both light and dark. Men perceived light and dark as two separate
entities without understanding that they were both part of the same thing. Light and dark are like two sides of a coin. However, they appeared and were perceived as though they were two different and separate coins.

After making this false separation, light and dark became associated with that which is bad or wrong. Men were afraid of darkness because it limited their sensory perceptions. Therefore, they associated darkness with things they could not see or understand. Lightness on the other hand, allowed men to see and more fully sense the environment. They were more comfortable with what they could see and feel, and therefore, associated light with goodness and rightness.

Once these original misconceptions were formed, they permeated men's thinking. Everything was separated into different opposing groups. The practice of separating dark and light became associated with the differences of black and white. The connection of black to dark promoted anything that was black to be perceived as bad, and conversely, the association of white to light promoted white to be perceived as good. These basic separatistic conceptions are the root of men's misunderstanding of their relationships to the universe and to one another. Skin color became associated with goodness and badness. This led to misunderstanding and animosity between people of different skin colors. Men's senses perceived distinctions in colors, but their thought processed failed to comprehend that men of different colors are all part of the human race.

Even in modern times when we consider ourselves intelligent and civilized, the affects of these early misconceptions are still
vividly alive. Skin color plays a viscous role in how people treat each other. Discrimination has developed from primitive conceptions of black and white. People continue to perceive men of varied colors as different and separate coins rather than different sides of the same coin.

This separative method of dealing with varying perceptions has developed into a state, a science, an art in which everything is differentiated and classified. This practice has been both disadvantageous and advantageous. It has led both to understanding and to drastic misconceptions which are evident from the actions of men. The separation and classification of humans into male and female counterparts has been blown far beyond any physiological differences. People have failed to realize that the differences between the sexes are immaterial compared to the similarities of all men and women regardless of sex or skin color.

Separatism mentality has been detrimental to the attainment of social justice because of the vast, and often underlying, affects produced by differentiating and classifying. These processes have led to false perception of light and dark, white and black, right and wrong, and good and bad. This mentality has provided the avenue for believing that the taking of human life can be the right thing to do. Such atrocious mistakes as egoism and war have developed from, and are defended by, the separatism attitudes which have consistently separated alike things from other alike things. Out of this mentality individuals have become separated from society. The good of the individual and the good of society have differentiated. Men have not understood their relationships to one another due to
their limited understanding of the universe and the human race. This is probably the greatest downfall of human nature.

In a very broad sense, men have failed to understand that the human race is an extremely miniscule segment of the entire universe. Compared to the power of the universe men are impotent. In the final analysis, the forces of the universe will determine the ultimate fate of every individual segment of the universe. In a slightly more easily perceivable sense, men have the capacity to choose the course of human life. However, men have failed to realize this capacity and to understand that it links all men to other men just as all the particles in the universe are pieces of the entire universe. Men have not consistently understood that the actions of each individual, at least indirectly, affects everyone else. The separatism mentality has fuel these false conceptions and has led to further misconceptions and problems. Discriminations, wars, crime, manipulation, subjugation, and inequality are outgrowths of the mentality of separatism. So long as we follow this path of human nature we will continue to plot the course of our own fate without realizing we have very little to do with the fate of the universe.

Parallel to the track of human nature based on ignorance, egoism, and the separatism mentality, is another track of human tendencies. This track is founded in emotion. Emotions allow men to feel and understand things without sensory perception. They fulfill the capacity to experience the connections among individuals and the universe. The powerful emotion sympathy plays a strong role in affecting thoughts and actions. The practical application of sympathy and compassion has ended wars, saved lives, and unified
work efforts. The potential benefits of sympathy are great. Sympathy makes possible and promotes the realization of human rights. Sympathy offers the potential for altruism and for the fair distributions of benefits and burdens. Sympathy means men working for others for the good of all.

This track of human nature also includes movement towards intelligence and striving for ideals. Men's level of intelligence has been expanding at an increasing rate. Men have become aware of some of the horizons in front of them and some of the limits as well. They have begun to understand some of the forces of the universe such as the nuclear principles of the sun and atomic weapons. Men are starting to reach a limited understanding of space and time. They are beginning to realize how small a part human life plays in the infinitness and the destiny of the universe. Men are becoming more aware and more intelligent.

Accompanying increasing intelligence is a continued striving towards ideals. The war resisters, the opponents of nuclear proliferation, and the dedicated workers of science and medicine are striving for ideals. They seek to promote human rights and the quality of life. They seek to promote the well-being of everyone.

The two tracks of human nature have guided the world to its 20th century state. One track is characterized by ignorance, egoism, and the separatist mentality; the other by increasing intelligence, sympathy, and striving towards ideals. These tendencies have created a state of instability characterized by chaos and sympathy. Men kill other men, they lie, cheat, and steal, they deceive and manipulate, and they concern themselves with themselves. Above all, they
separate, classify, and fail to understand themselves relative to others and to the universe. On the other track, men try to change the status quo, they help the poor and the sick, and they work to benefit everyone. They are slowly experiencing the connections between men and the universe. These two paths have produced a world in which men both kill and save lives; they are both ignorant and intelligent; and they promote and restrict thoughts and actions.

The state of affairs which men have brought themselves to and which the future will evolve from is overwhelmed with conflict and struggle. People are not treated fairly and equally by other people. If social justice is ever to be realized, the track of human nature based on intelligence, cooperation, and sympathy must replace the dominance of the track based on ignorance and self-interest. As these patterns of human nature struggle for dominance, the fate of social justice hangs in the wings of society waiting to develop a better world for all people to live in, peacefully.
THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT!
"The Devil made me do it!" This phrase, popularized during the 1970's, expresses the common belief in the forces of evil directing a person's behavior. The existence of evil presents a difficult religious and philosophical challenge for anyone who examines the issue. The origins of evil remain illusive and open for considerable speculation. One explanation of the existence of evil is the free-will defense which asserts the free-will of men will at times, inevitably lead them to evil. Evil is a function of the free-will of mankind.

The free-will defense to the problem of evil is dependant upon assuming people are free to do as they choose. Free-will implies that a person's actions are not determined by some external cause such as the will of God. Rather, people are free to make choices on their own accord. Since people are free, they have the option to choose good or evil, wrong or right. Therefore, because people are free they sometimes make the choice of evil over good. This is the free-will explanation of the problem of evil.

Typically, people believe there are two forms of evil--moral evil and natural evil. The free-will defense adequately explains moral evil. Because people freely make choices they are free to choose things which are morally wrong. Consequently, moral evil exists because people have the free-will to choose evil if they want to. Along this same line of reasoning we find natural evil then, must be due to the freedom of the universe to determine its own course. According to the free-will defense, if all the forces
of the universe are free to act on their own accord, then they must have the option to be evil. Inevitably they will occasionally take that option. The forces of the universe are free to act on their own, therefore we have natural evil. For example, the forces of the winds are free to create tornadoes which we view as natural evils because they are so destructive.

There is another explanation of natural evil which can be extrapolated from the notion of free-will. My theory is that natural evil is not evil, it is simply natural. The forces of the universe are free to act on their own accord without determination by external forces. Therefore, it is perfectly natural for the forces of the universe to combine in such a way so as to be destructive or evil as we call it. However, it is incorrect to call these natural forces evil. The forces themselves are not intrinsically evil. Rather, evil is a subjective term we apply to some natural phenomenon simply because we do not like all of the consequences of the forces of the universe. The free-will defense can be used to explain natural evil, but it is not necessary. The joining of the words natural and evil is a subjective fallacy.

According to the free-will defense it is inevitable for people to choose evil at times. One of the objections to this explanation of evil is that it could be possible for people to be free and yet never choose evil. This might be possible theoretically, but in practice the theory falls apart. If mankind is totally free, then at some point in time some person must choose evil or we would not truly be free. Had God made us so our only choice would be to do good, we would not truly be free because we would not have the option
to be bad or evil, and therefore, the objection that it might be possible to be free and never choose evil is not relevant.

Another objection contests that if God is extra-temporally omniscient, then we cannot truly be free. When God knows what we are going to do in the future we are not free. Since God knows everything extra-temporally, we really only have one option, to do what God knows we are going to do. In actuality then, all of our actions are predetermined by what God knows we will do and we are not free to do otherwise. Furthermore, because our future actions are known by God, and therefore determined by God, he must predestine our evil actions. It appears that extra-temporal omniscience may not be complimentary with true freedom. However, by altering our perspective we may resolve the apparent contradictions. We may consider God to be omniscient in that he knows everything except what is not knowable, the future. God may know everything which has or is happening, yet not know what will happen next, and still be considered omniscient. Freedom and omniscience do not have to be mutually exclusive.

The free-will defense is an explanation of the existence of evil based upon the assumption that people are free, and will inevitably choose evil at times. This explanation is important because it allows people to freely choose among options. This means people must be free to choose evil or good. Evil exists because we are free. This view does not subtract from our convictions that God is omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient. It simply states that God made us free to make our own choices.
TO BE RELIGIOUS
For most God-fearing Americans, being religious has always been a matter of attending church regularly and abiding in the norms of some religion. To be religious a person has to fulfill certain patterned expectations of the church. For example, for Catholics to be religious they should abstain from using birth control; for Mormons to be religious they should pay tithing to the church; for Jews to be religious they should eat kosher food. Religions dictate what people should or should not do to be religious.

In addition to going to church and following its rules a person must also believe what the church accepts or believes to be true. They must believe that Moses parted the Red Sea, that Jesus turned water into wine, and that mankind was forced into a world of strife because Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. But, is conforming to the beliefs and norms of some church what it means to be religious? Does being religious as we understand and interpret it, really mean to be religious?

Any person who honestly examines his religion and his beliefs must know that there is more to being religious than just going to church and blindly accepting its doctrine in the name of faith. These external appearances of religiousness in themselves, do not have much meaning or relevancy. These things lead to a very superficial, sophisticated life, a life without much significance. We are so busy with ourselves that we fail to examine what it means to be religious. A person who is concerned with himself and his own activities is not free and open to find for himself what it
means. We go to church and deceive ourselves by believing that this is what it is to be religious.

To be religious people must not merely accept the doctrine of the church they were raised in as "the truth." To be truly and completely religious one must search for truth. They must be willing to set aside everything the church has wanted them to believe and search for themselves, within themselves for truth, for God. And in that search they will find that it does not mean to pay tithing, or go to church, or believe in heaven and hell, but rather, to be religious means to seek God. To seek God is to search for truth. Any person who seeks truth with his whole heart, soul, mind and body will find God. There is no truth any greater, any more real than the power and existence of God.

If we are willing to search for God, then we must go beyond the norms of the established religions and search within our own hearts and minds for truth. In the search for truth the mind is uncontaminated by the edicts and sanctions of religions and societies. The search for truth, for God, is an inner seeking. Through inner search with an open and subtle mind we will find our own peace with God. We must find for ourselves our connection with God. We must come into communion with God by seeking him on our own. If we merely cultivate the superficial without understanding, feeling and living the deeper realization of God, then we will never know the real significance and beauty of knowing God and being religious. It is this inner religion, an inner communion with God that makes us religious.