

J3 – Interpersonal Justice & Morality

Dear: As you know, a central tenet (viz., “a principle or doctrine or belief held as a truth”) of the principal religions of our culture is that there’s some giant Jabberwock in the sky who defines “morality” and who, on some “final judgment day”, will dispense his “supreme justice”: rewarding those who were “moral” with “eternal bliss in heaven” and punishing those who were “immoral” with “eternal torture in hell”. What I want to continue to try to show you in this chapter is that it’s doubtful if any idea could be further from the truth: whoever concocted this jabberwocky (the Persian priest Zoroaster, some ancient Egyptian priest, or whoever) didn’t have the faintest idea of the meaning of either justice or morality.

In the previous chapter, I tried to show you some basic ideas about natural justice (viz., Nature’s principle of causality), about personal justice (i.e., Nature’s teaching each of us, ever since we were babies, that if we can influence an outcome, then generally we’ll get what we deserve), and about personal morality, which is merely a measure of how any action promotes our goals – with always “the most moral act” (a +10 on a scale from -10 to +10) being to use our brains as best we can.

In this chapter, I want to begin to try to explain some basic ideas about *interpersonal* justice and morality, which unfortunately are a little bit “trickier” than those of natural justice and of personal justice and morality. In later chapters – and it’ll take many chapters! – I’ll address the concept of social justice, and be forewarned, it’s a “bit of a beast”. Yet, because I don’t want to scare you off, let me try to put it in a nutshell: social justice is just opinion – and the key to developing more social justice is to base opinions on sound data.

In this chapter, to begin investigating interpersonal justice (which actually is a limiting case of social justice, the only difference being the number of people interacting), I want to again apply the four “general principles” that I listed in the previous chapter:

- 1) *Be careful with words,*
- 2) *Using common sense, simplify,*
- 3) *Look at the limits, and*
- 4) *Try to discern the objectives.*

This time, though, rather than apply those four “principles” in that order, let me start with a few comments on “Try(ing) to discern the objectives”.

Clerics (of all persuasion) argue that the prime objective of people is to serve their god or gods – who for some strange reason need money rather badly and for whom they just happen to be the collection agents. In addition to paying, however, the people must be “moral and just”, exactly as the clerics prescribe – although most clerics can arrange “special dispensations”, whereby, by paying a little more cash, people can literally get away with murder. In fact, it was the rampant selling of “special dispensations” by the Catholic Church (in accordance with “their doctrine of indulgences”) that led Martin Luther to revolt in 1517, posting his list of 95 “grievances” on a church in Wittenberg, Germany, thereby starting the “Reformation” (which eventually led to Mormonism).

Meanwhile, scientists confronted with data suggesting that people (and animals!) do indeed seem to have an “innate sense” of interpersonal justice and morality – and unable to find even a smidgen of data to support the speculation that this “innate sense” had any “supernatural origin” – began to wonder about its cause. In his 1871 book *The Descent of Man*, Charles Darwin wrote (p. 49) “man and the lower animals do not differ in kind, but degree” and (p. 104) “besides love and sympathy, animals exhibit other qualities connected with social instincts which in us would be called morals.”¹ Subsequently, an enormous body of data has been collected (only a tiny bit of which I’ll show you in this chapter and in later chapters) that supports Darwin’s suggestion – leading to the obvious conclusion that no deity dictated any “laws of justice and morality” (e.g., the Ten Commandments) to any human, but instead, we “inherited” such instincts from our animal pasts. To this date, of course there are continuing uncertainties about how humans (and animals) acquire such “senses” of interpersonal justice and morality (e.g., how much is learned in social groups vs. how much is “hard wired” into our brains or “programmed” in our DNA – the continuing “nature” vs. “nurture” debate), but what seems abundantly clear is the “objective” of possessing such capabilities: they have helped us, and continue to help us (and other animals), to survive and to evolve.

¹ Quoted from the *Preface* of a 1946 book by Joseph Lewis entitled *The Ten Commandments*, available at <http://www.positiveatheism.org/tochlews.htm#LEWTEN>.

I would encourage you, Dear, to seek out evidence that supports (or, if you can find any, that refutes!) the conclusion that humans have “inherited” our “instincts” for “interpersonal justice” from our animal pasts. If you search on the internet, however, I’d recommend that you restrict your search by including many terms, e.g., “observations animals justice fairness morality” – and even more, because that list in Google led to over a half a million hits! One article that I particularly enjoyed was another one by Sharon Begley in her weekly “Science Journal” column in *The Wall Street Journal*. It’s her 10 November 2006 column entitled “Animals Seem to Have an Inherent Sense of Fairness and Justice” (and if you’ll use that exact title in Google, you can probably still find the complete article at a number of sites). Immediately below, I’ve quoted a few particularly well-written paragraphs.

Animals Seem to Have an Inherent Sense of Fairness and Justice

by Sharon Begley

As there is no such thing as a free lunch, Sammy and Bias had to work for theirs. The two capuchin monkeys (the species once employed by organ grinders) sat in side-by-side cages separated by a mesh barrier while just beyond the bars was a tray holding two cups of food. It was counterweighted so that both monkeys had to pull a bar to haul in lunch, moving the tray snugly against the cage in such a way that Sammy could reach one cup and Bias the other.

But Sammy was in such a hurry to chow down that after grabbing the apple in her cup, she let go of the tray before Bias could dig into her own. The tray snapped out of reach, causing Bias to scream bloody murder. After half a minute, Sammy understood. She reached out for the tray and helped Bias reel it in.

Anyone who has been around toddlers will recognize Bias’s reaction as a simian [i.e., “relating to an ape or monkey”] “That’s not fair!”

The concept of equity – and fury when it is violated – lies deep in the human psyche. But scientists have long wondered whether it is a product of learning or something innate, from deep in our evolutionary past. That question has taken on added importance as behavioral economists probe why people sometimes make “irrational” decisions, such as rejecting a payoff that would leave them quantitatively better off if a rival unfairly benefits.

Sammy’s reaction, righting the inequity, hints at something even more intriguing: Animals other than humans are not only sensitive to unfairness, but are driven to rectify it. Philosophers have long argued that this ability underlies much of our human morality...

Capuchins... know unfairness when they see it. They prefer grapes to cucumbers, and when a scientist gave a grape to one capuchin and a cucumber to another, the latter threw it onto the ground and stalked away rather than acquiesce to this injustice...

Paired with a relative, monkeys are even more willing to pull the tray, even if their own cup (which they can see from afar) is empty. "Fair," it seems, covers a family member reaping the rewards of your labors even if you don't.

Even when little or no effort is required, chimps and capuchins balk at unfair situations, says anthropologist Sarah Brosnan of Emory University. In a series of experiments, the animals learned to trade a "token" (a rock or plastic pipe) with a trainer for food. If they saw a cage-mate trade for a delectable grape, but were offered a cucumber in exchange for their own token, they were much more likely to refuse to hand it over for the stupid vegetable. Better to go hungry than to give in to this unfairness...

It isn't hard to see the survival value of being able to detect inequity. Cooperation requires a grasp of fairness. You need to be able to detect (and punish) freeloaders to keep a cooperative society running. "Fairness counts," she says. "Humans and other animals are able to detect unfairness because doing so is beneficial."

And, it seems, it's an ancient attribute of the primate mind.

Of course, religionists might argue that some giant Jabberwock in the sky provided also chimps with a sense of fairness – but surely any sane human would question such a speculation, devoid of even a crumb of data.

Meanwhile, though, it's presumed that most humans have better brains than most other animals; therefore, we humans should be able to make more progress understanding the meaning of interpersonal justice and morality than do animals. To that end, let me now show you another "limit argument". Using a limit argument in the previous chapter, I tried to show you what I hope you consider to be an obvious meaning for the personal morality of our actions. Let me repeat what I tried to convey:

Because 'moral value' (as with any value) can be measured only relative to an objective and because our prime objective is to promote our trio of survival goals, the 'morality' of any act is simply a measure of how the act promotes our goals. And because using our brains as best we can is the best way to promote our trio of survival goals, then the act of highest

moral value is: *test ideas with data and then decide and act as the data dictate.*

The morality of our goals is another matter, which I'll get to in subsequent chapters (especially in **P**, dealing with "Purposes", and in **V**, dealing with "Values"). Yet, let me again at least mention the conclusion (as I did in the previous chapter) that the fundamental "value" against which the morality of our goals (and therefore our actions) can be reliably measured has been dictated by our DNA molecules, i.e., to continue living. Thereby, Albert Schweitzer (1875 – 1965) concluded: "*Reverence for life affords me my fundamental principle of morality.*" But when I use my brain as best I can (i.e., act morally), my summary description of the fundamental goal against which all morality can be measured is: to try to help intelligence continue – and to expand

I've also reviewed what I've called "natural justice" (i.e., the principle of causality) and "personal justice" (i.e., Mother Nature constantly judges the choices we make to promote our goals, viz., our morality, by producing outcomes, via the principle of causality, that are generally what we deserve). To develop the above ideas, I used the simple "limiting case" in which it was assumed that you were the only person on Earth, but as Schweitzer said: "You don't live in the world all alone; your brothers are here too." Therefore, to begin to examine what is meant (or should be meant!) by *interpersonal* justice and morality, let me double the complexity of my "limit argument", by supposing that the population of the Earth doubled, to two people (you and a potential mate) and first let me address the question: In this case, what would be meant and what should be meant by morality?

In this case, with just the two of you, 'right' vs. 'wrong' (and, again, all shades in between!) would still depend on objectives. That is, as before, "moral value" (as with all values) can be judged only relative to some objectives. Consequently, right here at the start of interactions with just one other human, a judgment or "judicial choice" must be made: Whose objectives?

Of course, the happiest resolution would be if the two of you had common and even shared prime objectives (e.g., your own survival, survival of the human genetic code, promotion of common values, expansion of intelligence, and so on). In this case, with clear thinking, good communications, and substantial work (!), the consequences should be

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peace, friendship, love, a family, and life-long support for one another. I'll consider that happy state later. But to start, assume that the two of you were strangers who had no idea of each other's objectives (and therefore no idea of each other's values).

Unfortunately, Dear, you must be wary of strangers. In fact, one of the main advantages of belonging to a religious group is that, although you may not know all the people who belong to the group (especially if you have moved to a new location), generally you know the ideas with which the other members of the group have been indoctrinated; therefore, you have some idea how members of the group "think". The same is true for members of other than religious groups (e.g., a group belonging to some humanist organization) and even, to a certain extent, for other citizens of your country (assuming that they have been indoctrinated with such ideas as "with liberty and justice for all").

In case you think that there's a logical error in the above, Dear, let me try to explain my meaning. I'm convinced that the prime objective of all humans is their trio of survival goals (of themselves, their extended families, and their values). Relative to these goals, there's value in knowing what others think. If they think clearly, not only will they have the same prime goals (for I'm convinced that all sane people have the same trio of survival goals) but also they'll have the same values (for, as I'll try to show you later, if their thinking is sufficiently clear, then the prime source of their values will be their dual survival goals). On the other hand, and although there's potential danger to you if others have confused thoughts, if you have a fairly good idea of even their confused thoughts (such as their belief in some giant Jabberwock in the sky), then your safety will be enhanced over cases when you know little to nothing about what others might be thinking.

In any case, Dear, you must always be wary of strangers. Consequently, in the limiting case with you and your potential mate being the only two people on Earth, it would be wise to be wary. What you should then do (as you should do now!) is meet with him (or, as appropriate for other readers, meet "her") first in "safe territory". For example, suppose you chose to first communicate by shouting across a wide canyon – so that, if necessary, you could safely escape. Arrange to meet him this way each day for many times (never once trusting even his commitment to meet in this manner!), until you learn something about his ideas – especially about his ideas of 'morality' and 'justice'.

Dear, you can never be certain what crazy ideas are “driving” other people! For example, in the case of only the two of you on Earth, he might have found some old book, somewhere, that contained some absurd speculations about a giant Jabberwock in the sky and that the world was soon coming to an end in some “final judgment day”. He might then have “reasoned” that somehow his and your continued existence were mistakes, that the “final judgment day” had already occurred, that somehow the giant Jabberwock had overlooked the two of you, and that the only “moral” thing to do, now, was for him to kill both of you – to join the others at the “judgment ceremony”! Bizarre? Yes! Unimaginable? No! Dangerous for you? You bet!

It would obviously not be a happy situation to be associated with such a stupid person, i.e., someone who would act on speculation rather than on tested hypotheses from reliable data. If you decided that your objective was to live, no doubt you would quickly conclude that three “highly moral acts” for you would be 1) determine if you could easily get him to change his mind, without endangering yourself, 2) determine if you could distance yourself from him sufficiently, so that you’d be safe, or 3) determine if you could kill him, before he tried to kill you.

That your possible plan to kill him was also consistent with his crazy goal (to join the giant Jabberwock’s judgment ceremony) would be irrelevant. What is relevant, Dear, is the general principle: *allow no one to impose his morality on you*. Thus, Dear, not only should you reject another person’s idea of “morality” (e.g., that it was “right” for him to kill you), you certainly should reject any code that says “Thou shalt not kill” (which you might have found chiseled on some old stone tablet somewhere).

To consider killing someone in your own defense is entirely consistent with the fundamental “moral principle” or “judicial principle” stated above or stated equivalently as: *everyone has an equal right to struggle to achieve one’s goals* (or, as I remind myself when I’m walking: “*everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence*”). Applied in this case of you and the only other person on Earth, the important point is that he doesn’t recognize your right to achieve your own goals (in particular, to live). It’s true that, by killing you, he would be just struggling to achieve his goal (of having you join him in the giant Jabberwock’s judgment ceremony, so he

could gain “eternal survival”), but in the process, he would be disregarding your equal right to pursue your own goals.

Now, Dear, it’s true that by your killing him, you would be refusing to recognize his right to pursue his goal (of killing you). But, Dear, it was he who first violated the judicial principle that everyone has an equal right to pursue one’s goals. And surely if he refuses to recognize your right to pursue your goals, then you would be foolish to continue to recognize his.

But putting aside (for a moment) the wisdom of your decision to try to kill him, what would be the ‘justice’ of the outcome? First, no matter the outcome, “natural justice” will be served; that is, no matter who kills whom, the outcome will be perfectly linked to its causes. Also, no matter the outcome, “personal justice” will be served; that is, each of you will probably get what you deserve (for example, if you were killed, then you would have either not developed an adequate plan to kill him or not executed your plan adequately). But there is a new kind of ‘justice’, here, which I call “interpersonal justice” (a subset of “social justice” – for a society of only two people), and the question posed is the same as for any type of ‘justice’: what outcome would be ‘fair’?

Well, Dear, let me answer that question before explaining what I mean! Thus, I’m sorry to report to you that, when people talk about the ‘justice’ of an outcome that involves more than one person, then people are just expressing their opinions. This is the (partial) truth in what Emerson said: “one man’s justice is another’s injustice”. Missing words in his statement can be seen from a more complete statement, such as: “one man’s [opinion of the] justice [of an outcome] is another’s [opinion of the] injustice [of an outcome].” Thereby, Dear, if ever you find yourself “required” to recite that in this country there is “liberty and justice for all”, you might want to add the words (silently!): “that is, everyone is entitled to one’s opinion!” In later chapters in this group, I’ll show you that there’s some hope for “real social justice” (because of what Mother Nature has taught each of us), but first, let me return to this case of you and your potential mate, to show you that “interpersonal justice” (and, similarly, “social justice”) means little more than opinion.

In his opinion, the ‘fair’ or ‘just’ outcome would be that he killed you. After all, he would “reason”, he started from a “moral principle” that he found in the same old book that talked about the giant Jabberwock’s judgment day.

The principle was “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” He then “reasoned” that if it were you who had found the old book and learned about the giant Jabberwock’s judgment day, then he would have wanted you to take him to the ceremony. Therefore, he continued to “reason”, if that is what he would want you to “do unto him”, then because it was “morally right” to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, it followed that he should bring you to the judgment ceremony (that is, that he should kill you). His “reasoning” thus leads him to the *opinion* that, if there’s “any justice in this world”, then surely the outcome should be in favor of the person who was “acting morally”.

Meanwhile, your reasoning would lead you to a totally opposing opinion. Starting from your “moral principle” or “judicial principle” that “everyone has an equal right to pursue one’s goals”, you reasoned that his plan to pursue his goal (to kill you) would deprive you of your right to pursue your goal (to continue living). You further reasoned that if he refused to honor the “judicial principle” that you have an equal right to pursue your goals, then surely you were also entitled to abandon the principle. Thus, you reached the *opinion* that “if there’s any justice in this world”, then the outcome should be in favor of the person who offered “to act morally” but whose offer was rebuked.

In this case of interpersonal relations, therefore, there are totally opposing opinions about the ‘justice’ of the outcome: one person’s justice is another’s injustice. Whose opinion is ‘right’? It might further be asked (and I will address): “Whose reasoning is right?” And let me answer the second question immediately: both sets of reasoning are right (which demonstrates the great danger of relying only on reason!), but they’re based on two different (and contradictory) premisses. Thus, Dear, each of you would claim to be acting “morally” and each of you would claim to have reasoned “logically”, but you started from different moral principles or premisses. So the question is: which “moral principle” (or premiss) is ‘right’? But the ‘morality’ of any act is just a measure of how the act promotes one’s goals. Consequently, the essence of the question is whose prime goal is ‘right’: your goal (to live) or his goal (to die)?

And here, Dear, is where there’s some hope for “interpersonal justice” (and, more generally, “social justice”) beyond being just differing opinions, beyond being just a consensus, and even toward being a unanimous opinion – because of what Mother Nature has taught us. Thus, Dear, I guarantee that

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essentially anyone or any group of people (any judge or any jury) who considered this case of you and this young man (save for those juries composed solely of similar religious fanatics) would hold the *opinion* that ‘justice’ would be served if you killed him.

Now, Dear, before I address the obvious question of why I have the opinion that, almost certainly, there would be unanimous agreement by any judge or jury that “justice would be served” if you killed him, let me again point out the obvious: as Emerson implied (interpersonal and social) justice is just opinion. This leads to many complicated questions, which will take me many chapters to address. The complications include: Who gets to judge? Who gets to define customs, laws, and moral codes? What should you do if you conclude that certain laws are wrong? How can “fair” and “reasonable” customs, laws, and moral codes be established? Who decides? How? And so on. And though I don’t want to leave such questions “dangling”, I probably should, because I expect that your reaction will be one of three possibilities: 1) You won’t understand what I mean, 2) You understand but don’t agree, or 3) You understand, you agree, but you don’t like the answer! In any event, let me just state the answer (which will require many chapters to explain) and then move on: just as with “truth”, social justice can never be achieved – just approached asymptotically.

Now, Dear, let me return to the question at hand, namely, why I have the opinion that, almost certainly, anyone judging the case of you and your potential mate would conclude that “justice would be served” if you killed him. The reason, Dear, is not because of what any giant Jabberwock in the sky teaches (or those who claim to be the Jabberwock’s representatives, i.e., the clerics), but because of what Mother Nature has taught each one of us. She has taught all of us survivors that the “right choice” – the “moral act” – is to try to stay alive. As the Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong said: “Whatever diminishes life is evil, and whatever enhances life is good.”

The reason seems clear. Eons ago, on a big rock that we call Earth and probably in some pool of organic “goo”, a molecule learned how to reproduce itself. As time went by and the environment changed, some of these reproducing molecules encased themselves in a ‘soup’ similar to the original organic pool; we call such encasements “cells”; this was the beginning of life on Earth. Those molecules that didn’t learn how to encase themselves in cells didn’t survive. Then, through eons, the molecules that are still reproducing themselves, developed more and more ways to survive

– as plants, trees, birds, and humans – and it's we, the survivors, who define morality: we claim that "the good" is to live.

Thus, Dear, if any rattlesnake of a young man comes along and tells you that he intends to kill you, then he is choosing the morality of death, not life. And actually, it's an insult to all rattlesnakes to call this young man a rattlesnake: with total clarity of "thought", a rattlesnake kills so that it can live. In contrast, this totally confused young man is making the mistake of one of the long-since extinct animals that "chose" a dead-end path and ended up as just some dead organic debris in the ground – or as a terrorist "martyr".

Dear, all animals (including humans!) are a part of nature. In the case when you were assumed to be the only person on Earth, you would have had to deal with many animals (including rattlesnakes). If you chose to live, then you would have soon learned that the 'good' (the "moral thing to do") was to eat. Depending on your surroundings, you might have found sufficient plants and berries to eat (in season) and maybe some roots. Almost certainly you wouldn't have tied yourself in any "moral knots" with the dilemma of killing the "offspring" of the plants (i.e., leaves, berries, and roots) so that you could survive: either you ate them or you wouldn't survive, and you decided that "the good" was for you to survive. Similarly, if you were able to find eggs and kill small animals, no doubt you again would conclude that it was quite "moral" for you to eat them, with the basis of your "morality" again being your goal to survive.

With some animals, however (such as rattlesnakes, mountain lions, and similar), you would need to take more care. Such animals are quite prepared to challenge your "moral values" (based on your goal to survive) with their own "moral values" (based on their own goal to survive). For such cases of these "differences of opinion", Mother Nature would always be there to dispense suitable justice: the rattlesnake, the mountain lion, and you would generally get what you deserve. And so that there will be more story to tell, let's assume that the outcome was not "might makes right" (in the case of the mountain lion) and not "poison is power" (in the case of the rattlesnake) but "brains over brawn"!

Now, in this "limit argument", it's assumed that you've met a new kind of animal, in the form of a human. We humans like to say that, in this case, you encountered a being with "volition" (able to perceive the future and

make choices). But, Dear, if you ever meet a rattlesnake, let me warn you not to be so arrogant as to discount a rattlesnake's "volition"! For example, I remember encountering a poisonous snake right in the middle of the path where I walk in the desert: it sure seemed to have a mind of its own; it sure seemed to foresee the consequences of my every move; it sure seemed to have a will of its own; and when it wouldn't move off the path (no matter the rocks and branches I threw at it) you bet I decided to yield to its "will", giving it as much space as it wanted – and more! And note, Dear, that this snake was just trying to protect itself: for it, as for me, the "moral good" was to survive.

Yet this young man (as with most humans) can apparently see further into the future than can other animals – and can develop totally absurd ideas, unsubstantiated by data, about what might occur in the future (for example, at some giant Jabberwock's judgment ceremony). But even so, he's still just a part of nature – so treat him accordingly. He probably doesn't have the venom of a poisonous snake or the strength of a mountain lion, but he does have a large brain, and though that brain can lead him to concoct totally ridiculous concepts, it also provides him with quite impressive abilities, including the capabilities to kill rattlesnakes, cougars, and you. Therefore, should you decide that you have no other choice than to kill him, you'll need to use your own brain as best you can: maybe tell him that you know where there's an altar or a "worshipping place" that people apparently used to pray to his giant Jabberwock in the sky – and keep to yourself the knowledge that it's located at the bottom of a rock slide that will need just a little nudging to start an avalanche, tumbling on anyone stupid enough to be kneeling at its foot.

In any event, Dear, should you wonder why it's "justice" that your morality should prevail rather than his, and why it is "right" for you to execute your plan to kill him rather than permit him to kill you, it has nothing to do with any giant Jabberwock in the sky and everything to do with what Mother Nature has taught us. You are another link in the chain of life, and in a tradition that stretches back for at least a billion years, we the living have learned from Nature that the objective is to live, that the "good" is to try to stay alive, and that it's "fair" that those who struggle to stay alive are more successful than those who don't. Therefore, Dear, I guarantee that there would be, not only a consensus, but unanimous agreement among those who think clearly that the 'just' outcome would be that you got what you deserved (to live) and he got what he deserved (to die).

In contrast to the clarity, intensity, and unrelenting tenacity with which Mother Nature teaches us that the ‘good’ is to live, the clerics of our culture babble totally ridiculous contradictions. One group of clerics babble “thou shalt not kill” and “if someone slaps you on one cheek, then turn the other” – and, by extension (although I doubt if many clerics have been able to perceive this extension, for the intellects of all clerics seem to be quite limited) if someone wants to kill you, then make it easier for him: “If someone wants to slap you, turn the other cheek; if someone wants to kill you, supply them with a AK-47!” In their view, the giant Jabberwock will take care of justice on “the day of reckoning”, and although your life ends, you will be “resurrected” to live forever in “eternal bliss”, while the “transgressor” will be subjected to “eternal damnation”. These are the religious pacifists of our culture, who refuse to fight oppressors, but who quite happily live in a society (and mooch off its members) that has required enormous sacrifices of those who have fought oppression.

Meanwhile, there is another group of clerics in our culture who apparently are totally confused by the absurdities and contradictions of the Bible. As I’ll show you in later chapters, these absurdities and contradictions include the “commandment” not to kill – and then the stories showing how those who reportedly ordered this “commandment” next ordered the people to slaughter those who were living peacefully on the land that the “great landlord in the sky” supposedly was giving to “God’s chosen people”. Such confused clerics preach that some killings and wars are “just” (e.g., any of many “holy wars”) – provided that such wars are “justified” by the clerics. But it’s all so damn absurd! It’s not some giant Jabberwock in the sky (whose personal representatives just happen to be passing around the collection plates) who defines either morality or justice. Instead, it’s Mother Nature who has defined morality and justice – and by extension, it’s we who choose to live!

And if you should think that all of the above is just too hypothetical, too esoteric, too..., then let try to show you that it’s not, by showing you the following.

Transcript of Purported Al Qaeda Videotape

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Published: March 14, 2004

Following is a transcript of the videotaped message claiming that Al Qaeda carried out the Madrid bombings. The tape was translated from Arabic into Spanish by the Spanish government.

“We declare our responsibility for what happened in Madrid exactly 2.5 years after the attacks on New York and Washington. It is a response to your collaboration with the criminals Bush and his allies.

“This is a response to the crimes that you have caused in the world, and specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, and there will be more, if God wills it.

“*You love life and we love death* [italics added], which gives an example of what the Prophet Muhammad said. If you don’t stop your injustices, more and more blood will flow and these attacks will seem very small compared to what can occur in what you call terrorism.

“This is a statement by the military spokesman for al-Qaida in Europe, Abu Dujan al Afghani.”

And I’m sorry to suggest, Dear, that unless we can get fools such as Abu Dujan to realize their errors, then just as with the imagined young man who proposes to take you to the “Final Judgment Ceremony”, there’s no reasonable option but for us to speed the Islamic terrorists on toward their stated desire for death.

Now, Dear, an important point is available here, but I want to delay exploring it until a later chapter. Yet, let me at least summarize it here, so that maybe you will see it more clearly when I reintroduce it later. The point starts from a widely shared opinion that there will be no widespread and lasting peace in the world without justice. But there can be no widespread and lasting agreement that justice prevails until there is a widespread acceptance of common moral values. Further, whereas “value” can be measured only relative to some objective, there will be no widespread acceptance of common moral values until there is widespread recognition of common goals. And thus, Dear, finally the point (which I will want to explore more fully later) is that there will be no widespread diffusion of peace and justice, and no widespread recognition of common moral values and goals, until a huge amount of confused thinking (based on zero data) is cleared up – in particular, the confused thinking that some giant Jabberwock in the sky defines goals, values, morality, justice, peace, or anything at all!

But let me turn away from the real problems of today's world to the imagined problems between just the two of you, the only people on Earth. If you were to find yourself in the situation that I've sketched, I wouldn't advocate that you immediately try to execute a plan to kill him (unless you decided that there were was an imminent need for self defense). As I wrote earlier, if you have learned about his "thoughts" from a safe distance, then your options also include just staying away from him and, also, trying to help remove some of the confusion from his thoughts.

As an example of how you might try to clear up some of his confusion, imagine the following conversation, shouted across the safety of an intervening ravine.

"You say that you found an old book that tells about a 'final judgment day'?"

"Yes – and it says lots more – it's a wonderful book – it was written by God himself."

"Really? How do you know that?"

"Cause it says so."

"Oh... Well, tell me about some other ideas in this book."

"I'd be glad to. For example, it has a list of 'commandments' telling us how to live."

"What sort of 'commandments'?"

"Well, a fellow by the name of Jesus, who was God's son, said that the most important 'commandment' is: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'."

"Hmm – sounds pretty good. And was it by applying this commandment that you reached the decision to have me join you at the 'judgment ceremony'?"

"That's exactly right!"

“Well, you know, over on this side of the ravine, I found an old book, too. Apparently a fellow by the name of Confucius (who lived about 500 before Jesus) said that the important principle was: ‘Don’t do unto others what you don’t want done to you.’”

“Sounds pretty much the same.”

“Well, no... For example, would you like me to impose my moral principles on you?”

“Certainly not!”

“Well, then, if you don’t want that done to you, why do you propose to do it to me?”

“Well, I don’t want you to impose your principles on me because they’re wrong; but if I were you, I’d want you to impose the right principles on me – so that’s what I plan to do for you – as a favor to you.”

“I see. And would you try to impose your ‘right’ principles on everyone.”

“Sure. Why do you ask?”

“Well, because there’s another fellow who lives over here; maybe you’d like to impose your ideas on him.”²

“I sure would!”

“Well, okay, but I guess I should tell you something about him.”

“Like what?”

“Well, he doesn’t take kindly to anyone trying to impose anything on him, and he’s a great big guy.”

² This would be a lie, of course, but Dear: don’t let anyone ever dictate some stupid “commandment” to you about the morality of lying. The morality of lying can be low or high (from less than -9 to more than +9), depending on your objectives. The morality of lying to protect yourself from being murdered is at least a +9.9!

“Oh... How big?”

“Well, I’d say about twice as big as you – and strong as an ox.”

“Oh. Well maybe I won’t try to impose my ideas on him.”

“Really? That’s strange. I thought you said that your prime rule was ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’”

“Well, yah, if I can – but it sounds as if I wouldn’t be able to teach this big fellow what was right.”

“Hmm... Then it sounds like you have another principle: it sounds as if your prime rule is “might makes right”.

“It’s a good rule. It’s a rule that God Almighty, himself, lives by.”

“Whatever... It’s been good talking with you, but I gotta go now.”

“Where are you going?”

“Well, the big fellow that I was talking about is my husband. I promised to meet him when the sun goes down. He worries a lot about me, you know, with all the rattlesnakes around.”

“Oh. Well, I might not see you again. I plan to go to the judgment ceremony soon.”

“Well, okay: I hope it’s a nice ceremony and that you get the justice you deserve.”

“Oh I will!”

“I’m sure you will.”

Well, Dear, that’s enough of that. (Too much?!) Instead of my continuing with that unhappy scene, let me now consider a more cheerful scenario: assume that the only other person on Earth turned out to be fairly reasonable, with moral values generally consistent with yours – or close enough so you thought that, over time, you could correct his mistakes! That is, assume that

the young man (or, if appropriate for another reader, then “assume that the young woman”) had developed his ideas about ‘morality’ and ‘justice’ not from the Bible (or other “holy book”) but from observing and interacting with the rest of nature.

In particular, suppose that he had reached essentially the same conclusions as you: that the “moral value” of any act is simply a measure of how the act influences one’s objectives and that, when he thought he was the only person on Earth, he had concluded that his prime objective was to survive. Further, suppose that, after a time, the two of you jointly decided on a new objective: to have children, to try to ensure that you weren’t the last two people on Earth.

Now, before examining some details about how the two of you might develop additional ideas about morality and justice, notice a few additional conclusions that no doubt are obvious. First, beyond the conclusion that morality can be judged only with respect to an objective, there’s the obvious generalization that: *unless you’re alone in this world, moral values deal with interactions among people.* In addition, I trust you agree that: *to live harmoniously with other people, it certainly helps to hold similar moral values.* Therefore, Dear, if some day you decide to marry, it would be wise to make sure that your potential mate’s moral values are, if not identical, then at least compatible with yours – or close enough so that you think that, in time, you’ll be able to correct his confused thinking!

It follows that a fundamental ingredient (and maybe even the fundamental ingredient) for peaceful and happy relations between two people (or among two hundred million people!) is clear thinking. If people will think clearly, which includes checking their reasoning against data, then they will clearly see that their prime objectives are their dual survival goals. Clear thinking from these two goals – to survive and to help humanity continue – will then lead to common values, including common moral values. With common moral values, then opinions about justice will be uniform. And with these ingredients, then two people (or two hundred million people!) can generally live together not only peacefully but happily, happily supporting each other in seeking to accomplish their shared goals.³

³ I should add a “caveat”, here, in part to explain why I didn’t extend this happy vision to the case of two billion people (or more!). The caveat is derived from any failure of the implicit premiss that there are sufficient natural resources available to support the population. When resources are constrained (for example, when there is insufficient food for the population), then struggling to survive, the people will do

In particular, for the case of only the two of you on Earth, suppose (after considerable discussion at a safe distance!) you both agreed that “the good” was to survive and to help humans continue (and, as I’ll get to, to help intelligence expand). Then what sort of “judicial principles” and even “laws” might you develop? Well, it’s all rather obvious, but before mentioning some obviously desirable features, I hope you notice an important conclusion from this “limit argument”, a conclusion that I’ll use in a later chapter (dealing with customs and laws): *the basis for any shared moral values, judicial principles, customs, and laws should be agreed-upon rules for interactions among people; supernaturalists notwithstanding, nothing “supernatural” is needed to define moral values, judicial principles, or laws.*

Thus, the two of you alone on Earth would no doubt agree not to kill one another, not to rob from one another, not to lie to one another (at least, not about important matters, e.g., you could tell him that he was handsome, brave, and intelligent), and so on. If you agreed that the prime goal was to help your genes continue, then obviously it would be “immoral” not to have sex with him. On the other hand, if for some reason you decided that you should have no more children (because it would endanger your health, or be too great a burden on you or the resources available to you, or distract you too much from rearing your other children, or for whatever reason you deduced), then obviously it would then be “morally wrong” to have any additional children (maybe a -3.5 on your morality scale) and “morally right” to do what was necessary to not have any additional children (maybe a +5.4).

Now, Dear, of course it’s tempting to head off on a tangent, here, to address modern ideas about abortion, but let me leave that for a later chapter (dealing with problems in social justice), and instead, let me continue, here, focusing on just the two of you. Let me assume that you and your mate advanced sufficiently to identify your prime objectives to be your dual survival goals and, in addition, that individually you had deduced a consistent and generally common set of values, including moral values. Let

what they consider necessary, including waging war on their neighbors. This has been a huge problem throughout history – and it will continue to be a huge problem, especially so long as there are fools in positions of influence who fail to see the need for birth control. The common statement is that “the two prime causes of war are religion and real estate” – and these are compounded by religious fools such as the pope and various Christian (including Mormon) and Islamic “fundamentalists” who oppose birth control.

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me further assume that even the unlikely occurred: that the fundamental law of the jungle “might makes right” never reared its ugly head – even though it was you who had the black belt in karate! And let me further assume that the two of you learned that the act of highest moral value was to use your brains as best you could, i.e., *test ideas with data and then decide and act as the data dictate*.

Who knows, when you reached agreement on those actions that you thought had highest moral value, then just to keep them in mind, you might decide to chisel your “top ten rules for living” into stone! But that might be unwise: your descendants might someday come to the ridiculous conclusion that some giant Jabberwock in the sky visited you to prescribe these “ten commandments”, leading your offspring to the absurd conclusion that their prime goal was to serve this fictitious god – as preposterous as that possibility may seem! But setting the ramifications of that aside, let me turn to the question of justice between the two of you. For example, an important question that the two of you would need to address essentially daily is: what would be a fair distribution of the tasks that the two of you would need to undertake?

Now, I’m certain that you would have a “fair idea” (and I know that you have fairly strong opinions!) about “what’s fair” – but would it be? Thus, suppose that he were stronger and could run faster. Then, you might consider it both fair and wise (in pursuit of your joint goals) if he did the hunting and if you then prepared and cooked the food. And given those and similar characteristics of men and women, you might think it both fair and wise if he cut down trees and built a house for the two of you, and protected you from wild animals, while you kept the house clean, picked berries, dug roots, and bore children.

But what if his idea of fairness were different? Suppose he said: “Look, I may look stronger, but actually I’ve got a bad back, which hurts when I run, throw spears, and cut down trees. So, you be the builder, hunter, and protector, and I’ll pick the berries, dig roots, and generally be the home maker.” Trying to get along, maybe you’d answer: “Fine, I’m a liberated women, I can do those things – but you bear the children.” You can imagine how well that would be received!

Actually, in the best of all possible scenarios, the two of you would quite likely never need to worry about justice. In this best case, you would

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discover something better than justice, namely, love. Now, soon I'll address the concept of love (in chapter L), but let me just mention a few characteristics about the love between a man and woman, such as might have developed between the two of you who were the only people on Earth. Because of the happiness and pleasure (i.e., survival signals) that you would give each other, both of you would help each other as much as possible. If his back hurt, of course you'd do the hunting, and if you detested cleaning the house and digging for roots, of course he'd do that – and whatever else you wanted.

It reminds me of a statement in a book that I read about 20 years ago (and have long since forgotten the book's title and the author's name). It's one of the best definitions I've seen for the concept of "personal justice in interpersonal relations". With recognition of exceptions, the author concluded something close to the following. "There is certain justice in relationships that is quite satisfying: *generally, you get out of relationships pretty much what you put into them.*"

I suspect, Dear, that already you've found the wisdom in this author's conclusion – and I suspect that you'll find more in the future. The author may have been Sheldon Kopp; he wrote: "In the long run, we get no more than we have been willing to risk giving." Either way, returning to the case with only the two of you on Earth, if you were enjoying, helping, and caring for each other, and working toward joint goals (having a home, having a family...), then this love would produce what we would now describe a perfect marriage (meaning that it's as good as it gets).

Unfortunately, though, after a "honeymoon period", most marriages run into trouble – commonly because of disagreements about "what's fair". And from this simple example under consideration (with no extra complications from finances, in-laws, or extramarital affairs!), a number of generalizations are immediately available. One was well expressed by the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788 – 1860): "In our part of the world where monogamy is the rule, to marry means to halve one's rights and double one's duties"!

Another generalization is that, when two people disagree on "what's fair", sometimes a resolution can be found from bartering. Still another generalization is that, although some people suggest that the best way to find justice in human interactions (viz., "interpersonal justice") is to apply the

rule “you cut and I’ll choose”, it obviously can lead to significant problems. An obvious problem is: who would then want to do the cutting, rather than the choosing?⁴

But a more significant problem is that, for many cases, no reasonable choice is available (e.g., your suggestion that he should bear the children). In such cases, there’s confusion between ‘justice’ and what “just is”. Perhaps you then agree, Dear, with a third generalization: in many cases, it’s not easy to find ‘justice’ between two people, even in the “best-case scenario” when you have shared objectives and therefore, with clear thinking, shared moral values.

In this particular “limiting case”, though, when you suggested that he bear the children, apparently you would have had some other objective, which you hadn’t revealed. If you had truly adopted the objective of trying to help your genes continue, then you wouldn’t have made such a suggestion. Perhaps you were venting your frustration that you had seen him run and jump when he was going after something he wanted, and you suspected that he had just invented the excuse about his sore back, so he wouldn’t need to do his “fair share”. Thus, perhaps you concluded that he was lying to achieve an advantage, and that he had an unspoken objective to do less work, a not uncommon characteristic of all humans – and it has been a great incentive for the invention of labor-saving devices!

An important point revealed by this analysis is that injustices begin to creep into relationships when moral values change. Stated differently: opinions about justice begin to diverge roughly in proportion to how concepts of morality diverge. If it were true that he was just faking his ailments, then the morality to which he was turning was that, rather than carry his share, he preferred to have a slave do the work.

⁴ The idea of “you cut and I’ll choose” is the essence of “Rawl’s theory of justice” (much information about which you can find on the internet). Basically it’s that any social system will be designed fairly if the designers have no control over their future positions within the social system: they cut; we’ll choose. Reality, however, has a way of spoiling the spoils. Thus, 1) although any cutter (or designer) would undoubtedly be “moral” (i.e., use her brain as best she can), trying to ensure that the spoils were equal, the chooser’s “moral choice” is more difficult (whether to choose the bigger piece or not – and if not, then for what other gain is the choice made?) and 2) in reality, all legislators have fairly good ideas about their positions in any proposed social system – and meanwhile, the choosers in the designed system may have different “moral values”, e.g., “Why should I go to work? My job, digging ditches, isn’t nearly so much fun as being a legislator. I’m just gonna go on welfare!” Thereby, Dear, maybe you can see a little of why “social justice” is not only complicated but also so difficult to achieve. I’ll return to such problems in later chapters.

If so, Dear, you would need to try to enforce, with all the tricks at your disposal, *a fundamental “judicial principle” for interpersonal relationships that’s*

- Probably as old as humanity in the form of *bartering*
- Perhaps was first stated but at any rate was first “popularized” by “the Socrates of the East”, Confucius (551 – 479 BCE), as the single word “*reciprocity*”
- Commonly stated as the Latin phrase “*Quid pro quo*” (meaning “this for that”)
- Was advocated by Ayn Rand⁵ in the form “*give equal value for value received*”, and that
- I’ve adopted for myself, but with the important restriction, described in an earlier chapter and apparently created by George Herbert (1593-1633): “*Living well is the best revenge*”.

All of which I remind myself, when I’m walking, in the form: *Give equal value for value received – reciprocity – but remember: the best revenge is to live well.*

Now, Dear, this “interpersonal moral principle” or “interpersonal judicial principle” (of “bartering” or “reciprocity” or “give equal value for value received”) may seem trivial to you, especially if you conclude that it basically means “don’t steal” (that is, that you should provide equal value for the value you receive). Actually, though, it contains substantially more: not only that you should pay for what you get, but that you shouldn’t pay for what you don’t get! Thus, if the young man in your life proposes not to carry “his fair share” of the burden, then you should diminish the share of the burden that you carry: *it’s morally wrong (that is, again, it’s damaging to your survival goals) to give more than you receive.*

⁵ Dear, I’m fairly sure that this “judicial principle” is from Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged*, referenced earlier, but upon glancing through the book again, I wasn’t able to find it. In any event, even if the exact words aren’t in her book(s), the idea certainly is!

And of course I realize, Dear, that my advocating *it's morally wrong... to give more than you receive* is contrary to what you've been taught since you were a baby, namely, "Saint" Paul's: "It's better to give than receive." But, Dear, I'm certain that the morality taught by the clerics of our culture contains a huge number of monstrous errors – and I'm also certain that, in what remains of this chapter, I won't be able to reveal to you all the horrible ramifications of their errors. Therefore, please be patient with me: let me delay showing you the clerics' errors until later chapters (starting in **K**, which deals with Kindness), and let me now assume that you accept that "bartering" or "reciprocity" is a valid basis for interpersonal morality – so that I can conclude this limit argument.

In particular, let me now address the question: With only the two of you on Earth, how would you resolve your different opinions about the 'fairness' or 'justice' in the relationship? As you can imagine, this question and the associated problems have been occurring ever since the fundamental family unit has existed. And as you can deduce from the outcome (that is, from the number of humans that now exist!), resolutions were obviously found – although some of these resolutions have been horrible. For the remainder of this chapter, I want to sketch some of these resolutions (all of which I'll return to in later chapters).

First, I'm certain that the best resolution of determining "what's fair" in any disagreement between two people is some sort of "bartering" or "reciprocity". This is the basis of all satisfying friendships and marriages and (as I'll address in **L**) it's the foundation for love between two people. In this best resolution, the love between two people is able to overcome any differences in opinions about justice; with love, each person gives equal value for value received. In the case under consideration, however (in which your mate wanted you to do more), apparently this resolution was unavailable; apparently he wasn't in love with you. If he were, if he saw you as the best other being in the whole world (as you would be!), he would try his best to help you, never once considering an attempt to make you his slave.

And let me add that it's a form of slavery that the clerics of our culture teach as "moral". I hope that you'll always reject as immoral the mystic's morality that you should give more than you receive. Certainly your lazy partner would want you to adopt this "moral principle" – while he didn't! It's a morality that consumers throughout the world advocate be adopted –

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but only by the producers, not by themselves! In the rest of the animal kingdom, such animals are called parasites or leeches; among humans, such parasites and leeches include all clerics.

For reasons that I'll show you in a later chapter, Ayn Rand also describes the cleric's morality as "the morality of death". What I hope you see, Dear, is that if you adopt the morality of the mystics (to give more than you receive), then in essence the resolution that you adopt is to forfeit your freedom and to become a slave: if someone can convince you that it's "morally right" to give more than you receive, then that someone just finished convincing you that it's morally right for you to be a slave (and, surprise surprise!) for him (or her) to be the slave owner.

The worst possible resolution of the problems between the two of you (if you didn't have a black belt in karate – or a gun!), even worse than your agreeing to be his slave, would occur if he would demand that his opinion about 'justice' prevail, adopting a "moral principle" or "judicial principle" that was obviously to his advantage, namely, "might makes right". This was apparently the most common resolution adopted by most primitive societies – of course adopted by the "mightier" men. In fact, throughout history (as I'll try to show you in the "excursions" **Qx** and **Yx**, and as Ayn Rand describes in her book *Atlas Shrugged*), the morality of the mystics ("it's better to give than receive") has been closely allied with the morality of the brutes ("might makes right"). This alliance was the essence of all relationships between "church and state" and persists even in our society today with "unholy" alliances between priests and politicians.

In addition, the principle "might makes right" is still promoted in most organized religions, such as Islam and most Christian sects (including Mormonism). In these religions, the presiding "judge" for each family (that is, the person whose opinion about "justice" is enforced) is "ordained" (by the church) to be the one who is strongest (i.e., the man). No doubt this experience in each family ruled by "might makes right" contributed to the idiotic notion that "God ALMIGHTY HIMself" was waiting upstairs, as the "supreme judge", to decree final judgments on everyone.

Thus, Dear, there are two "polar opposites" from the recommended "judicial principle" of "bartering" or "reciprocity" or "give equal value for value received". Rand called these two polar opposites: 1) "the morality of the mystics" (i.e., "give more than you receive" – which simultaneously means

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that “the mystics” and whoever the mystics designate as “rightful receivers” are immoral, for they get more than they give!), and 2) “the morality of muscle” or “the morality of the brutes” (i.e., “might makes right” – which means that “the mightier” get more than they give). Throughout history, priests and politicians have had a great time with these two “moralities”, in many cases playing both poles against the people. In some cases, the political leaders forced the people to give more than they received (e.g., in exorbitant taxes) while the priests preached to a selected group (i.e., the “givers”, not the “receivers”!) that it was right to give more than you receive. In other cases, the priests also had “the might”, and the people were therefore enslaved, while the priests became rich and fat (especially in Europe during the “Dark Ages” and in most Islamic countries, continuing today).

As taught by Mother Nature (and therefore, throughout most of history), the two most common ways for people to respond to “the morality of the mystics” and “the morality of the brutes” is “fight or flight”; a third way, as I described in **F**, is to try to fence them off. In the case of only the two of you on Earth, you probably would have the option of fleeing his tyranny, which also would be a way of fencing him off from influencing you. If, instead, you chose to fight, then two obvious options are “intellectual warfare” (try to get the young man to see the errors in his thinking – but rarely has anyone who has adopted “might makes right” been convinced by reasoning to abandon this morality) or “open warfare” (using any techniques in one’s arsenal).⁶

In the case of you and this young man who adopted “might makes right”, if the option of flight seemed poor and if you found that “he wouldn’t listen to reason”, then you would need to fight. That is, you would need to adopt his moral principle of “might makes right” – and show him that “might” doesn’t necessarily mean who is stronger; rather, it can mean who is brighter (i.e., you would need to show him what is meant by “brains over brawn”). History shows that, eventually, brains always win over brawn. With their relatively enormous brains, humans have won all wars against all powerful

⁶ Dear: A third option, e.g., “Satyagraha” or “passive resistance” (which, as I’ll show you in later chapters was well used by Mahatma Gandhi and by Martin Luther King), relies on exposing the “injustices” to a large number of people, whom the “leaders” fear. If the method is successful, the “leaders” can then be moved (by their fear of the people) to correct some of the injustices. Such an option would obviously be unavailable to you if there were only the two of you on Earth.

animals. With their invention of weapons, all Davids with their slingshots have always eventually defeated all Goliaths with their muscles.

Once the young man in your life has chosen “might makes right”, then to reject his choice without fleeing or fencing him off, you would need to temporarily accept his “judicial principle” – and then demonstrate to him that “bright makes might”! You would need to choose your weapon and your attack carefully: maybe you could “accidentally” burn the shelter and all your food supplies, so that he would be forced to struggle for his own survival; maybe you could find a root or plant or herb that would make him dreadfully ill; maybe you could bind him when he slept and then suitably punish him when he was bound, and so on. The point is, Dear, if anyone is stupid enough to adopt the principle “might makes right”, then there’s a fair probability that eventually you can defeat anyone who is that stupid – but certainly it’s not certain.

Unfortunately, in an absolutely horrible number of cases throughout history, a single person (or even a group of people) has been unable to fight or flee or fence off such an injustice. When a brute has adopted the morality “might makes right”, sometimes he has so much power that a single person (or even a group of people) cannot, during a reasonable time period, defeat such a brute – as most slaves throughout history learned from horrible experiences.

In modern times, even in the Western World where overt slavery has been abolished, still there are an enormous number of cases (especially in modern bureaucracies) in which someone gains power over people, effectively treating them as slaves. Then, history has shown that the only resolution is in “power of the people”; that is, for a sufficiently large group of people suffering a similar injustice to join together – but I’ll get to this resolution in a later chapter dealing with social justice (and injustice). For now, let me comment just on the case when an individual feels trapped and treated unjustly in a two-party relationship.

I’m sorry to report, Dear, that my experience has been that finding “just” resolutions in disputes between two people are rarely available in modern bureaucracies. Modern bureaucracies are power structures, and if (for example) you go to your boss’s boss or to “the human relations department” to try to right some wrong perpetrated by your boss, normally you will be unable to find a judge who is disinterested in the outcome. You can then try

to find justice in our legal system, but normally not without substantial cost, effort, and emotional strain – and all with very uncertain outcome.

As I sketched in an earlier chapter (F), in my job I spent a decade in such a hell, but most of my “resolution” to what I considered to be a gross injustice was probably too specific to be of much value to you. My specific economic condition argued against my seeking employment elsewhere (i.e., flight), but if you ever encounter a similar tyrant, it would probably be best for you to quit. Normally it’s useless to seek a resolution within the bureaucracy, and unless you can thoroughly document the injustices (e.g., unless you can tape-record conversations – an activity that’s illegal in many states), then it’s probably useless to seek a settlement in court. Generally, you can’t fight your “boss”, even verbally – you will just be fired. Thereby, no wonder that some people take guns to work (or even to school) in an attempt to achieve some “justice”.

But, as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) said: “Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more man’s nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out.” In my case, I had sufficient strength in science and sufficiently good communications with my research sponsor that I could just fence off the tyrant: for the final decade of my career, I worked out of my home office, going to “the office” only for the occasional meeting and also every evening to pick up my mail. It was during this time that I came to understand the wisdom in the resolution: “The best revenge is to live well.”

But enough of my digging out memories from the past, and actually, enough of this “limit argument” in which it was assumed there was only the two of you on Earth. Instead, to proceed to examine more about “interpersonal justice” (and to begin to try to show you something about “social justice”), let me consider some aspects of another way to resolve differences in opinion about “what’s fair”, a method that written records show has been used for at least the past 5,000 years, namely, to get a “third party” involved as a “judge”.

Of course one hopes that, in the modern world, a person who feels treated unfairly in a two-party relationship will be able to find justice before a “third-party” judge who, if not “objective”, will at least be “disinterested” (i.e., have no stake in the outcome) and who has the power to enforce suitable justice. But then many questions arise: Who gets to be the judge? Who would be fair? His mother? Someone disinterested in the outcome?

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How can you be sure the judge is disinterested? What will be the basis of the judge's judgment? Why do judges get to define justice? What sort of justice do people get from judges? Is the judge a male chauvinist? Was the judge indoctrinated in some patriarchal religion (such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Mormonism) in which a central tenet is that women should be subservient to men? Will the judge start his hearing by requiring the petitioners to swear on the Bible (!) to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God"? I'll begin to address such questions in the next chapter. Meanwhile, may I remind you again about the morality of getting some exercise – and the personal justice if you don't?!