

01 – Openness, Opinions & Objectives

Dear: Let me start by describing what happened this morning at dawn. You may think that the following is a fabrication, but it's not. I'll try to describe what occurred as openly and as objectively as I can.

I was out walking in the desert (at dawn, because by mid-morning, the temperature was forecast to be over 100°F) wondering and somewhat worrying about how to impress on you my opinion about the importance of asking yourself: *What's the objective?* With the sun not quite up over the mountains (south and east), and with the nearly full moon still quite bright in the southwestern sky, I stopped for a few minutes, as I usually do, at the top of the hill overlooking the river. To the southwest, almost aligned with the moon, I saw what appeared to be a duck flying from the southwest toward the northeast. It was alone. I suspected that it was a duck (before I could see details), because of the way it flew: long neck forward and little wings flapping rapidly and angled back (as on a Boeing 727, if you know your airplanes).

The bird's flight path was taking it directly overhead (about 200 feet above me), and as it came closer, I saw that, if it were a duck, then it had the craziest "color scheme" that I had ever seen on a duck: not only was it just black and white, but it had distinct patterns of white, both on its wings and body. On its wings, I think the white was in the shape of a diamond (but I'm not sure, because they were flapping so rapidly); on its body, there was white in a distinct strip, or even a rectangular shape. My impression was that, if this were a duck, it must have been "painted" by an amateur! Surely Mother Nature wouldn't give a duck such a simplistic design and with only a black and white "color scheme"!

I stared in amazement as it flew past. Then, when it was maybe a quarter of a mile past me, it started to swing toward the south. My immediate impression was that it had just then encountered the sunlight in its eyes (the sun was just about to come up over the mountains, and the sun's rays would soon hit me), and I therefore thought that maybe it gave up its excursion (wherever it might have been going) to return to the river. And "sure enough", it kept turning, more and more toward the river, until it was flying southwest, back from where it came.

But then, it kept turning. This is the truth, Dear: it kept turning until it had swung in a complete, huge circle, a huge “O” (at least a half mile in diameter), until it was again on its original flight plan, again coming directly toward me, from the southwest toward the northeast. As it flew overhead for the second time, this time less than 100 feet above me, I studied it again. As it flew over, I could see its eyes clearly: they seem to be fixed on mine and seemed to be yellow (perhaps reflecting the sun). Then, it continued flying northeast, until I lost sight of it, when it was well over a mile away.

Upon returning home, I told your grandmother of the incident. She wasn’t impressed. After breakfast, I had a snooze (I had been up since about midnight). Upon awakening, I immediately saw the significance of the incident: the duck (or nighthawk or whatever it was) didn’t fly in a circle, it flew in a huge “O”, as in: **Openness, Opinions, & Objectives!** And the message it carried from the gods was totally obvious, as obvious as black *versus* white, night *versus* day, and the moon *versus* the sun. And if, similar to your grandmother, your opinion is that I’m “losing it”, well then, Dear, read on: at the end of the next chapter (there are two O-chapters), I’ll try to put the message in black and white, as clear as black *vs.* white, also for you!

But before trying to show you that, let me show you what I review with ‘O’ when I walking, starting with:

O: Openness – with myself; with others, temper openness with tact.

In the “No” chapter, N, I mentioned what I mean by the need for “openness with myself” when making decisions about constraining instincts. Also, although the desirability of tempering openness with tact when interacting with others is probably obvious to you, Dear, let me mention why I remind myself of such an obvious idea, namely, because of an experience in my life. Because of that experience, I had to relearn the old lesson about tact – and maybe still have not learned it very well. Let me explain what happened.

TEMPERING OPENNESS WITH TACT

Before about 1970 (when I was younger than about 30), I expect that I interacted with others with a normal amount of tact – though other, tactless people (!) may disagree (☺). Then, the research company where I worked sent me to a weeklong “communications workshop”, which was a very strange experience. The organizers of this workshop put about a dozen of us

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(from companies from around the world and all males, although I'm fairly sure that the exclusion of females wasn't part of any plan) in a room for eight hours per day, with a totally unspecified agenda and with no workshop organizer or other authority figure, save for someone (whom we later learned was a psychologist) who refused to say anything at all – even to tell us why we were there!

It was quite an experience, not knowing the objective. For the first hour-or-so of the first day, there was a lot of idle and somewhat nervous chatter (and quite a few fairly good jokes!), mostly concerned with wondering what we were supposed to do and joking about the tardiness of whoever was to supposed to be running “the workshop”. You should understand, Dear, that all of us considered ourselves to be rather important and certainly very busy “professionals”, not accustomed to having nothing to do! By the time of the first morning's coffee break, we had decided to at least introduce ourselves.

And so on it went. By the end of the second day, it was amazing to be hearing (and telling) so many life stories. By the end of the third day, some quite amazing communications were occurring. As a result, I learned a lot about “open communications” and about how to read even non-verbal and indirect communications (such as people's posture, “body signs”, and the way words are enunciated and linked). And for quite some time after that week's experience – I mean for years – I was hooked on the desirability of “open communications”. From my experience at that workshop (and immediately thereafter), I learned that there are enormous benefits to be among people with whom communications are open and honest.

But gradually over the years since then, I've seen that open communications must be constrained, with tact. If you communicate openly with people who are not expecting it, some rather shocking responses can occur – including, in the case of male-male interactions, some flying fists! I've found that, generally, open communications for me is easier with women than with men. But in any case, open communications should be developed only slowly – except, perhaps, with strangers whom you don't expect to meet again. Except in such cases, open communications should be developed slowly and constrained with tact – if your objective is to be able to continue to communicate openly! Thus, if the other person has made a stupid statement, or acted like an idiot, or has body odor, or whatever, then you're better off broaching the topic carefully – if at all. It's a pity, perhaps, but tact is normally necessary.

Stated differently (and as you also no doubt have learned), many times it's most appropriate to keep our opinions to ourselves. But even though I'm sure you've learned that lesson by yourself, Dear, please let me "harp on it" for a while, to try to make sure you understand what 'opinions' are. Thereby, I hope you'll see that a prime cause of a huge amount of trouble in this world (both for individuals and for societies) is inadequate evaluations of opinions, especially about objectives.

FORMING OPINIONS

To start, let me show you the definitions of the word 'opinion' as given in my copy of Webster's dictionary (omitting its legal meaning):

1. a belief not based on absolute certainty or positive knowledge but on what seems true, valid, or probable to one's own mind; judgment **2.** an evaluation, impression, or estimation of the quality or worth of a person or thing [or idea!]

Synonyms: **opinion** applies to a conclusion or judgment which, while it remains open to dispute, seems true or probable to one's own mind (it's my *opinion* that he'll agree); a **view** is an opinion affected by one's personal manner of looking at things (she gave us her *views* on life); **sentiment** refers to an opinion that is the result of deliberation but is colored with emotion; **belief** refers to the mental acceptance of an idea or conclusion, often a doctrine or dogma proposed to one for acceptance (religious *beliefs*); a **conviction** is a strong belief about whose truth one has no doubts...

For example, I hold the *view* [or more accurately, I have the *sentiment* (because my opinion is influenced by the experiences of my grandchildren) and even the *conviction*] that all religions are just opinions, derived from models of this universe (and our place within it) developed from inadequate data, with incompetent analysis, by primitive people in the infancy of the human intellect and now held by people who believe more than they think.

More to the point, Dear, is this. During your life, you'll be exposed to literally millions of ideas. Some of these ideas you'll consider sufficiently important to form opinions about them: that they're valid or invalid, sensible or nonsense, profound or silly, stupendous or stupid, and so on – and all shades in-between! Then, based on your opinion about some idea, you may choose to take some action: "That sounds like a good idea; let's go for it!" or "Nah, I don't wanna do it; it's a dumb idea." Thus, the steps that

you normally take are: idea, evaluation, opinion, action. And what I hope you see, Dear, is that (once again) the critical step is *evaluation*.

Thus, Dear, before you take any action, before you form any opinion, please be certain that you have appropriately evaluated the relevant idea. For example, before you undertake to live your life as some clerics dictate, before you form an opinion about “the truth” (or falsity) of the contents of some “holy book”, I strongly encourage you to evaluate the clerics’ ideas. As I tried to show you in the “I-chapters”, the keys to evaluating any idea are to return to the data upon which any sound idea must be based and to examine if the predictions of hypotheses derived from the data have been validated. That is, in a nutshell, before taking any action, make sure that your opinions are derived from applications of the scientific method.

Looked at from a different perspective, please don’t buy into the crazy, “politically-correct” idea in our culture that “all opinions deserve respect.” It ain’t so! Data deserve respect (if the data are reliable and reproducible); hypotheses that summarize a substantial amount of data and have predictive capability deserve respect – at least so long as their predictions are validated; if not, dump them! But, Dear, as I’ve written before, opinions don’t deserve “respect”: opinions are a dime a dozen, a penny a pound, a token a ton! And yes, Dear, in a free society you have the right to your own opinions – but that doesn’t mean that your opinions are right!

When I’m walking, I remind myself about such ideas with the following.

O: Opinions: Derive all opinions from reliable data and tested hypotheses. Never base an opinion just on rumor; never base an opinion just on feelings; never base an opinion just on authority; never base an opinion just on popularity; never stop testing the hypotheses on which an opinion is based; never fail to examine the reliability of the data; never abandon the scientific method.

Now, Dear, although I’m sure that the above is obvious to you, yet because of your experiences, please permit me to “harp on it” some more. Thus, ever since you were a baby you’ve been totally immersed in your parents’ and your church’s opinion that you have an “immortal soul” and that there’s some giant Jabberwock in the sky (God) who plans to judge your morality, “suitably” rewarding or punishing you for how you lived your life (according to the clerics’ rules). Those are some pretty amazing opinions!

And were my poor grandchildren (and literally billions of other children throughout the world!) ever provided some data to support such opinions? Were they ever shown how tests of the predictions of such hypotheses have been verified? Or were they told, in hundreds – if not thousands – of different ways (from approving smiles to disapproving frowns, and from the purchase of new clothes for attending church to being sent to bed without dinner) that conforming to such opinions was “good” and disagreeing with such opinions was “bad”? Such children are shown that parental love depends on their conforming to their parents’ opinions. You were told that agreeing with such opinions was your ticket to heaven and that disagreeing with them meant that you were headed for hell! Say it isn’t so! Please!

In startling contrast, Dear, please consider the opinions that in all interactions of otherwise isolated mechanical systems, total momentum and total energy are conserved, or entropy always increases, or that it’s impossible to precisely define the momentum and the position of anything simultaneously, or that... You want to see some data that support such opinions? Millions of data sets can be provided. You want to see that predictions from these hypotheses have been validated? Again, data from literally millions of such “validation experiments” are available. And if you want to “prove it for yourself”, take some courses in physics, and if you’re anything like your old grandfather, you’ll be sorry that you said that – but then, maybe you’re different and will enjoy doing all those physics lab experiments!

Oh, and by the way, Dear, if you still don’t accept these opinions, then go for it: if you don’t accept such scientific ideas, you’re headed NOT for hell but to the life of an experimental physicist (which, now that I think of it... but that’s only my opinion, based on...). But if you can demonstrate that such opinions are wrong, Dear, you won’t be considered bad, your parents won’t stop loving you, you won’t be “excommunicated” from some church, and you aren’t headed for hell – unless that’s your opinion of physics labs! Instead, I essentially guarantee you that you’ll be awarded a Nobel Prize.

Sorry to belabor the point, Dear, but not only do I hold the opinion that the point I’m trying to make is critically important, I’m flabbergasted that more people don’t seem to realize it – and I’m “mad as hell” that people are so cruel as to force their dimwitted opinions on poor little children, who don’t yet have experience to critically evaluate ideas and thereby, to form their own opinions. It’s immoral – and I’m certain that, someday, all societies

will advance sufficiently to make such indoctrination illegal: at present, most societies don't permit physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of children; surely in the not too distant future, mental abuse of children will also be prohibited. And the worst is that parents, themselves, do it to their own children – “worse” because, by natural selection, through thousands of generations, children instinctively trust their parents.

WHY DO PARENTS DO IT?!

The obvious question is: Why does it occur? Why do parents fill their children's minds with such balderdash about gods and souls? And I think that many reasonable answers to such questions are equally obvious:

- 1) Because most parents who indoctrinate their children with such nonsense don't consider the ideas to be nonsense, since they were indoctrinated with the same ideas by their own parents (i.e., they perpetrate the lie, because in their opinion, it's the “truth”); therefore, they indoctrinate their children because, in their opinion, it's the kind, correct, and “wise” thing to do
- 2) Because, even if some parents have some doubts about the validity of such silly ideas, they don't realize the harm done by indoctrinating their own children with the same dumb ideas; parents hold the opinion that such ideas didn't hurt them when they were kids; so, they “reason”, the same ideas won't hurt their own kids
- 3) Because it's a method to try to control the kids, similar to the method of using the Santa-Claus myth: “If you don't behave, then you won't get any Christmas presents, I'll send you to your room, God won't let you into heaven, and if you don't smarten up, he'll send you to hell”
- 4) Because it's a way (and, for some parents, the only way) to make sense of the world and to respond to their kids' questions (e.g., “How come some people have black skins?”, “Why is the sky is blue?”, “What happens to people after they die?”); to such questions, parents can respond with all sorts of gibberish that starts with “Because God...” and the poor kids “think” that their wonderful, natural, inquisitiveness has been satisfied. And although I'm sure that this list could be continued, let me end with
- 5) Because the parents have been indoctrinated by their clerics to “think” that, if they (the parents) are going to “save” their own “immortal souls”, to experience the “paradise of eternal bliss” and avoid the “hell of eternal damnation”, then they must train their children to be good little... [fill in the blank with “Christians”, “Muslims”, “Mormons”, or whatever].

Let me give you at least a little evidence to support the fifth reason listed above. In the case of Judaism, the King James Version (KJV) of the Old Testament (*Deuteronomy 4, 10*) states (with italics added):

Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, “Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and *that they may teach their children.*”

Also, in *Proverbs 22, 6*, is the explicit instruction: “Train up a child in the way he should go.” In the case of Christianity, the clerics had their Jesus say (*Matthew 19, 14*):

Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

In the case of Islam, it’s nothing less than criminal to see (as I have) that the entire “education” of a large number of children is nothing but memorizing the Koran! And as for Mormonism, there’s the general direction given in the Book of Mormon at *2 Nephi 25, 23*

We labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ...

as well as specific instructions, given both by Sidney Rigdon and by Joseph Smith, to indoctrinate children with their nonsense. Thus, in the Mormon’s *Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) 68, 25*, Sydney Rigdon has Joseph Smith proclaim in the 1831 “revelation”:

And again, inasmuch as parents have children... that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

And thereby, Dear, the idiotic “God idea” is propagated, generation after generation, constantly keeping the clerics’ collection plate full and the clerics fat and content. But I want to push aside until later chapters (in **P** and in **Qx** and **Yx**) investigating data that support my opinion that the primary cause of indoctrinating children with the God idea is clerical ignorance, greed, and cunningness in running their con games. Here, instead, I’ll try to focus your attention on a critically important step in the evaluation of any idea that anyone proposes for your consideration, namely, seeking an answer to the fundamental question:

WHAT'S THE OBJECTIVE?

When I'm walking and get to 'O', then after reminding myself about 'opinions' (as I showed you earlier), I remind myself of the above fundamental question (dealing with objectives) as follows:

O: Objective: Never forget to ask, "What's the objective?" Neither priorities nor moralities can be established unless the objective is known. But be careful: the ends don't justify the means; the means are ends in themselves; the important question, therefore, is: what's the most important "end"; i.e., what's the most important objective?

I trust you agree, Dear, that before you undertake something (save perhaps if you're at an "open-communications" workshop!), it's critically important and totally obvious that you must know the objective. In the vernacular: "If you don't know what you're 'sposed to do, then whadya gonna do?" And although it's critically important and trivial obvious that objectives must be known, the vast majority of humans apparently either fail to ask themselves this fundamental question (even for the "undertaking" of living the remainder of their lives!) or just accept the objectives stipulated by their parents as a part of clerical con games.

Thus, perhaps the major reason why people fail to ask *What's the objective?* is because someone has already told them what they're supposed to do. For example, when we're children, our parents never seem to tire of telling us what to do; when we're in school, our teachers never stop telling us what to do; and when we get a job, always but always we're told what we're supposed to do. In fact, for most people in most cultures, the indoctrination starts even earlier. For you, for example (similar to most people in most cultures), ever since you were a baby, you've been indoctrinated into accepting objectives for your life that were dictated by a bunch of lamebrain, con-artist clerics.

As a result, the vast majority of humans do whatever clerics of their culture tell them (or, at least, they "know" what they're "supposed to do"!), typically given as explicit commandments of the form "thou shalt not". People are to *obey!* To promote their control of the people, the clerics even add a carrot and a stick (i.e., fear and hope, probably the most powerful emotions in most people and, in fact, in most animals): if you obey us, then you'll get eternal bliss in heaven (a juicy carrot); if you don't, then you're

headed for eternal damnation in hell (a huge, ugly stick). And meanwhile, all the clerics of the world have a very clear view of their own objectives: sit back, relax, and have the people produce goods and services for their consumption! And thus, as I'll go into in some detail in Chapter **P8**, all priests are parasites on producers of the world.

Therefore, Dear, maybe you appreciate one of the principal objectives for my writing this book: to urge you (and other children) to *evaluate* all ideas, to form your opinions for yourself, to hold your opinions only as strongly as relevant evidence warrants, and to define your own objectives – rather than to accept someone else's purposes and then just *obey*. Consequently, after trying to stimulate you to be aware (with **A**), I started immediately (in **B**) by showing you how I convened my “Board of Governors” to try to discern my own objectives. And in this book ever since **B**, I've been “testing your patience” by repeating my conclusion that, as far as I can make sense of all relevant data, the prime goal (or objective) of all humans is our trio of survival goals (of ourselves, our extended families, and our values).

Now, Dear, although (as I've stated before) I'd be glad to hear from you if you think I'm mistaken in my opinion about the prime objective of all humans (in fact, I'd be triply pleased: to learn of your ideas, your skepticism of mine, and your evaluation of the data), yet, I'm really quite certain that I'm right, because an enormous amount of data supports my conclusion that the prime objective of all humans is their trio of survival goals. I include among these data even the behavior of humans who accept the objectives and values dictated by the clerics of their culture. In such cases, however, the clerics have managed to indoctrinate their “followers” with some absolutely crazy “values” – out to and including the value of strapping explosives around their waists to die for the “jihad”, then to proceed directly to the objective of gaining “eternal survival” in a fictitious paradise promised by parasitic clerics.

That is, Dear, I've formed the opinion that differences in behaviors of different groups of humans arise not from differences in *objectives* (i.e., we all pursue our trio of survival goals), but from differences in ideas about what “survival” means (e.g., seeking to continue to live this life *versus* seeking to live forever) and in the resulting choice of *values*. In particular, if all humans are (very crudely!) divided into two sets labeled “naturalists” (or “secular humanists” or “Brights”) *versus* “supernaturalists” (or “religious” or...), then we naturalists choose our values relative to our dual survival

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goals (of ourselves and our extended families, out to an including all life). In contrast (and typically in conflict with naturalists), supernaturalists choose values allegedly communicated to clerics by their fictitious gods – values that most clerics claim must be adopted if the religious are to achieve “eternal survival of their immortal souls in paradise”.

As I’ll try to show you in later chapters, resulting differences in opinions about values have led to horrible disagreements, whose origin is as artificial as the clerics’ gods – but which, nonetheless, have led throughout history to a continuous series of absolutely atrocious brutalities, murders, and wars. And today or tomorrow, it’ll continue: some dimwit humans, unable or unwilling to evaluate the data to form their own opinions, will follow some clerical craziness and kill some other humans (who, in turn, follow the crazy ideas of another cadre of criminal clerics). Meanwhile (as I’ll also try to show you in later chapters), during at least the past 2500 years, naturalists have been not only shaking their heads in sorrow over such sad, misplaced objectives but also trying as best they can to stop the clerics’ carnage.

But the priests of all persuasions have been powerful and have demonstrated, again and again, that they’re not above steering their followers to do “whatever is necessary” to stop naturalists from interfering in clerical con games, including insults, incarcerations, exiles, tortures, and murders – and thus the insults, incarcerations, and exiles of naturalists from Anaxagoras to Paine, and the murder of innumerable other secular humanists, from Hypatia to John Lennon. But for now, let me abstain from digging deeper into historical details (I’ll do some of that in **Yx**); instead, here I’ll return to some simple analyses of “values”, such as those dealing with morality and justice, to try to identify a few root problems and to begin suggesting solutions.

MORALITY BASED ON OBJECTIVES

First, let me review some results from analyses of earlier chapters. Thus, in the “limit argument” that I showed you a few chapters back, I reached the conclusion:

The bases for any shared moral values, judicial principles, customs, and laws should be agreed-upon rules for interactions among people; opinions of supernaturalists notwithstanding, nothing “supernatural” is needed to define moral values, judicial principles, or laws.

I hope you agree with the above conclusion, Dear, but I realize that you might not, because it blatantly contradicts your religious indoctrination.

Similarly, from another simple “limit argument”, I concluded:

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.*

In a word, the moral code that I hope you’ll consider adopting is: **Evaluate!**

Now, Dear, if the above seem trivially obvious to you, then you probably wonder why I plan to spend (waste?) more of your time digging deeper. Part of my reason is to show you that, in fact, a large percentage of all people have apparently found the above ideas to be either obscure or wrong. And another part of my reason for digging deeper is to reveal the errors of such people – and to suggest how humanity may yet find a way to get out of the huge hole in which it has dug itself. To begin my digging, I’ll start with some definitions.

As I reviewed in an earlier chapter, the principal definition of the adjective ‘moral’ (as in “moral code”) given in my copy of Webster’s dictionary is:

relating to, dealing with, or capable of making the distinction between right and wrong in conduct.

Now, if we apply a little common sense, does this definition seem reasonable? For example, when I engage in “conducts” such as walking or whistling (for my enjoyment), “making the distinction between right and wrong” seems rather irrelevant. I therefore suggest – but only tentatively – that a better definition might be to use the word “objective” rather than “conduct”, i.e., a better principal definition for the adjective ‘moral’ would seem to be: *relating to, dealing with, or capable of making the distinction between right and wrong in [pursuit of some objective].*

Isn’t it obvious, Dear, that if a decision is to be made about whether or not some action is “right” or “wrong” (and all shades in-between!), then it’s necessary to know the objective? For example, if your objective is to build a

house, then it's "right" to use (among other things) some wood, a hammer, and some nails and "wrong" to use marshmallows and peanut butter (or whatever other crazy stuff might be proposed for building a house). Or if your objective is to get a job (so that you will be able to look after yourself when you're an adult), then it's probably "right" for you to study tonight and "wrong" for you to go to another party – after all, tonight's a "school night" and you have a test tomorrow! That is, **just as with any value, moral value has meaning only relative to some objective.**

Thereby, Dear, I'm suggesting, first, that the morality of any act can be judged only relative to objectives. That is, ideas of 'right' and 'wrong' are not "absolutes" (like apples on some mystical tree, in some mystical Garden of Eden, or like some words chiseled in some stone tablets) but depend on your objectives: if you want to get to the moon, it's "wrong" to use a shovel (unless you're digging for titanium or something else that you'll need for your rocket!); if you want to want to learn quantum mechanics, it's "right" to learn calculus well; if you want generally to live peacefully in your society, then generally it's "wrong" to violate the laws and customs of your society; and if you want to survive and someone is coming at you with a knife, then shoot him!

But, Dear, as you probably see, the above ideas are woefully inadequate – because obviously you must then decide if your *objectives* are right or wrong (and all shades in-between). Thus, not only must you decide if your thousand-and-one (then, sub-) objectives are right or wrong [Is it right to try to get to the moon? Is it right to learn quantum mechanics? Is it right to want generally to live peacefully in your society?], you must also decide if your prime objectives (your trio of survival goals) are "right" or "wrong".

MORALITY OF SUB-OBJECTIVES

Let me illustrate the first part of the above conditional statement (viz., the need to evaluate the morality of your sub-objectives). In contrast to the sub-objectives listed in the previous paragraph (going to the moon, learning quantum mechanics, etc.), which are easily seen to be consistent with the prime goal of all humans (i.e., our trio of survival goals), there are a huge number of examples of people who have done (and are doing) incredible evils, doing what was "right" in pursuit of "wrong" objectives. Examples include the Hebrews under Moses (as depicted in the Bible), the Christians during the Dark Ages, the Nazis under Hitler, the Japanese under Emperor

Hirohito, the Communists under Stalin, modern-day Islamic “suicide bombers” – and parents indoctrinating their children with the god idea.

For example, Hitler’s objective was to create a “pure Aryan race” (a meaningless, racist concept), and although he obviously convinced his followers that it was therefore “right” to kill millions of Jewish people, just as obviously, his objective was horribly “wrong”. And similarly, about 3,000 years before Hitler, the objective of Moses was [allegedly] to promote the welfare of “God’s chosen people” (another meaningless, racist concept), and although he allegedly convinced his followers (by quoting his fictitious God) that it was therefore “right” to steal the land from those who dwelled in what is now called Israel (and to murder all the inhabitants, including all women and children), yet just as obviously, Moses and his followers were horribly “wrong”. From those two examples, I hope you agree, Dear, not only that ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ must be judged relative to an objective but also that the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of all (sub-) objectives (i.e., all lower-priority goals) must be judged relative to our prime objectives.

Stated differently, Dear, I hope you agree that “the ends” don’t justify “the means” – either agreeing with your grandmother who says *there are no ‘ends’, only ‘means’* or agreeing with your grandfather [me!] who says *the ‘means’ are ‘ends’ in themselves*. What your grandmother means by *there are no ‘ends’, only ‘means’* is that never yet, in the history of the world, has there been an end! And claims of the clerics’ Jesus (and Paul and Peter and...) notwithstanding, Dear, it’s highly unlikely that the end will occur any time soon – especially if you’ll devise a method for eliminating any asteroid on collision course with the Earth!

In contrast to your grandmother’s idea of incorporating an idea of time in the word ‘end’, I use the word ‘end’ as a synonym for ‘objective’ or ‘goal’ (when I remind myself that *‘means’ are ‘ends’ in themselves*). That is, Dear, I remind myself that the ‘means’ are to be included among my ‘values’, and promoting my values is one of my trio of survival goals (of myself, my extended family, and my values). Consequently, Dear, whenever you wonder if some end justifies the means, please first realize that the means are ends in themselves – and then tackle the sometimes difficult problem of deciding *which ‘end’ is more important to you: the end pursued via the means, or any of the ends that are camouflaged as means*.

For example, Dear, should you lie (e.g., use ‘tact’!) to achieve some end? I hope you see that there’s no “absolute” answer to that question. In contrast, the clerics are crazy to command: “**Thou shalt not bear false witness**”. It depends on the situation; you must decide which “end” is more important. Although generally it’s a good idea to tell the truth, if you lie to try to cheer up your mother (telling her that the dinner was wonderful), to try protect someone from being murdered, or similar, then in such cases, the end can justify the means. On the other hand, if someone lies when he says that he didn’t steal something (i.e., lies to avert appropriate punishment), that end doesn’t justify the means – it just demonstrates that he’s a liar as well as a thief. Thus, again, Dear: the ends are means in themselves, and what’s needed is to decide which end (i.e., which objective) is most important.

But as important as I consider the above ideas to be, they deal only with the first part of the conditional statement

not only must you decide if your thousand-and-one (then, sub-) objectives are right or wrong... but also you must decide if your prime objectives (your trio of survival goals) are “right” are “wrong”.

That is, the above ideas deal only with the morality of your sub-objectives, and what I hope you’ll conclude, Dear, is that you should always evaluate the morality of pursuing any sub-objective (such as going to a party tonight) relative to your trio of survival goals.

MORALITY OF OUR PRIME OBJECTIVES

So now, Dear, I’ll turn to the second part of the conditional statement and therefore to the “potentially tougher problem” of deciding on the morality of our trio of survival goals. As I’ll be showing you, this problem has plagued humanity for at least the past 5,000 years (and probably longer, but the written record extends back only 5,000 years). Further, it’s a problem that still plagues the vast majority of humans, evidence for which includes the next suicide bomber and the next outbreak of religious warfare. And what is so absolutely horrible about the whole situation is that the problem is entirely bogus! Led by innumerable idiotic clerics, billions of people have wasted their lives pursuing the solution to a problem when the problem, itself, is only a figment of their imaginations! Let me try to explain.

Dear: The next time you have nothing better to do, why don't you ask a tree if it "thinks" it's "morally right" for it to be living, or ask your dog if he "thinks" it's "morally right" for him to be eating, or ask your cat if she "thinks" it's "morally right" for her to have kittens. If they could talk, the conversation might proceed something similar to the following:

"Your questions make no sense", anyone of them would probably respond, "because 'moral value' (as with any 'value') can be meaningfully measured only relative to our dual survival goals (of ourselves and our extended families)."

"So..." you might respond to them (if you've been sufficiently indoctrinated by the clerics of our culture), "that only displays the difference between you and we humans: we measure morality relative to our sense of values."

"Indeed," replies the skeptical cat while licking her coat, "and against what, pray tell, do you measure your 'sense of values'?"

"Our sense of values", you state indignantly, parroting the priests, "is conveyed to us through our clerics as revealed to the great prophets by God Almighty HIMself."

"Do tell," said the impatient puppy, intrigued by his own tail "and against what does this giant Jabberwock in the sky measure HIS sense of values?"

"That", you reply with due reverence and echoing the clerics, "is beyond human comprehension. God works in mysterious ways. It is not for mere humans to question the ways of the Lord."

Whereupon the dog abandoned interest in his tail and started chasing the cat, the cat ran up the tree, the dog urinated on the tree's trunk, the dead branch (on which the cat sat) broke and hit the dog – and I heard the tree say: "I've been wanting to get rid of that dead branch for a long time, I thank the dog for the nitrogen, and am amazed at the tenacity and intelligence of that cat."

Sorry, Dear, as you know, sometimes I get carried away. But, Dear, I "dearly" hope that you clearly see my point. No giant Jabberwock in the sky ever defined moral value or any other value. A billion-or-so years ago, probably in a pool of organic goo, a molecule learned how to reproduce itself, thereby simultaneously declaring the meaning for 'morality': for it to continue to "live". Therefore, Dear, it's a totally bogus question to ask about the morality of pursuing your trio of survival goals (of yourself, your extended family, and your values) – provided that your 'values' are derived from your dual survival goals (viz., your own survival and the survival of others). The question is bogus – because pursuing your dual survival goals is the objective with respect to which morality acquires meaning.

To state the same conclusion differently, Dear, let me go back to correct the dictionary definition of ‘moral’ – and to suggest why Webster (or whoever created the dictionary) chose not to complete the definition. As quoted above, my dictionary gives the definition for the adjective ‘moral’

relating to, dealing with, or capable of making the distinction between right and wrong in conduct.

I suspect that why the author of my dictionary didn’t “complete” this definition is because an obvious dilemma arose: whether to complete the definition with demands made by supernaturalists, e.g.,

relating to, dealing with, or capable of making the distinction between right and wrong in conduct, as judged by some giant Jabberwock in the sky

(although, perhaps an alternative description of the giant Jabberwock was contemplated!) or to complete the definition with evaluations of naturalists, e.g.,

relating to, dealing with, or capable of making the distinction between right and wrong in conduct, as defined by the Earth’s original self-replicating DNA or RNA molecule, i.e., relative to its goal of continuing to live.

If you see this fundamental difference in meaning for morality, Dear, then you can see that immediately, at the beginning of any consideration of morality (i.e., at its definition!), rational humans part company with the irrational. From there, their paths diverge, leading “free thinkers” to conclude that the act of highest morality is **Evaluate!** and leading “faithful followers” to conclude that the act of highest morality is **Obey!**

DIFFERENT CHOICES OF PRIME OBJECTIVES

Viewed differently, the source of divergence of concepts about morality can be seen from differences in choices of objectives. For those of us who realize not only that our prime objective is our trio of survival goals (of ourselves, our genes, and our values) but also that ‘values’ have meaning only with respect to our dual survival goals (of ourselves and others), then these goals provide us with the ‘standard’ for judging morality. Some “free thinkers” then conclude what Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) summarized well: “**Reverence for life affords me my fundamental principle of morality.**” Other “free thinkers”, including many “secular humanists”, might agree with

your old grandfather's "improvement" on Schweitzer's summary:
"Reverence for intelligence provides Humanists with our fundamental principle of morality", or more briefly, "The basis of morality for Humanists is our respect for intelligence."

Now, Dear, probably I should apologize to you for writing stuff that's so trite as the above: I suspect that, very quickly, you saw that it all was trivially obvious. Yet, Dear, please don't conclude that the concepts are unimportant. As I wrote in an earlier chapter (**J3**) and promised to explore later:

...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!

And although I'm still not ready to address the above point (nor will I be "ready" until the **X**-chapters!), I hope you at least see why I seem to be "harping" – and will continue to "harp" – on the concept of "objectives": until people come to closer agreement on their objectives (and therefore morality), I'm afraid that peace will continue to elude humanity.

Further, Dear, even if you consider all of the above to be trivially obvious, I'm forced to conclude that, for the vast majority of humans, it mustn't be! For, as trivially obvious as it may seem to you, this idea (that judgments about 'right' and 'wrong' can be made correctly only relative to our "reverence for [intelligent] life") has apparently escaped the comprehension of literally billions of people and for at least the past 5,000 years!

For some people, perhaps the idea that 'right' *versus* 'wrong' has meaning only with respect to "reverence for [intelligent] life" is too obvious to notice. For others, they've apparently been brainwashed by a class of moochers,

* Go to other chapters *via*

called clerics, into “believing” that some giant Jabberwock in the sky is needed to define ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ – thereby giving the clerics “the right” to mooch off productive members of society.

And in contrast to your being “bored out of your skull” by what I hope you consider to be trivially obvious (that no supernatural junk is needed to define moral codes), you may then be astounded (as I have been) to find that so many people so vehemently disagree. For example, I wouldn’t be surprised if the concept that some giant Jabberwock in the sky is needed to define morality surpasses all others as the basis for Sunday sermons. Some of the “moralists” who preach this silly idea literally scream their conviction that society would explode into immorality if “God’s truth” were abandoned; others who are more “politically correct” (such as Senator Liebermann) express their views more modestly, quietly complaining about “**the moral vacuum**” and the need “**to fill the values vacuum with a strong faith in God and the life-affirming values that flow from that.**”

For some strange reason, clerics don’t mention that, if their god(s) were unnecessary, if their god(s) were just concoctions used to continue their con games, then they’d no longer be able to continue to mooch off society – they would need to get a real job! But except for understanding their opposition to their working for a living, I find clerical idiocy to be mind boggling: I don’t understand how someone who has the ability even to speak could utter such absurdities as “**without God there could be no morality.**” But I guarantee you, Dear, that there’s a huge number of people that profess to “believe” such nonsense. And as a result of the fundamental error by the “faithful” to follow (like sheep) their shepherd’s definition of morality, their “morality” permits some totally absurd (and some absolutely horrible) activities, such as murdering people who follow different sheep herders.

And I’m very sorry to conclude, Dear, that I see no possible compromise between the opposing opinions. Unless “free thinkers” can get the “faithful followers” to start thinking for themselves, the “faithful followers” will continue to OBEY, even if it means walking into a Coliseum loaded with hungry lions, engaging in another crusade to “kill the unbelievers”, strapping explosives around their waists to “kill the infidels”, or similar hideous idiocy. And unless the “faithful followers” thereby murder all of us “free thinkers” (rather than just the few million that they’ve murdered so far), we’ll continue to refuse to obey such stupidities and will continue to think and EVALUATE.

In my opinion, therefore, it's a fight to the death: either the death of all of us Humanists, slaughtered by the "righteous religious", or the death of all ideas about all gods.

Now, given that there isn't the tiniest crumb of data supporting the existence of any god, one might think that it would be relatively easily to demolish the idea of gods – if by no other means, then by laughter! Unfortunately, however, con-artist clerics have accomplished a major coup: through centuries of conniving, they've gained control of indoctrinating children with idiotic ideas of gods, the children grow up (at least in stature) to have children of their own, a new generation is polluted with the clerics' garbage, and thus the calamity continues. Someday (my hope permits me to say), "I'm sure", such indoctrination of children will be judged by our society to be criminal; unfortunately, however, that day seems to be still quite distant.

Meanwhile, therefore, Humanists do what we can, bit by bit: a country-song writer creates lyrics describing everyday heroes, a playwright creates a new story showing how morality can be measured only relative to "reverence for [intelligent] life", a movie producer and director have the courage to show that all religions are shams, a lawyer for the ACLU offers another defense of the wall between church and state, and even an old grandfather sits down to write a book to show his grandchildren (as well as other children) that all religions are absurd and that the standard for judging the morality of any act is not only "reverence for [intelligent] life" but the degree to which the act promotes intelligence – thereby hoping that at least a few links in the chain of indoctrination, from generation to generation, can be broken.

But enough of that for now. In the next chapter, I want to dig deeper into 'objectives' – in particular, objectives that clerics of the world claim are the goals of the gods as well as their purposes for people. After that chapter (**O2**), my plan for **P1** is to "get real", by identifying the (obvious!) purpose for people that Mother Nature, herself, has decreed. Doing so will lead me closer to my desired goal of showing you how chances for peace and prosperity will increase if more people choose more realistic objectives, i.e., those consistent with our nature, namely, to help humanity evolve. Meanwhile, though, may I suggest, Dear, that you should consider another one of Nature's decrees: to stay healthy, you need to exercise!