

B – Board Meeting

Dear: In the previous chapter (or “letter”), **A**, I mentioned the “Board Meetings” in my mind. For this **B**, before I can show you the quite-simple second step in my “meditation scheme”, I’ll need to describe to you the “prime goals” of my “Board of Governors”. But before doing that, I’d better explain what I mean by “prime goals” and “Board of Governors”, and even before that, I’d better describe some general ideas about “priorities”.

PERSONAL PRIORITIES

Now Dear, I know that, for a long time (at least since you were six years old), you’ve known about the need to set priorities. You would ask me (or I would ask you): “Whaddya wanna do?” To answer that question subject to some constraints (on time, money, what’s available, and so on), what all humans do is mentally examine available options, arrange them in priority, and then choose the option of highest priority – under the given constraints. Sometimes, though, the resulting choice is undesirable; so, instead, we choose to try to remove one or more of the constraints: “Well, what I’d really like to do is float down the river in the rubber rafts; why don’t we see if we can patch the leaks.”

But please notice, Dear, that it’s impossible to arrange options in priority unless you’ve already reached a decision about your goals or objectives. On some Sunday afternoon, my goals might be to spend some time with a certain grandchild and with as little physical effort as possible; therefore, the idea of floating down the river with you was quite appealing! Your goals might have been to “get away from the kids” and have a new experience. Thus, in all instances of setting priorities, humans apply a fundamental principle, sometimes known as “the first principle of systems analysis”: *priorities of any system [such as a human!] can’t be established until after the system’s objectives are known.*

Of course, the critical importance of knowing any system’s objectives has been known since antiquity. For example, from about 2,000 years ago, there’s Publilius Syrus’s Maxim No. 777 (which isn’t a “typo”, Dear, he wrote a huge number of these “maxims”): “**In every enterprise, consider where you will come out.**” But going back much further in time, surely *the first principle of systems analysis* (that priorities can’t be established until

goals are defined) was known ever since humans first began to make choices: “If we’re gonna survive, we’ll need to find shelter in a cave”, “If we’re gonna survive, we’ll need to find something to eat besides berries, nuts, and roots”, “If we’re gonna survive, we’ll need to leave this over-populated forest and find another home”, “If we’re gonna survive, we’ll need to figure out a way to kill those beasties!”, and so on.

The same continues today: setting goals, examining options, defining priorities, and making choices summarizes much of what everyone does in life. Therefore, in this **B**, I want to show you what I’ve learned about the first link in this chain, namely, identifying my prime goals. And why I hope (and expect) that this enterprise will be of value to you, Dear, is because (as far as I can discern) these same “prime goals” or “primary objectives” are pursued by everyone – including a certain grandchild!

PRIME GOALS

Now, Dear, I grant you that it may seem quite bold (even arrogant) for your old grandfather to suggest that he knows everyone’s prime goals; so, immediately, let me add some comments. First, if you’re skeptical that I can identify essentially everyone’s prime goals, then good! I applaud your skepticism! Further, Dear, I urge you to always maintain a “healthy degree of skepticism”, a topic that I’ll return to later in this book. In particular, if anyone makes the sweeping claim of knowing everyone’s prime goals, then I hope that your skepticism is so intense that you plan to refute and reject such a claim – unless the details are totally obvious to you. And let me add that, what I plan to show you is totally obvious; that is, you already know your prime goals – but if you are similar to most people (including the way I used to be!) then you don’t realize that you already know them.

Second, if you plan to refute my claim (that I know everyone’s prime goals), because humans are so complex, certainly I would agree that humans are very complex “systems” and can have hundreds or even thousands of different goals – many pursued simultaneously and many tugging in different directions! Right now, for example, you might feel some “duty” to continue to read this “junk” written by your “weird old grandfather”, but maybe what you’d rather do is call a friend to go out for something to eat – and you know that what you really should do is help your mother and then do your homework! But for now, I don’t want to address all these

“secondary” (or “tertiary” or other lower-priority) goals; instead, I want to address only our prime goals.

By prime goal (or prime objective) I mean “the obvious”, for example, as commonly defined in systems analysis: *the prime objective of any system is that one objective for which all other objectives (which then, by definition, are lower-priority goals) would be sacrificed to achieve the prime goal.*

Why I’m then writing prime goals (i.e., a plurality), rather than prime goal (i.e., a single goal) is a complication that took me quite a while to understand – and, I’m sorry to say, will take me quite a while to explain. The complication is derived from the complexity of humans, in particular, the complex ways that we think – which then leads me to introduce you to my “Board of Governors”.

I’ve identified my prime goals by examining how I think. By the way, doing so (i.e., becoming aware of one’s thoughts, being an observer of one’s thoughts, examining and evaluating one’s thoughts) is one of the prime goals of Zen. To do so, as I described to you in **A**, I’ve held various Board Meetings in my mind, and over the years, I’ve found that the vast majority of these Board Meetings were dominated by three “people”, whom I call my “Board of Governors”. For want of better names, I call these three members of my Board of Governors: 1) “Left Brain”, 2) “Right Brain”, and 3) “Body”. Alternatively, identifying how they seem to operate, they are (respectively): 1) “reasoning or analysis”, 2) “emotion or synthesis”, and 3) “instinctively knowing”. Or as still another option, respectively identifying consequences of their activities, they are: 1) “understanding”, 2) “feeling”, and 3) “just doing”. There is also a “fourth member” of my Board of Governors, whom I call “Universe”, but let me delay introducing “him” until after I introduce you to the first three.

Now, Dear, if my Board of Governors seem “rather strange” to you, then I trust that at least you’ll agree that 1) each of us is a very complicated whole and 2) any whole can be divided (at least mentally!) in a great number of ways. One way to consider parts of a whole individual is to separately consider “mind” and “body” – as if either would be much good without the other! This is the common division that most religions consider, and then much of most religions deals with various “conflicts” between body and mind (or “soul”) – conflicts that are really just “wrestling” with the sometimes-difficult choices related to short-term vs. long-term goals. That

is, life is full of complexities, sometimes including conflicts between our short-term and long-term goals!

LEFT BRAIN *versus* RIGHT BRAIN

But for now (rather than mimic the mistakes of most religions to introduce the almost meaningless word “soul”), what I want to do, first, is consider two familiar parts of the human mind, commonly identified with reason *versus* emotion. I do this to try to understand how I think. For example, “I’ve” noticed that, in my brain, one tendency always seems to be to want to analyze “things” (sometimes to death!), e.g., the probability of hearing two meadowlarks in stereo, and also (for that matter) trying to analyze how I think! From only a little reading, I gain the impression that neurologists attribute this analytical power to our brain’s left hemisphere, which is dominated by words and mathematics. This is “man (and woman!) the rational being.”

Within my brain, in addition, there is a phenomenal capability to synthesize; to put the pieces together; to leap to conclusions, sometimes with such incredible “leaps” (in logic) and “bounds” (over rational thought) that it takes my Left Brain weeks to decipher (i.e., analyze) how my Right Brain reached its conclusion. From the little I’ve read about how brains work, I understand that the right side of my brain has difficulty with words, preferring to deal in pictures. I think that I’m correct in saying that this is “man the emotional being” – and if there is any truth in the common idea that women are more emotional than men, maybe it means that women have developed capabilities to synthesize better than have men.

Now, Dear, in reality, surely the above-outlined left-brain *versus* right-brain distinction (or dichotomy) is crude. To see this crudeness more clearly, consider the following quotation from Chapter 5 of Lloyd deMause’s online book *The Emotional Life of Nations* [from which I’ve omitted his references and to which I’ve added a few notes in brackets, such as these].¹

Since, as the neurobiologist Gerald Edelman has put it, “The likelihood of guessing how the brain works without looking at its structure seems slim,” we will begin with a brief overview of brain structure. The brain is composed of over 100 billion neurons, with trillions of connections, dendrites, which are branching extensions from the body of the neuron that pass stimuli received by axons on to other neurons through

¹ Available at http://www.psychohistory.com/htm/eln05_psychogenic.html.

synapses, the specialized connections between neurons. Since this synaptic activity is either excitatory or inhibitory, much of mental life and therefore also of social life is either manic or depressive, and one of the main tasks of leaders (as also of psychiatrists) is to adjust through social projects the level of excitation of the brain.

Memorization is thought to occur through repeated stimulation of synapses, making them grow bigger and stronger, as neurotransmitters are released across synaptic gaps. Specific memories are stored all over the brain, in a much more fractured way than a computer stores memory in many files. As with a computer, however, the crucial task is retrieval of the memory, using neural networks or brain modules that serve as ‘indexes’ for the fractured memories.

As discussed in the previous chapter [of DeMause’s book], early emotional memories are indexed in a network centering in the amygdala [“a roughly almond-shaped structure”, derived from the Greek word *amugdalē* meaning ‘almond’] while the conscious self system is indexed more in the hippocampus [“elongated ridges on the floor of each lateral ventricle of the brain”, I assume resembling a sea horse, since in Greek, horse is *hippos* and *kamos* is “sea monster”] and orbital prefrontal cortex, giving the brain the ability to retrieve information stored elsewhere and providing a “working memory” system that receives emotional signals from the amygdala. A PET scan of the brain, for instance, made during “free association” shows increased blood flow in this orbitofrontal area, thus showing why the psychoanalytic process can tap into uncensored private thoughts.

The amygdala is predominantly excitatory, stimulating externally oriented behavior, and the hippocampus is predominantly inhibitory, comparing current information with existing knowledge. In current situations of danger, the amygdalan system is the first to make your muscles tense and heart beat faster, while the hippocampal-prefrontal cortical system will remember whom you were with and what you were doing during the danger, so as to be able to avoid it in the future. It is the growth of the hippocampus, prefrontal cortex and related areas that represents the main evolutionary development of self consciousness (beyond simple growth of cortical storage areas), allowing *Homo sapiens* to delay responses while comparing them to past experience and self concepts. When one dreams, one’s amygdala lights up in the brain scanner like a pinball machine, as powerful early emotional memories are accessed and incorporated by the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex with current daily events into long-term personality modules.

The hippocampal-prefrontal cortical and amygdalan memory systems are, in fact, the real “two brains” that dissociate more rational conscious-self systems from unconscious emotional memories – not a simple “right-brain”, “left-brain” split.

Nonetheless (and yet with some appreciation for the crudeness), let me continue to use the simple terms “left brain” and “right brain” – because as I’ll now begin to show you, there are many more complications.

Thus, even more obvious to me (or, maybe I should say, “to my left brain”) than my right brain’s synthesizing abilities is how its “picture-making” ability “tells me” what to do. If I force myself to be aware, I can literally watch how it works, at least a hundred times every day! For example, suppose “I” decide, right now, to stop typing and get myself some coffee. The instant “I” think about this, I’ll get a glimpse of a picture of the cup of coffee (or of going up the stairs, or of lifting the kettle, or...).

Similar seems to happen with every one of my actions! I assume that the brains of animals work similarly: they see a picture (e.g., a real predator), and that picture stimulates their bodily response. Similarly, my brain seem to communicate to my body (to take action) using pictures (which I assume are generated in my right brain) – but this “picturing” happens so fast that, unless “I” force “myself” to be aware of the pictures, my left brain (at least I assume it’s my left brain) doesn’t even notice the pictures! Maybe sometime, when you have nothing better to do, you might want to similarly “watch” yourself think, to see glimpses of the pictures in your mind.

L’AUTRE MOI

In addition, in my brain there seems to be “something else”, which I call “Body” but which might better be described as instinct. It seems to be more than “just” its incredible ability to keep all my vital organs working; it seems to be a shadow presence in my mind. In truth, though, I never had a name for it until I read someone else’s comments (I’ve forgotten the source) about a “shadowy figure” in his or her mind, which the author called *l’autre moi* (i.e., “the other me”). All “I” know is that, when “I” have a difficult Board Meetings in my mind, and after “I” (or, maybe better, “we”) have listened to the arguments and perspectives of all who have something to contribute – after Board Governor Left Brain has analyzed all input, and after Board Governor Right Brain has synthesized all (and likely drawn, literally, a plan of action for how to proceed) – still there is another Board Governor (“l’autre moi”? body? instinct?) who somehow conveys “his” message to the rest of us. I’m sorry if that sounds weird; I assure you that it is!

I have a number of examples that could show you better what I mean, but I’m hard pressed to find an example that I can comfortably tell a youngster. (Sorry, Dear, but to me, a teenager is still a youngster.) The reason for my reluctance, Dear, is that this *l’autre moi* seems to run on instinct, and perhaps the strongest instinct of any male animal is associated with his “sex

drive”. In fact, I have difficulty explaining what I mean by *l’autre moi* even to someone much older than you, namely, your mother.

For example, many years ago, in response to her question about something else, I told your mother that I’d explain it to her “when she was older”. Of course she responded, incredulously, “When I’m older?!”, and I said “Yes – say when you’re 50”. I thought that, by the time she was 50, she would have learned enough about life to understand and to judge me not too harshly. But I add that, when I said I would tell her the story when she was about 50, I was about 50, and when she’s 50, maybe I’ll change my mind, if I conclude she still hasn’t experienced enough – although, anyone who has lived through you children probably has learned enough! In any event, Dear I’m hard pressed to give you an example of *l’autre moi*, but I’ll sketch one, even if it’s not so illuminating as others.

In this example, *l’autre moi*’s instinct was to save one of my sons, namely, your father. Now, it would be inappropriate for me to provide you with my perspective of the details of the background of the problems. Let me say just that, after being a model child and teenager, when your father left home to go to college, he got into problems that “drove me crazy” – figuratively, maybe even literally, and possibly even certifiably! The fault, however, was my own, for trying too hard to save him.

But to the point of my giving you an example of *l’autre moi*, let me tell you about one of a number of intense Board Meeting in my brain, during which I tried to determine what to do. During this Board Meeting (“convened” while I was lying on the sofa downstairs), my left brain analyzed the many problems that had to be confronted, trying to evaluate the probabilities of outcomes of all possible actions that I could conceive. My right brain synthesized the information, providing far too realistic pictures of some of these outcomes. At this particular Board Meeting, the two sides of my brain concluded to let your father be, even though it seemed that the probability was quiet large that the outcome would be his death. That is, although on other occasions I had chosen (and on future occasions I would choose) ways to try to save him, this time I basically gave up and accepted his death. Then, though, *l’autre moi* “spoke up” (or however “he” communicates) and vetoed the conclusions of my left and right brains: I was compelled, once again, to try to save him – regardless of my left brain’s conclusions about its futility. My right brain showed me how to try, by searching for him from an

aircraft. So, I proceeded to the local airport, rented a small plane, and spent the next many hours searching for him (incidentally, in vain).

Over the years, the conscious part of my brain has learned a little more – but sparingly little – about *l'autre moi*. It seems to be the part of me (and, no doubt, all of us) that just knows what to do. That's why I call it “body” or “instinct”. I think it's what Alan Watts meant when, in one of his books, he wrote: “We're much smarter than we think”. In his 1885 book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche (pronounced “Neecha”) wrote:

Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a powerful commander, an unknown wise man – he is called self. He lives in your body; he is your body. There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom.

Not only does “it” know how to keep my heart beating, etc., and not only does “it” know how to react in a huge number of situations (“instinctively”), but sometimes “it” just “speaks up” and demands a particular action. If *l'autre moi* uses words, it's vocabulary seems limited to: “Just do it” – but in many cases, “it” doesn't even to even try to communicate to the rest of “me”; it just forces us to act! Consistently, Nietzsche described “it” as “a powerful commander”.

Unfortunate examples that I've experienced include my bursting into rage – swinging out to hit whatever's close, when I'm “so mad I can't think” (which is what I expect is what people mean by the phrase “blind rage”). From these and similar experiences, I certainly gain the impression that, if *l'autre moi* communicates at all, “he” does so exclusively with my emotional right brain rather than my analytical left brain. And I would like to add my expectation, based on my own experience, that *l'autre moi's* instinctive drive to save one's children is even stronger in women than in men; that is, I expect that the “mothering instinct” is even stronger than the “fathering instinct” (perhaps derived from animal experiences of mothers being more certain than fathers who their offspring are).

But enough of that for now. Let me now try to make some stumbling progress toward describing my prime goals – which, as I already said, seem to be the same prime goals for all humans. Let me try to explain these goals by using some examples, which also illustrate why each of us has a plurality of prime goals and how we choose among them, depending on

circumstances. Later in this chapter and in this book, I'll try to show you how our multiple prime goals are intertwined.

INSTINCTIVE GOALS

Dear, if you and I had gone for a raft ride on that Sunday afternoon and if you had fallen into the river, one of your prime goals would have been immediately obvious to you: your goal to live! If you were in danger of drowning, you wouldn't need to use any words to analyze the situation with your left brain; you wouldn't need to synthesize any pictures with your right brain; your body would instinctively know that water doesn't belong in your lungs – and you would “just do” whatever was needed to survive. Everything alive has this instinctive prime goal to survive; it's an instinct “programmed” into our DNA molecules; those DNA molecules that failed to include this programming in their “genetic code” are no longer here.

To illustrate our prime goals further, continue to suppose we had gone for a raft ride on that Sunday afternoon. Now, Dear, if you had fallen into the river, of course I would have done whatever was necessary to save you. And of course my own survival is one of my own prime goals (just as for you and for everyone else), but in this situation, a higher priority goal than my own survival would have been to ensure yours. Further, I wouldn't need to analyze the situation with my left brain or synthesize a reaction with my right brain; I (or “body”) would instinctively know what to do, how to do it, and “just do it”! That is, our DNA molecules appear to have “programmed” us not only with the prime goal to seek our own survival but also with the prime goal to seek the survival of our genetic code (i.e., in this case, the part of you that's me, going forward).

Now, Dear, please permit me to appear to wander away from the task of identifying our prime goals, to explore the limits of our instinct to help others. It won't take long, and it does provide some useful information. I'll then return to describing our other prime goals. And as old grandfathers have a tendency to do, let me start by relaying a story.

I remember (but only vaguely!) that when I was a kid (even younger than you!), my nearest-age brother and I were awarded some prize for being “heroes”. My vague recollection of what happened is that we were wandering along the beach one day (I don't remember if it was a particularly stormy day), and we saw that some dumb “sailor” (probably drunk) had run

* Go to other chapters *via*

his boat into a well-known reef, about half a mile from shore. We must have thought that the boat was damaged enough that it might sink (if I recall correctly, it was tipped up at quite a large angle, with its bow hung up on the reef as the tide and the boat's stern fell still lower). So, we "borrowed" someone's rowboat, rowed out to the reef, and "rescued" the fellow. I don't know who he was or if there were any passengers (although I vaguely recall loading a woman into the rowboat), and we never gave the whole episode much thought (because it was "no big deal"). A few months later, though, and totally unexpectedly, we were contacted for being "heroes", we heard our names on the radio news from the nearby city (believe it or not, there was no TV in those days!), and we were awarded some "prize" (maybe it was a medal), but I don't remember the details.

This episode always seemed to me to be a pathetic example of "heroism", because my brother and I took little-to-zero risk in our "heroic rescue". But let me use this example to introduce and address the question: how do humans decide what risks to take to try to help others? As you will see, my conclusion is that animals such as humans seem to be astoundingly good both in math and in estimating probabilities; that is, our DNA molecules seem to have "programmed" us to instinctively know what risks we should take to try to help our genes survive; those that didn't, didn't survive!

To outline what I mean, let me bet that I know your instinctive reactions in the following cases. If you expected (or "guessed") that there was a 90% chance that you would survive if you tried to save your 90-year old great grandmother from death (e.g., in a fire), then I bet your instinct would be not to risk your life. On the other hand, if you were in a foreign country and you guessed that there was only a 10% chance that you would survive if you tried to save 1,000 school children from a fire, then I bet your instinct would be to risk your life to save them.

SOME MATHEMATICS OF INSTINCTS

Let me try to show you at least a first estimate of some of the details of how we seem to know instinctively what risks to our own survival we "should take" to help others. Here, by "should take" I mean "should take to be consistent with our instinctive goal of promoting the survival of our genetic code". Later (in this chapter and later chapters), I'll address the difficult problem of trying to understand the risks that we normally "would take",

which are more difficult to understand because of various and complicated cultural modifications of our values.

To start, I trust you agree that most parents will take extreme risks to save their own children, especially their only child. Now, it's true that, in each of one's children, one's own genetic code is "diluted" (by our spouse, who in typical argumentative fashion probably would object to the word "diluted") by a factor of about $2 = 2^1$ (depending on how many of our genes are "regressive" and other details that I'll ignore). Yet, we risk our life to save our children, because we seem to be able to appropriately account for the likelihood that a child will normally live longer than its parents. Therefore, normally our own genetic code is more likely to survive (i.e., reproduce) even if we take substantial risks to save our children. Our genetic code is similarly diluted in additional generations, roughly by a factor of $4 = 2^2$ in our grandchildren (and in our nephews and nieces), by $8 = 2^3$ in our great grandchildren (and first cousins), and so on. Thus, after n generations (or for similarly distant cousins) one's genetic code is diluted by 2^n , which in a short period of time can be very large (known as "exponential growth").

As examples, after about 200 years (with each generation of, say, 20 years, i.e., after about $n = 10$ generations), then this "dilution" is by about $2^{10} = 1,024 \sim 1,000 = 10^3$, and after 2,000 years (i.e., about 100 generations), the "dilution" would be by the huge factor of about $2^{100} \sim 10^{30}$. Similarly for similarly distant cousins – except for the fact that with the Earth's population smaller than 10 billion = 10^{10} people, there are nowhere near that many independent genetic codes! That is, Dear, because $10^{10} \sim 2^{33}$, then after about 33 generations (fewer than 1,000 years!) one's genetic code would normally be mixed uniformly throughout the Earth.²

What does all that math have to do with risking one's life to help the survival of others? Well, Dear, let me summarize some of the above math by quoting something I once read but now have forgotten the source: all humans are related to one another no more distantly than as 50th cousins. My point is that, we seem to know this mathematical result "instinctively", by which I mean that the result is "programmed" into our genetic "code".

² An exception occurs for "ethnically-pure people" (which is a polite way of describing more "in-bred groups"), such as the Basque, Japanese, Jewish, and many Muslim people, who on average marry their closer cousins more frequently than the rest of us. Therefore, the rest of us would need to look back further in time (perhaps as much as five or ten thousand years) to identify a common ancestor with such people.

The result is another illustration of the applicability of Darwin's theory of evolution: a particular animal species (or DNA code) that contained the programming to risk an individual's life for the survival of a certain number of others of the same species thereby had a better chance for the survival of its genetic code. The programming is brutal, in more ways than one: those DNA molecules that didn't contain this "altruistic gene" in animal "brutes" had less chance to survive – and didn't! As a result, we humans and other animals know instinctively when there's value to the survival of our genetic code to risk our lives to save the lives of others. For example, it's normal for anyone to risk a high probability of one's own death to save one's child (who possess approximately half of one's own genetic code) or to save ~100 strangers – because, thereby, we promote the survival of our own genes.

Now, Dear, please don't jump too far ahead of me, here, with questions such as, "Then how come we proceed to kill millions of people in wars?" I'll eventually get to such questions when I start to deal with "values". With the above, I was dealing only with our "instinctive goals", known by "Board Member Body", programmed into our genes by our DNA molecules (and similarly for other animals). In the case of humans, however, with our huge brains, we can modify such programming (a case of "mind over molecule"). As I'll examine in detail later, in such case we sometimes choose some value (such as "freedom") as higher priority even than our own survival, go to war to promote the survival of that value, and proceed to kill millions of other people – which we instinctively "know" is wrong.

I should point out, also, that the same type of analysis as the above (to try to understand our instinctive goals) seems appropriate in the less-extreme case of just helping others (i.e., without risking one's life to save them). To see this, roughly, please consider the following: helping our genes along by personally helping our children and grandchildren (and maybe even our great grandchildren, should we live so long) certainly is consistent with the goal dictated by our DNA molecules to help ensure the survival of our genes. Actually, though, such help isn't very efficient.

Thus, whatever help you manage to give to your children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren, it's reasonable to expect that, in general, your assistance (e.g., your ideas about life!) will be similarly diluted after n generations roughly by some factor, f , raised to the n^{th} power, i.e., f^n (depending, of course, on the details of your "help", which others may consider "hindrance"). For example, if a mother's influence on her child's

religious feelings were roughly by a factor $f = 1/4$ (the rest derived from father, culture, independent thought, etc.), then after n generations, that mother's influence would normally be diminished by about $(1/4)^n$, which after a few generations, diminishes even more rapidly than the mother's genetic influence. Perhaps you then see that, to help our own genetic code along, it's actually more productive to help "just" our fellow humans, whose genetic code we share and whose genetic code will become indistinguishable from ours, a few hundred years from now. Thereby, Dear, I expect that you see why it's reasonable for each of us to try to help all humans, rather than just our close relatives – and thereby, I expect you see why I decided to put this book on the internet, rather than give the notes just to you.

And there's more. To stimulate you to consider this, Dear, let me ask you: what risks would you take to save a tree – a forest – all the deer in a forest – the entire deer species – all forests in the world – all nonhuman life on Earth? I trust that the answer to at least the last part of the question is obvious: I assume everyone would do everything possible to save all nonhuman life on Earth, because without it, humans would almost certainly disappear. And I hope, Dear, that you wouldn't risk too much to save a single tree – unless to you it was an extremely special tree! But that special case aside, I trust that you agree that there's a range of risks humans normally would take to try to save not only members of our immediate families but also other humans and even any life form.

To summarize the above ideas, what I want to do is sweep all such instances under a single, very-large rug by saying that a prime goal of all humans is not just their own survival but also the survival of their "extended families". The "extent" we recognize for our extended families and our commitments to "family members" depend on many factors (our awareness of genetic links, potential future contributions of those at risk, the nature of the risks, and so on, importantly including our indoctrination in cultural values). Such factors can perhaps be seen most clearly by watching how other animals protect their "families"; in primitive societies, the "extended family" was the extent of the tribe; these days, some people take enormous personal risks to save, for example, endangered species such as some species of whales (whose DNA molecules, after all, are actually quite similar to ours).

Let me speculate. If, some day, humans discover another form of life in some other planetary system, then I expect that, if necessary, we would take substantial risks to try to ensure that this other life form would survive, even

though it would probably not be DNA-based, because we yet would realize that we would be “related”. That is, as Richard Dawkins proposed: “All life evolves by the differential survival of replicating identities”; therefore, we’d have a common bond with any form of life found anywhere in the universe. In essence, it’s a struggle between life and death: without life, this universe would be a bunch of “dead” rocks with zero purpose. Save for a possible exception that I’ll mention in later chapters, it appears that only life has a purpose, namely, to continue living! Therefore, if we find life elsewhere, I expect we’ll do our best to help it achieve our jointly held goal of survival. I therefore speculate (and hope!) that, someday, all humans will see that their prime goal is the survival of all life – and if all life isn’t threatened, then especially the survival of intelligent life – and if all intelligent life isn’t threatened, then especially the survival of intelligence.

But enough of that for now. Enough of the dreariness of death! Meanwhile, a certain grandchild knows perfectly well that I haven’t finished listing the prime goals – especially of a certain grandchild – when I haven’t yet mentioned the fun part! And of course you’re right, Dear: another prime goal of all humans is to be happy. Yet, now watch how your old grandfather can make even the subject of happiness dreary!

RIGHT-BRAIN GOALS

When I was struggling to understand my own prime goal (when I still thought that there was only a single “prime goal”), and after I thought I understood “body’s” prime goal of survival (of itself and of its family), I, too, doubted the result, because I, too, knew that what I “really wanted” out of life was “just” to be happy. I was puzzled even further when “I” realized that it wasn’t Board Governor Body that was seeking happiness; instead, of course it was my “emotional” right brain, whose prime goal was to “get a little fun outta life!” And of course what happened in this particular Board Meeting was that Board Governor Left Brain took over the meeting, seeking to analyze what Board Governor Right Brain meant by happiness.

Thereupon, “I” spent considerable time making two huge lists, one of everything that made me happy (gave me pleasure) and the other of everything that made me sad (caused me pain). Dear, I encourage you to do the same for yourself. I then tried to understand (analyze) what it was in each that caused me pleasure or pain. The result, almost without exception (to be mentioned) was very simple: I was happy when I was receiving

“feedback signals” of my (or my extended family’s) “survival”; sad, otherwise. If you make a similar pair of lists of what makes you happy (gives you pleasure) and sad (causes you pain), maybe you won’t immediately come to a similar conclusion. Therefore, let me give you an example of mine (one chosen from hundreds); maybe this example will help you understand how I reached my conclusion.

Thus, Dear, as perhaps you’ve heard (or deduced from pictures that you’ve seen), I love riding motorcycles – as foolish as that may seem to you. I’ve been riding them for more than 40 years; maybe I won’t do much more, because my leg is hurting me rather badly and sometimes I become worried about my sense of balance – physical, kid; not mental!

So, I trust you ask: “What does riding motorcycles have to do with survival? Why would anyone, who accepts that a high-priority goal is to survive (and who claims to be sane), choose to engage in such a dangerous activity as motorcycle riding? Why not do something less risky, such as sky diving or bungee jumping?”

Well, kid, although you sound just like your mother, your grandmother, and your great grandmother (!), I’ll try to describe why I enjoy motorcycle riding. It’s a feeling of freedom (the wind, the view, the odors, the power, the control...) and excitement (especially on curves, driving my bike close to the limits of my capabilities). I’ll add a story that my brother (your great uncle) repeats.

More than 20 years ago, we were on a long motorcycle trip, about 1,000 miles in total. Somewhere on that trip, we came across a brand-new road (paved so recently that the yellow line was still bright, and there was a smell of fresh asphalt); it was beautifully curved with each curve banked; the road was along a river valley; I zoomed ahead of my brother; I had a better bike. As he tells the story, he kept “putting along” for about a half hour, and then he saw this other motorcycle come “roaring” toward him. I waved as I past him, drove back to start the road over, turned, and passed him again. My view: the ride was so enjoyable, I had to do it again.

And what, I trust you are asking, does this silly behavior have to do with survival? My answer, Dear, is everything! – but in a silly sort of way, the same way that others go skiing, sky diving, and similar – and the same way that a certain crazy grandchild “loves” to go on those totally ridiculous,

terrifying, roller coasters! The common denominator in such activities seems to be that we construct an environment that is somewhat threatening to our survival – so we can experience the joy of surviving!

But that's just one example. If you'd make a similar list of your pleasures and pains, I'd encourage you to examine all the items you listed to see if you don't reach the same conclusion, possibly with a few exceptions. An example of an exception that still puzzles me some is this: I enjoy beautiful sunrises and sunsets. Maybe I enjoy them because they are times of tranquility (no threats to my survival?), but then, it's not just the tranquility that I enjoy; it's the beauty of the colors (a signal telling me I'm surviving?). Similarly, one of the most pleasurable experiences I've had is to lie on the grass, under a tree, on a warm summer day, and look at the sky through the leaves. Somewhere, deep down inside my brain, this causes a warmth or a resonance; maybe it's like a chemical or a drug. I find it consistent that, when I calm my Left Brain (as I described in **A**, e.g., with "*l'autre moi*, what do you see?") my Right Brain quite commonly provides me with pictures of the sky, seen through gently swaying leaves. Maybe a sunset or the trees stimulate a chemical in my brain, like some drugs.

And I would be remiss if I didn't add some other points. One is that when I take common medication for headaches or other pains, and then calm my Left Brain, the pictures that I see seem to be different: I've found, for example, that aspirin vs. Tylenol seem to stimulate different pictures, with Tylenol seemingly stimulating pictures of more faces! And too, I should mention my horrible habit of smoking cigarettes; I trust you'll be smarter than I and never start. I was startled to read recent scientific results showing that, in the brain, nicotine provides a "survival signal", mimicking a natural chemical (dopamine) that tells us: "that's good for your survival, keep it up." So, nicotine is a traitorous, subversive survival signal; telling me I'm surviving while killing me. I'll keep trying to quit; maybe I now can, with other threats diminished.

But coming back to the point I was trying to make, let me first mention my delight (happiness!) when Board Governor Left Brain saw that Board Governors Body and Right Brain shared common goals, which I subsequently called my "dual survival goals". They're "dual" not only in the sense that both Body and Right Brain agree with them, but they are the "dual goals" of survival of myself and my extended family. Thus, Dear, it makes me "happy" (my Right Brain's prime goal) to see you succeed so well

(for, thereby, you are helping me toward my instinctive prime goal of the survival of my genetic code). Similarly, I was “delighted” (i.e., happy) that I had reached this understanding, because experience had taught me that understanding promotes my dual survival goals. And I was happier even in my work (trying to solve the “acid-rain problem”), because I felt that I was contributing to the survival of my extended family – which included the fish, trees, and other life-forms whose survival was threatened by acid rain!

LEFT-BRAIN GOALS

Unfortunately, though, my delight didn’t last very long: eventually I realized that my thinking was, at best, incomplete, and possibly worse, i.e., wrong. That my analysis was incomplete was obvious, because while my left brain was busy analyzing the prime goals of Body and Right Brain, Left Brain “forgot” to inform “me” what “his” prime goal was! More significantly, I began to worry that my conclusion was wrong because there was an obvious class of “outlying data point” (or “outliers”) that I had overlooked – and I urge you, Dear, not to disregard data that doesn’t fit your preconceptions. Instead, please always seek to enlarge your conception to be consistent with all reliable data. Most obvious of the “outliers” that I had overlooked were the sacrifices and heroism of those who risked and lost their lives in wars, for example, the men (such as my father and my oldest brother) who willingly jeopardized their lives to fight Hitler and his henchmen.

Now, of course it’s true that the vast majority of men (and now women) who go to war don’t plan on being killed, but certainly, they know the risks are high, and yet, they willingly endanger themselves. Also, maybe the willingness of many people to take such risks has more to do with societal pressures and with their goal to protect their genetic code from some enemy (who might exterminate them or their families). Yet, one doesn’t need to consider the heroism of those who went to war (to fight what they considered to be an evil) to see that humans can adopt a higher priority goal than their dual survival goals.

For example, Dear, suppose that when you purchased something at a store, the cashier gave you too much money in “change”. Now, keeping the extra money would marginally help your survival, but you know that it’s wrong to keep the money – not only because your parents told you it was “wrong” but also because you know that acquiring money that you don’t earn enslaves

other people. That is, with this unearned money, you'd be able to buy goods or services from others, without your earning that "right". Therefore, no doubt you'd choose to return the extra change. Similarly for thousands of other examples; that is, humans place conditions on the pursuit of their dual survival goals.

Let me sketch another example, the specific one that forced me to recognize that I pursued more than "just" my dual survival goals. The background (which I won't describe to you) is the case that I told your mother I'd describe to her "when she was older". Here, I'll say just that, one of the times that I was trying hard to identify a way to save your father (pursuing the survival of my genetic code), both my instincts and my emotions (Board Governors Body and Right Brain) propelled me to an even more drastic way to try to save him than by searching from an airplane. The consequences of that attempt were worse than useless – save for what I learned, and what I dearly hope you will think about very seriously.

I learned that, as compelling as *l'autre moi's* instincts can be and as strong as our emotions can be, there are times when they should be rejected. Following them can lead to terrible errors; errors with which your left brain will have great difficulty living. That is, Dear, my experience has painfully taught me that, to avoid enormous pains of the consequences, rational humans must yield final authority for their actions not to instinct or to emotions but to Left Brain's rational thoughts – even if a particular rational conclusion results in the death of one's child (or one's self). Stated differently, Dear (but stumbling as I try to find a best way to say it), each of us has some sense of fairness, justice, decency, morality, honor, and other values... (all topics that I'll get to, later in this book) about which one should be very certain and from which one should *absolutely* refuse to yield, regardless of the "desires" of one's emotions and instincts – which, in turn, may be trying to dictate one's values!

Now, Dear, please don't jump to conclusions about what I'm trying to say here. By the time you finish this book, I hope you'll understand. I don't mean that one has a huge list of "moral commandments" (such as in the Bible) that you must always obey. Thus, at times, people should lie (you should tell your mother that it was a wonderful dinner!), steal (when I was a child, I used to steal food, before our family went on welfare), "bear false witness" (do tell a murderer that you don't know where his intended victim is), and so on – out to an including killing others (e.g., if they intend to do

you bodily harm). But for example and in contrast, I have a core “moral code” on which I now refuse to yield, namely, *everyone has an equal right to claim one’s own existence*, as well as a guiding principle that I’ll try my best to never abandon again: *think and then evaluate!* And of course it’s for you to decide for yourself what your “core values” will be, Dear – though I admit that my prime goal in writing this book is to try to guide you toward making choices that will be of most “value” to you.

A TRIO OF SURVIVAL GOALS

Let me try to explain that better. Instinctively, Body’s prime goal is the survival of its genetic code. Emotionally, Right Brain’s prime goal is to be happy, an emotion signaling that we’re achieving our survival goals. But rationally, our Left Brain’s prime goal is to live consistent with whatever we have adopted as our set of “values”, a topic to which a great deal of this book will be devoted. I therefore have concluded that my prime goals (and, I claim, the prime goals of all humans) is what I call our “trio of survival goals”: survival of ourselves, our extended families, and our set of values – with the specific goal that we choose to pursue in any particular set of circumstances being this tricky business called living!

Furthermore, Dear, I hope that you see that this conclusion (that we all pursue a trio of survival goals) has been known “forever”. For example, you can see it in Jefferson’s wording of our Declaration of Independence, that we’re all “endowed” with certain “unalienable rights”, among which are “life [i.e., our own survival!], “liberty” [i.e., one of our highest values], and “the pursuit of happiness” [i.e., according to Spinoza’s “pleasure and pain... are states or passions whereby every man’s power or endeavor to persist in his being is increased or diminished, helped or hindered”]; therefore, the pursuit of happiness is a pursuit of signals telling us that we are making progress toward our goals.

I’m therefore claiming, Dear, that humans have the same two prime goals as all living things: survival of ourselves and our families. But what distinguishes humans from all other life forms on Earth is our increased capacity to think. With our thoughts (specifically, those thoughts organized by our Left Brain’s analytical or rational capabilities), we can override evolution’s “program” that demands that the survival of our genetic code be our top-priority goal.

Thereby, we decide whom we will recognize as “family members” (e.g., close relatives who “behave”, “fellow Americans”, “fellow humanists”, “fellow Muslims”, or whatever). That is, although “blood is thicker than water”, ideas can be thicker still! As a consequence, we choose conditions even under which we are willing to live (i.e., we define our “prime values”). Thus, we adopt a trio of survival goals: of ourselves, our extended families, and our values (which, in turn, we use to define the extent of our families).

From that, Dear, I hope you see how important it is for you to define your set of values carefully. No matter how you attained your set of values, you should frequently *re-evaluate* them (to try to understand their source), and if appropriate, to realign or redefine them – should you decide that your current values are inadequate. Looked at from this perspective, one of the main purposes of this book is to try to help you to examine, evaluate, and (if you think it’s appropriate) redefine your values.

For example, earlier in this “chapter”, I encouraged you to be skeptical, for as I’ll try to show you, skepticism will be of great “value” to you. In particular, I encouraged you to be skeptical of my claim that I could identify everyone’s prime goals. I suggested that you should plan to reject any such claim unless the result was totally obvious to you. I then tried to show you that all of us pursue a trio of survival goals.

So now, Dear, let me stimulate you to *evaluate* the result: do you know of any data that conflict with the conclusion that all of us pursue what I’ve described as our trio of survival goals? If you know of such data or learn of any, please let me know – and I’ll appropriately modify my conclusion! Otherwise, I trust that you will be forced to the same conclusion that I’ve reached: the conclusion, as it stands, is obvious!

Yet, Dear, I trust you see that I failed to accomplish my original objective. I was searching for my “prime” goal, defined to be the one goal for which all other goals (which then would be lower priority goals) would be sacrificed. Instead, data forced me to conclude that we all pursue what I’ve called our “trio of survival goals” (of ourselves, our extended families, and our values). So, I’ll now resume the task of identifying our prime goal – but let me alert you, at the outset, that when I’ve finished the task, I trust you’ll see that the result “turns back on itself”, again leading me to conclude that, in fact, our “prime goal” is our “linked” trio of survival goals.

To begin to show you what I mean, let me ask you rhetorically: is there anything for which you'd be willing to die? More generally: are there data that demonstrate people sacrifice their dual survival goals for some other (then, higher-priority) goal? And of course the answer screams: "Of course!" Such is the stuff of stories of all "heroes" of all cultures.

I'll return to details of some of these stories later in the book, but you are probably already familiar with some of them: Socrates choosing to drink poison, rather than abandon his commitment to abiding by the laws of Athens; Jesus refusing to acknowledge the "state religion", yet knowing that he would be executed for his "crime"; the Christians who willingly walked to the lions in Rome's Coliseum, rather than abandon their beliefs; as well as innumerable heroic acts in innumerable wars, even including today's Muslim "extremists" who tie explosives around their waists, willing forfeiting their life for the sake of the "Jihad" (i.e., their "holy war"). I trust that you then agree that there's an overwhelming body of data supporting the conclusion that the highest priority goal of humans is sometimes to preserve and promote some chosen "value". That is, there's no doubt that humans sometimes choose as their prime goal not their dual survival goals (of themselves and their families) but "the survival" of their values.

Further, Dear, let me try to expand this analysis from the "surreal" realm of storybook "heroes" to the more familiar ground of "plain folk". For example, yesterday I met a young man in the desert, which I'm sorry to report has lately been polluted by people dumping trash. Of late, I've noticed that some of this trash has been picked up and put in trash bags, as if waiting for collection. I saw that he was picking up trash from the trail, and so, I stopped to talk.

I asked him if he was with the County Health Department (who posted a "No Dumping" sign); he said no, but that he had talked to the local trash hauler, who had agreed to come to pick up any trash that he collected and assembled. He said that he was working "seven days a week" at a local industry, that he had been ill lately and had taken some days off, and that this day he was feeling better and therefore had decided to see if the recent storm had disturbed much of what he had collected. (I assume that he must have been normally doing the collection either before or after work.) He said that he thought the trail was beautiful, and that it made him sad to see how many people had polluted it. I didn't learn this hero's name.

There are thousands or millions or billions of such examples, well illustrated by the lyrics of a modern “country song” that states, in essence, everyone’s a hero. Someday, Dear, maybe you would like to spend some time investigating and thinking about the heroism of ordinary people, from the janitor who puts his child through college to the doctor who overcomes her drug addiction. We all make choices, based on our set of values, just as I had to choose whether to help the young man pick up trash from “my” desert path or to use my remaining time to help remove trash from the paths that my grandchildren and other children are starting to explore.

And please recognize, Dear, that such choices can be extremely difficult, especially because we can never know the outcome of what we didn’t choose. For example, as a parent, how much effort should you expend helping your children reach a particular goal, thereby expending less effort on helping them reach other goals? How much effort should you expend helping one child, thereby giving your other children less attention? Should you risk your life to save one child, thereby jeopardizing the lives of your other children? More generally, as a citizen, how much of your time, energy, and other resources should you expend helping specific others reach specific goals, thereby helping others less? To answer all such questions, we must rely on our sense of values – which then finally leads me to introduce you to the fourth member of my Board of Governors.

A UNIVERSE OF EXPERIENCES

This fourth member of my Board of Governors (besides Left Brain, Right Brain, and Body), I call “Universe”, by which I mean, in part, the Universe, itself (and for which I am “I’ing”) and in part, the universe of my experiences. I can define for you this member of my Board of Governors only “operationally”, that is, by explaining what I do: whenever “I” (the chairman of the Board of Governors!) find Left Brain making a decision based on his values, “I” ask “Universe” to describe the source of these values. That is, Dear, each of us has a set of values derived from our experiences and thoughts, and I specifically have “Universe” (as a member of my Board of Governors) to “remind” the rest of us (!) of my values – and their limitations, especially if these values are expressed in words!

Let me try to explain that better.³ First, I trust you agree that each of us has some “universe” of experiences in terms of which we normally think. For example, if we have no idea what a “pejkjdy” is (besides randomly assembled letters of the alphabet), then we can’t think about it. Therefore, if we are to understand how we think and the source of our values, we need to examine the universe of our thoughts. For example, I spent the majority of my life trying to learn as much as I could about science (specifically, the physical sciences); therefore, in my universe of thoughts, it’s “normal” for me to ask: Where are the data? What do the data “suggest”? What hypotheses have been made? How have they been tested? What do the data from the test reveal? And so on. In addition, our “thought universe” is “colored” by concepts inherent in our language and our words. For example, Dear, in our language we use nouns (to identify persons, places, or things), and yet, if you think about it, nouns don’t really exist: nouns (such as ‘tree’) are just slowly moving verbs! – a concept that I’ll return to in **W**.

In particular, my universe of experiences (including my feeling of unity with the rest of the universe) has impressed in me a set of values, most of which (I hope) are rational (but maybe some aren’t) and most of which (I hope) are reasonable (but maybe some have not yet been examined adequately). These “values” are extremely important to me, so important that their satisfaction can become my prime goal. Therefore, whenever I come to a point that my prime goal becomes an attempt to sustain or achieve one of my values, the rest of the Board of Governors (of course, especially my left brain) demand that Board Governor “Universe” fully answers such questions as: What value are you defending? At what cost are you proposing that this value be defended? What are the sources of this value judgment? Is this a rational value to defend? And, especially important: **against what objective is the value measured?**

As far as I can make it out, the last question, **Against what objective is the value measured?**, is the crux of the matter. It’s an essential point that so

³ And if I still fail to convey my meaning, Dear, then maybe you’d like to dig into some psychology literature. In particular, look up Freud’s ideas of 1) *Id* [which is what I refer to as “Right Brain” and by which he seemed to have meant instinct plus emotions, i.e., “[the storehouse for primitive desires](#)” (copied from the article by Dave Tishkowski at <http://clearinghouse.missouriwestern.edu/manuscripts/565.asp>)], 2) *Ego* [which is what I refer to as “Left Brain” and he meant “[the part of the mind that regulates and controls the id’s primitive desires](#)” (ibid.)], and 3) *Superego* [which is what I refer to as “Universe”, meaning my “universe of experiences”, and he meant “[a set of moral values and self-critical attitudes, largely organized around internalized parental images](#)” (ibid.)].

many other people seem to miss, and it's the point that turns my entire analysis back on itself, reemerging at the beginning! Repeatedly in this book, Dear, I'll return to the obvious but crucial conclusion: **essentially all values have meaning only relative to some objective.**

EVALUATING VALUES

Dear: please think about it. Right now, please stop reading to address the question for yourself: do you have any values that aren't related to some objective?

In my case, in all but a very few exceptions, I've found that my values are related to my dual survival goals (of myself and my extended family). Soon, I'll mention some of the few exceptional cases (such as the value I place on seeing a sunrise), but because in the overwhelming number of cases my values have meaning only relative to some objective, then an obvious question is: if sometimes we choose as our prime goal the survival of one of our values, then what objectives give these values meaning? Asked differently, what's the goal (or goals) that we're pursuing by seeking the survival of our values – and that we've "camouflaged" as being the survival of our values?! Asked still differently: **What's the goal (or goals) of our values?** And if you can avoid chasing your own tail (or "tale"!), then ask yourself: what's the value of your values?!

Now, Dear, whereas this "chapter" is already quite long, whereas it will take quite a while for me to answer the question "what's the goal (or goals) of our values?", and whereas much of this book will be devoted to answering that question and showing you some of the many errors that so many people have made trying to answer it, therefore, please let me just outline my response, and then quickly show you what I review for my (short!) 'B' when I'm walking.

Thus, to summarize what I'll describe in detail later in this book: for all humans, essentially all the goals that we pursue (while pursuing our values) are just our dual survival goals (of ourselves and our extended families). That result may not seem immediately obvious to you, for example, in the case of religious people who pursue virtues prescribed (and avoid vices proscribed) by their clerics. But, Dear, if you will then try to evaluate why such people adopt such values, I think you'll see (and, later in this book I'll take pains to try to show you) that the goals of their values are "just" their

dual-survival goals – including, for most religious people, their goal of “eternal” survival.

There are, however, additional values that most of us pursue, although rarely do we place their priority as highly as our dual survival goals. For example, most humans place a high value on various types of truth and beauty – however they chose to define ‘truth’ and ‘beauty’ (in the arts, in nature, in mathematics, in fundamental physics...). As I’ll suggest in later chapters, in some cases the idea of ‘beauty’ may even be related to what appears to be the universe’s inherent preference for symmetry. In addition, as stories about starving artists attest, some people place the pursuit of what they consider to be “beauty” at a priority even higher than their own survival.

But in any event, Dear, perhaps you see both why I say that this analysis “turns back on itself” and why I conclude that the *single* prime goal of all humans is our trio of survival goals (of ourselves, our extended families, and our values). Thus, the analysis “turns back on itself” insofar as essentially all of our values can be related to our dual survival goals. Further, though, there’s a “double twist” in this “turning back”, because the “extent” we recognize for our “extended families” depends on our values! And thus I call them a “single” trio of goals (rather than three top-priority goals), because in general, they’re intertwined like a trio of singers. And if I were to describe the goal of this book in terms of a metaphor, then I’d say that its goal is to try to show you how to pursue your trio of survival goals harmoniously.

For people to achieve harmony in the pursuit of their trio of survival goals, only a single concept is needed. Later in this book, of course I’ll return to explain this concept in detail, but for now, to turn off this chapter, let me just state that to achieve this harmony, “all” we need do is: 1) realize that the vast majority of our values can be related to our dual survival goals (of ourselves and our extended families), and 2) ensure that we make no errors in evaluating the value to our dual survival goals of our chosen values. That may seem to be a trivially simple result, Dear, and in theory it is, but when we try to put it into practice, major problems commonly arise.

Thus, the problems [with having the survival (or “the preservation”, “the flourishing”, or if you’ll permit me to create a new word, the “thrival”) of our values as potentially our prime goal] are not just those problems that I’ve already mentioned (understanding the source of our values, measuring them

* Go to other chapters *via*

against some objective, and so on). In addition, there's the potentially huge problem of putting our values in priority and then putting these values in perspective with our other high-priority goals. For example, Dear, I know that you place a high value on the protection of the environment, but would you be willing to die to preserve a redwood tree? I trust that you wouldn't, but do you then see some of the complications in uncovering the source of your values, measuring them against some objective, and then putting not only your values in priority but then putting them in priority with your other high-priority goals? Life can indeed become complicated!

It's then no wonder that we seek simplifications for choosing our values. Such simplifications are usually found by basing "value choices" on some simply stated "general principle." Here let me just mention three such general principles (which I'll describe in detail later in this book).

1. One simplification, adopted by the vast majority of people throughout the world and throughout recorded history, is just to accept whatever values their culture's clerics dictate. The principle that the clerics promote is normally some "commandment", such as "Serve God", "Love God", or "Fear God", but such statements camouflage the real commandment: "Do what we (the clerics) tell you to do; in a word, *obey!*" As I'll try to show you, this choice has been (and continues to be) extremely dangerous; it has led to innumerable and almost inconceivable evils, including at least 5,000 years of wars, which continue today.
2. Another simplification was well stated by Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965, who was trained first as a theologian and then as a medical doctor and was winner of the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize): "*Reverence for life affords me my fundamental principle of morality.*" I agree with the many people (commonly called "humanitarians") who consider "Schweitzer's principle" to be a vast improvement for a choice of values compared with the principle adopted by all religious people (to serve their gods) – and certainly I should mention that those Buddhists who "revere all life" have been practicing "Schweitzer's principle" for the past ~2500 years!
3. And at least for now, my final group of examples of simplifications includes those adopted by people commonly called "Humanists" (some of whom have recently adopted the name "Brights"), whose "forefathers" include the Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Epicurus, and many others. Later in the book, I'll show you some of their simplifications. One is the

* Go to other chapters *via*

principle stated by Socrates: “*There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.*” My own formulation of the goal of Humanists (against which “values” can be measured) is some version of: “*To solve human problems more intelligently.*”

An alternative statement of the “value principle” for Humanists, one that I’ll be promoting throughout this book is the following, as addressed to you: “Dear: please try to use your brain as best you can; in a word, *Evaluate!*”

SOME ODDS & ENDS

Anyway, Dear, I’m finally just about ready to show you how I spend the minute-or-so on ‘B’ when I’m walking! I’m sorry it took so long. And I’m sorry that I’ll need to subject you to another “poem”, but if I don’t, you won’t understand the meaning for a few stanzas that have stuck in my memory. And I’m afraid that I’ll need to add a few more comments, to help you try to understand some of the “obscurities” in this “poem”.

One of these obscurities is derived from another idea in one of Alan Watts’ books (an idea that he attributes to someone else): a playful investigation of the word “universe” (which literally means “one turn”), reminding us that we only get “one chance” at this “Universe’s ‘I’ing’.” A second is a phrasing used by Aristotle: when searching for the prime goal of humans, he sought to identify “the proper function of man”. Third is the huge topic of lower priority goals, which I’ll return to later in this book.

In general, I agree with Aristotle’s analysis of the topic of lower priority goals. I agree, especially, with his summary statement (when he seemed to be worried that he was focusing on too few objectives, given the many differences in experiences/ talents/ temperaments among different people). He wrote: “But we must add ‘in a complete life.’ For one swallow does not make a summer...” His point (in my words): there’s music enough for all of us to dance to different tunes.

More significantly, I should add an explanation about the phrase (used in my “poem”): “Just dance as best you can” – so you won’t conclude that it means “party ‘till you drop”!

Thus, Dear, as far as is known, there are no other “purposes” in this universe except those chosen by life forms on Earth. For example, if you’re in pain, I

trust you agree that a “useful goal” would be to reduce and then eliminate your pain. That would be your own goal – established by one of your own values. But then, if you saw that others had similar pains, wouldn’t you conclude that another useful goal (of yours) – and assuming that you had a reasonable chance of achieving it – would be to help reduce the similar pains felt by others, to help your fellow humans?

That is, if you recognized both that one of your own prime goals was the survival of your genetic code and that all humans are related to you no more distantly than as 50th cousins, then wouldn’t it be of value to your own goals to help your cousins achieve their goals of reducing their pains? Therefore, Dear, do you see that it would be consistent with your own goals not only to become a medical doctor or researcher, but to become the most competent M.D. or Ph.D. of which you were capable, i.e., if you did choose to “dance” this way, then shouldn’t you try to “dance as best you can”?

And similarly, Dear, for whatever you choose to do. If you think of the value to you (and similarly to others) of all the labor-saving, comfort-producing... devices that others have developed (from quilts to crayons to cars to computers), then if you should choose to become an engineer to help your cousins, then become the best you can. Or, if you think how others helped you to think or see or hear or feel or smell – if you think of all the pleasures that you know – and if you then think of all of those who are your cousins, then, Dear, no matter what you choose to do (whether artist, ballet dancer, chemist, dentist, entertainer... philosopher, quality engineer, researcher, sociologist, teacher... to zoologist), please don’t plan to “goof off” and “party ‘til you drop”; instead, strive to realize your potential, i.e., “dance as best you can”.

So finally, Dear, for reasons that I trust will become clear, please permit me to subject you to another “poem”, after which I’ll show you what I review when I’m walking.

Board Meeting

(Within my brain, a corridor
Leads to the Boardroom door;
Today I’ll talk with only four,
Who’ll speak for many more.)

Let's first review our latest find
 For overcoming strife;
 It shows the workings of our mind
 And simplifies our life:

Left Brain with your analysis,
 Where logic can excel,
 In every case your prime job is
 To state the problem well.

Then Right Brain, when the problem's known,
 Exposing what is real,
 It's up to you – go on alone –
 And tell us what you feel.

And then, Left Brain, it's you who's free
 To analyze the thought,
 To test out practicality,
 Rejecting what is not.

And when these tests are all passed through,
 Relieved of any doubt,
 Then Right Brain picture what to do –
 And Body, carry out!

Through all of this, if we get weak
 And troubles take their tolls,
 We'll find the answers that we seek,
 Remembering our goals.

So Left Brain, with analysis,
 The goal to which we strive?
 “A verified hypothesis:
 “To have our values thrive.”

And Right Brain, if you please, the same,
 But synthesis employ:
 “Though Left Brain's right, his words are tame;
 “Our purpose is: enjoy!”

And Body, please, your wordless scores?
 (I'll show us what it means)
 “Enjoy just means: for you and yours,
 “Survival of these genes!”

And Universe, your dance's goal?
 (I've heard you say "one chance")
 "Your question biases the poll;
 "The purpose IS the dance!"

What dance to do? "What's on your mind?"
 How 'bout a *sine qua non*?
 "The 'proper function' for mankind:
 "To help the dance go on."

SUMMARY

And so, Dear, with that huge introduction out of the way (!), after 'A' when I'm walking I immediately do just the following for 'B'.

B – Board Meeting

My goals:

Left Brain: The thriving of our values.

Right Brain: Enjoy!

Body: Survival of our genes.

And Universe, your dance's goal?
 (I've heard you say: "one chance")
 "Your question biases the poll;
 "The purpose IS the dance!"

What dance to do? "What's on your mind?"
 How 'bout a *sine qua non*?
 "The 'proper function' for mankind:
 "To help the dance go on."

A dance of honor, a dance of love, a dance in search of truth.