

J4 – Judging Judges

Dear: In this chapter, I want to suggest some answers to questions (such as those listed at the end of the previous chapter) about various judges and types of justices. Thus, for various cases: Who gets to judge? Where do different judges obtain authorities to judge? If there are many judges, who has most authority? What sort of justice do people get from judges? And so on. In this chapter when addressing such questions, I'll emphasize natural, personal, and interpersonal justice; in later chapters (e.g., the **P**- and **X**-chapters), I'll address similar questions for cases in social justice.

1. DIFFERENT JUDGES

The first obvious question is: Who gets to judge? To answer that question, Dear, even though you've been indoctrinated since you were a baby with the bizarre idea that some "supernatural" Jabberwock in the sky is the supreme judge of everything, please consider reality. All data suggest that, in reality, there are only four types of judges – and none is "supernatural".

1.1 Mother Nature

All data of which I'm aware indicate that the sole judge of the "supreme court for this universe" is none other than Mother Nature, herself. Her "jurisdiction" is the entire field of natural justice. Her "supreme law" (as far as humans have been able to determine) is the "law" of causality, i.e., all effects have their causes. For example, Dear, if you think (and don't test your thoughts against data) that you can fly by flapping your arms, Mother Nature will be there "waiting in the wings" (☺) to judge your conclusion and enforce her ruling; if you think (and don't test your thoughts against data) that you can build a sturdy house using only marshmallows and peanut butter, causality will be there to enforce its law; and if you think (and don't test your thoughts against data) that after your death you can "live forever" in the company of some giant Jabberwock in the sky, then once again, reality will be there to pass out its final judgment.

1.2 You!

Even though Mother Nature is the supreme judge of natural justice and her jurisdiction is unsurpassed, the most important judge for you is you. It's you who must make your important judgments. For example, it's

you who must decide if you can fly off the top of some building by flapping your arms; Nature's judgment is secondary – but final! In general, it's you who must judge if you've given any matter your best thought, evaluated all relevant data, and taken appropriate action; that is, it's you who must judge if you've done what's right (i.e., acted morally) to promote your trio of survival goals. Stated differently, although you aren't the sole judge, you're the principal judge in all cases involving your own personal justice. It's true that, as the principal judge, normally you can't enforce your judgment, but you can usually dramatically increase the probability that any outcome will be as you desire. For example, Dear, if you study harder, you're more likely to get better grades.

1.3 Acquaintances

In the field of “jurisprudence” dealing with interpersonal justice, the court is crowded with judges and juries! In cases of interpersonal justice in which you're involved, everyone who knows you (or even knows of you) is a judge! As Michael Shermer wrote:¹

...like everyone else, I face judges that are in their own ways transcendent and powerful: family and friends, colleagues and peers, mentors and teachers, and society at large. My judges may be ‘lower-cased’ [i.e., judges, not Judges] and occasionally deceivable, but they are transcendent of me as an individual, even if they are not transcendent of nature; as such, together, we all stand in a long pilgrim community struggling down the evolutionary and historical ages trying to live and love and learn to temper our temptations and do the right thing. I may be free from God, but the god of nature holds me to her temple of judgment no less than her other creations. I stand before my maker and judge not in some distant and future ethereal world, but in the reality of *this* world, a world inhabited not by spiritual and supernatural ephemera, but by real people whose lives are directly affected by my actions, and whose actions directly affect my life.

Among these “lower-cased” judges, the most familiar are members of your family, friends, fellow students, teachers, employers, coworkers, and so on. Later in this chapter, I plan to make some suggestions about how you might want to interact with these “interpersonal judges”. For now, I'll mention only that, in many cases, you can ignore judgments by these judges – at least in theory.

¹ *The Science of Good and Evil – Why People Cheat, Gossip, Care, Share, and Follow the Golden Rule* (Holt & Co., New York, 2004, p. 22).

In practice, it's not always easy to ignore them – and in some cases, these judges can enforce their judgments. For example, if a friend judges you to be unworthy as a friend, then your (former) friend can enforce that judgment. But, Dear, please don't forget: you're one of the principal judges in all cases of interpersonal justice in which you're involved. In fact, as a judge of cases in interpersonal justice, sometimes you can enforce your judgment. For example, if you judge that a certain person is no longer worthy of being a friend, you can end the friendship. But in contrast, if you judge that you would like to have another person as a friend, you may be unable to achieve your desired outcome (although, as with all cases in personal justice, you can increase the probability that the outcome will be as you desire).

1.4 Judges of our Legal System

Finally for this list, there are groups of judges (with whom I've never dealt directly) that societies select (and, if necessary, impeach) to judge and enforce especially contentious cases in interpersonal justice and most cases in social justice. These are the judges of each society's legal system, about whom I'll write more, later.

In summary, Dear, please notice that, in the above list of judges, the name of some giant Jabberwock in the sky never appears. His (or her) name doesn't appear because, in reality, all data suggest that he (or she) doesn't exist.

And let me repeat what's probably the most important message that I want to convey to you in this chapter: *the most important judge for you is you*. Certainly you're not the only judge in the world – you're just your most important judge! It's your life; it's up to you to judge how to live it. In fact, you can't avoid this judgment: even if your judgment is to live your life following someone else's judgments (e.g., some cleric's); still, it's you who must make this judgment. That is, as I wrote in an earlier chapter (paraphrasing the existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, whom I'll reference later):

Even if you decide to listen to a guardian angel on your shoulder, still it's you who must decide if, in fact, it's an angel on your shoulder – and if you'll listen to its advice.

2. SOURCES OF AUTHORITY TO JUDGE

Turning to the question “How do judges get authority to define justice and to judge?” the answer depends on which type of justice is being considered:

- For cases in “natural justice”, Mother Nature claims and gets all authority to enforce her “opinions”: the principle of causality will be obeyed!² In fact, because all outcomes are always related to causes (including all outcomes of cases in personal, interpersonal, and social justice), then in all cases, Mother Nature is actually a “supreme court judge”. Thus, she (i.e., the principle of causality) is the nearest we humans will ever know to being the giant Jabberwock in the sky, judging everything.
- For cases in “personal justice” and similar to lower-court judges in our legal system, everyone has authority to try to influence personal outcomes. If we want to walk, ride a bike, excel at some sport, obtain some college degree, or whatever, then generally we get what we deserve. Yet, above each of us, Mother Nature is always available as a final, superior-court judge, able to overrule any “lower-court” decision!
- For cases in “interpersonal justice” and “social justice”, wherein by ‘justice’ is meant just opinions about what the outcomes “should be”, it’s certainly easy to find people willing to express opinions! Therefore, it’s certainly easy to find people who are willing to judge the justice of such cases. Yet, of all these judges who express opinions, the only important judges are Mother Nature (who has the authority to require that all outcomes are related to their causes), you (who can’t be forced to relinquish your opinions and who can almost always at least try to influence any outcome), people who have power to enforce their opinions (e.g., someone who no longer wants you as a friend), and someone who takes or is given the power to enforce his or her opinion, such as a judge of our legal system.

² Actually, Dear, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter and will explain in more detail in later chapters dealing with science, a few “wrinkles” in the law of causality have been uncovered in quantum mechanics and chaos theory. From quantum mechanics, we must admit that only probabilities of outcomes can be specified; from chaos theory, we must admit that for many nonlinear systems, uncertainties in initial conditions will eventually lead to the impossibility of knowing the outcome, except some of its broad features (e.g., for the hugely nonlinear system known as the Earth’s climate, predictions of details are impossible; yet whatever the details, we know that energy and momentum will be conserved and entropy will continue to increase).

In all cases, therefore, the judge with most authority is the one who has most power, i.e., once again, “might makes right”! Thus, Dear, before you try to fly off the top of a building by flapping your arms, remember that Mother Nature has the power to enforce her “law” of gravity; before convincing yourself that your teachers are biased, don’t forget that the grades you get in school depend primarily on your “willpower” to study; before breaking a friend’s confidence, remember that your friend has the power to terminate the friendship; and although I expect you’ll never need the information, nonetheless I’ll remind you: judges of our legal system have police power to enforce their decisions.

3. JUDGING JUSTICE

Dear, what I want to do, now, is at least glance at such complicated questions as “When is justice unjust?” and “What should one do to try to rectify or at least avoid perceived injustices?” To try to bring at least a little coherence to the many complications that arise, I’ll again organize my comments under the separate headings: 1) Natural Justice, 2) Personal Justice (and Morality), and 3) Interpersonal and Social Justice. Again, however, I’ll provide only a few examples for the case of Social Justice, leaving the bulk of such examples for later chapters.

3.1 Dealing with Errors in Judging Natural Justice

In an earlier chapter, I claimed: “Mother Nature’s justice is perfect”. If that claim is correct, there’s not much point in “judging natural justice”! Unfortunately, however, a significant percentage of all people (namely, essentially all religious people) misunderstand natural justice. Consequently, it might be useful if I present some suggestions on how to deal with people who judge natural justice so erroneously.

At the outset, I should admit that the claim “Mother Nature’s justice is perfect” is close to saying nothing, because it can be reduced to: what exists is ‘justified’ by its existence. In turn, that’s close to being a tautology (viz., “a needless repetition of an idea in a different word, phrase, or sentence; redundancy; pleonasm”). Yet, I wanted to say it (and will want to use it) not only because so many people seem so confused about natural justice but also because so many clerics capitalize on such confusion.

For example, Dear, think about how many times you’ve heard statements that start with the phrase “It’s not fair that...” e.g., “It’s not fair that her baby

* Go to other chapters *via*

was born blind”, or “It’s not fair that he was killed so young”, or “It’s not fair that the tornado hit us”, etc. To such claims of injustice, religious con-artists of our society commonly respond: “God works in mysterious ways.”

Actually, though, the real mystery is how people can continue to “believe” the gobbledygook preached by clerics. Yet, that, too, is totally “justified” – by the people’s fear, their inadequate thought processes, their failure to test speculations against relevant data, their greed for gaining what they don’t deserve, etc., which are topics that I’ll return to in later chapters.

Mysteries aside, Dear, consider reality. When you hear a statement that starts with “It’s not fair that...” then, almost certainly, you’ll be listening to someone who hasn’t considered the question: “Who is the appropriate judge?” That is, when people make statements starting with “It’s not fair that...” they usually mean: “If I [the person speaking] were the appropriate judge, then the outcome would have been different.” Now, of course clerics maintain the con that the giant Jabberwock in the sky is always the appropriate judge (otherwise, they won’t be able to collect their “legal fees”!); so, they respond with gibberish that the giant Jabberwock “works in mysterious ways”. But the reality is that neither the people who say “It’s not fair...” nor some giant Jabberwock in the sky is the appropriate judge; instead, in such cases, Mother Nature (that is, the principle of causality) is the appropriate judge.

3.1.1 Dealing with Confusions about Natural Justice

Perhaps it would be useful for you if I added some suggestions about how to interact with people who don’t seem to understand “natural justice”. My thought is that, because so many people don’t seem to understand “the reason” for outcomes such as a baby born blind, I essentially guarantee you that, many times, you’ll encounter situations in which you’ll feel the need to respond to what is essentially an incorrect perception of natural justice. If you choose to respond [although, don’t forget the general principle: “You don’t need to answer the phone!”], then before you respond, I’d encourage you to try to understand the other person’s objective(s) – as I’ll now try to illustrate. There are, of course, many possibilities; I’ll list just a few.

- If someone who apparently doesn’t understand natural justice says to you “It’s not fair that you’re experiencing [some pain or similar]...” then understand that the person’s objective is to console you; so, respond with something similar to “Thank you.”

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- If someone who apparently doesn't understand natural justice says something similar to "It's not fair that I..." and then mentions some misfortune experienced, then understand that the person's objective is to obtain some sympathy; so, respond accordingly.
- If someone who apparently doesn't understand natural justice says something similar to "It's not fair that you..." and then mentions an attribute that you possess but the speaker doesn't (such as brains or beauty or your skin color or your relative wealth or similar), then be careful: the speaker's objective may be to gain something from you by trying to "lay a guilt trip on you". In such cases, as appropriate, respond to defend yourself.

In the last case listed above, if the attack on your "innocence" seems trivial, you could respond with something similar to: "I understand what you mean; if I had been the appropriate judge, then the outcome would have been different." On the other hand, if the attack seems more threatening, then respond more forcefully, for example, with something similar to:

I'm surprised that you don't understand the meaning of 'justice'. Before demonstrating even more ignorance, why don't you seek to distinguish in your own mind the differences between natural and personal justice, then between natural and social justice, and then between personal and social justice.

And, Dear, I would suggest that, then, you shouldn't explain what you mean – just disengage yourself from the person!

3.1.2 Dealing with Believers in "Miracles"

Similarly, Dear, I encourage you to investigate ways if not to disengage yourself (which may be difficult for you, given your family situation) then at least to protect yourself from people who believe in "miracles" (in the religious sense of the word 'miracle'). In Chapter **Ig**, entitled "Gaining Confidence and Trust", I already commented on the natural injustice of all such "miracles". Here, I want to add just a few additional comments.

The essence of any (religious) "miracle" is a violation of Nature's law of causality. By definition, such a "miracle" is not just an event with a low probability of occurring (e.g., it'll be a miracle if I ever finish this book!);

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it's an effect with an unjustified cause. For example, God allegedly waved his magic wand (or some other unjustified means) and made light, all astronomical bodies, and all life on Earth in six days; Yahweh reportedly snapped his fingers (or some other unjustified means) and killed all Egyptian first-born males, parted the Reed Sea [incorrectly translated in many English Bibles as “Red Sea”], and so on; Jesus allegedly uttered some appropriate words (or used some other unjustified means) and cured people of incurable diseases, brought people back to life, fed thousands with a few loaves and a couple of fish, and so on; Joseph Smith reportedly used his “peep stone” (or some other unjustified means) to write the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham [the latter being a fictional translation of a portion of the Egyptian Book of the Dead!]; and so on.

You must be careful when you're in the company of people who believe in (such nonexistent) “miracles”, Dear, because such foolish people can endanger your survival. Such people have abandoned the reality relating causes to effects. For example, they can convince themselves that they can drive a car down the highway at more than 100 mph and can “miraculously” avoid an accident, they can convince themselves that they can use mind-warping drugs and “miraculously” avoid brain damage, or they can convince themselves that they can wander out into the desert without water or appropriate clothing and “miraculously” survive. If such people encourage you to join them in “tempting fate” (i.e., attempting to violate natural justice), I encourage you to remember that Mother Nature's justice will be done, on Earth as it is in the heavens (☺) – and take suitable actions to protect yourself.

3.1.3 Dealing with God Believers

Dear, the question of how to deal with “God believers” is too complicated to address adequately within this chapter. Most “God believers” (or “theists”) believe, without a shred of evidence to support their beliefs, that some giant Jabberwock in the sky controls not only natural but also personal and interpersonal justice, and that, after they die, said Jabberwock will judge people and reward or punish them eternally, depending on their adherence to rules for living given in sundry “holy books”. Meanwhile, in reality, all evidence suggests that gods don't exist (and never have) and that when people die, they're dead (the same as for everything else that once lived). Thus, when your brain stops working, there's no longer any “you”.

Now, if such people wouldn't harm the rest of us, then of course the best way to "deal with them" would be to "let them be; live and let live". Thus, if any of several interpersonal moral codes (such as "everyone has an equal right to claim one's own existence") is applied, then the recommendation follows: people should be permitted to pretend whatever they want, provided their delusions cause others no harm. Unfortunately, however, as I'll begin showing you in the "P-chapters", many theists cause sane people a substantial number of significant problems – from demanding that everyone obey their outdated social customs (e.g., dealing with women's rights, abortions, sexuality, etc.) out to and including hijacking aircraft and flying them into skyscrapers, murdering thousands of people.

The reason why theists can cause sane people so much harm is because the beliefs adopted by religious people can dominate their lives. Thus, through indoctrination by lamebrain and/or con-artist clerics (usually aided by parents who were similarly indoctrinated when they were children), religious people in their simplistic "worldview" (i.e., their speculations about the nature of reality) are provided with a prime purpose in life, e.g., not survival of themselves, their families, and their values, but the nonsensical purpose of "eternal survival". Such a prime purpose can then dominate their lives.

As a result, ignoring such indoctrinated and therefore highly motivated people can be, not only unwise, but dangerous. Yet, I can't adequately suggest in this chapter how to deal with "God believers", even though the essence is simple, namely, try to get them to "smarten up", in particular, to adopt the personal morality of holding beliefs only as strongly as relevant evidence justifies. Later, I'll devote several chapters to the topic, e.g., see Chapters **X27** through **X31**.

3.2 Judging Some Aspects of Personal Justice

In an earlier chapter in this group (**J2**), I summarized "personal justice" with the assessment (even with the proposed definition) "generally you get what you deserve" and suggested that the act of highest personal morality was to always use your brain as best you can. Here, I want to mention a few features of personal justice and morality for three special cases, involving 1) probabilities, 2) praying, and 3) perseverance.

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3.2.1 On Probabilities: the “Luck of the Draw”

Although in cases of personal justice a person generally gets what’s deserved, there’s no doubt that “the luck of the draw” also enters. For example, given the many unnecessary (and stupid) risks that I’ve taken during my life, then in more ways than one, if I were dead, I couldn’t complain about the personal justice that I had received! But as is the case for other people, my luck isn’t derived from the help of a guardian angel on my shoulder or the grand beneficence of some giant Jabberwock in the sky. Instead, because in life the linkages between cause and effect can be amazingly complicated, the best that any of us can normally do is deal with the probabilities of various outcomes.

For example, Dear, once you got out of bed this morning, you had to deal with the finite (i.e., nonzero) probability that you’d break your leg. And you wouldn’t necessarily avoid risk by staying in bed, because then you’d need to deal with the finite probabilities that you’d suffocate in your blankets or die in bed engulfed in flames. Stated differently, although all outcomes in personal justice are perfectly justified by their causes (i.e., they’re cases in which, as always, Mother Nature dispenses perfect natural justice), yet no outcome in personal justice is guaranteed to be what’s sought. If you study harder, Dear, I don’t guarantee that you’ll get better grades – only that you’ll increase the probability that your grades will be better (provided you don’t foolishly “pull an all-nighter” – causing you to be so sleepy during the exam that your thinking will be “muddled”).

That is, Dear, when you “play the odds”, please act morally, i.e., use your brain as best you can. Plan ahead; try to foresee the consequences of potentially important steps; do the best you can to evaluate the probabilities for all possible outcomes of each potential step – and then, act in the way that you “judge” to be most appropriate. To try to avoid breaking your leg, take suitable care every step of the way.

3.2.2 On the Personal Immorality of Praying

In contrast to the value of taking care every step of the way, it’s essentially useless to pray. I wrote “essentially useless”, because maybe there’s some value in prayer as a consequence of focusing one’s mind on some problem or situation. But even if so, almost certainly it would be better to devote full attention to the problem or situation, without being distracted by thoughts about some giant Jabberwock in the sky.

Stated differently, praying is immoral (maybe a negative 7.5 on the morality scale), because when you pray, you're not using your brain as best you can. In fact, praying to "the almighty" for "favorable outcomes" in various fields of justice (in "prayers of petition") is not only foolish (generally a waste of time that could be more profitably spent trying to influence the outcome) but also it's almost always astoundingly egotistical.

For example in cases of natural justice, the farmer who prays for rain when his crop is desiccated, or the urban dweller who prays for the rain to stop when her home is flooded, and thousands of similar cases, is begging "the almighty" (as someone else wrote): "Please, God, bend the laws of the universe for my convenience." The outcome would be more favorable if the egotistical supplicant had inquired of Mother Nature how the outcome could have been more favorable, such as by irrigating fields, building homes above flood plains, and so on.

Similar can be said about praying for favorable outcomes in cases of interpersonal and social justice. For example, simpletons can take the easy route and pray that their friend will succeed, that the unemployed will find jobs, that the hungry will be fed, that the homeless will be sheltered, that racial problems will disappear, that cancer will be cured, and so on – or they can get off their knees and get to work to increase the probabilities that desired outcomes will be realized. That is, in cases of interpersonal and social justice, somewhat less egotistical people who pray on behalf of others (but are astoundingly egotistical, thinking they have direct communications with the creator of the universe!) are also acting immorally (maybe a negative 5.5 on the morality scale): to be more moral, they'd need to abandon their egotistical, simplistic, and lazy ways and work to try to produce more favorable outcomes.

In cases of personal justice, similarly, praying for a favorable outcome is preposterous: not only astounding egotistical but an enormous waste of time. Thus, assume for a moment that religious people are correct: assume some god controls everything in this universe. Then the essence of any prayer is: "Excuse me, Sir, but if you're not too busy, would you mind...?" It's a wonder that such people don't worry that their giant Jabberwock in the sky would become angry with them, thinking: "There's another little pipsqueak human who thinks he knows better than I do. So, what does this little worm want me to change?"

In his book *Reason: The Only Oracle Of Man*, Ethan Allen (1738–1789), a Deist (i.e., someone who “believes” in a God, but admits of the possibility of learning about God only through the study of nature) summarized such nonsense well:

To pray for anything, which we can obtain by the due application of our natural powers, and neglect the means of procuring it, is impertinence and laziness in the abstract... for example, to pray for more wisdom, understanding, grace, or faith; for a more robust constitution, handsomer figure, or more of a gigantic size, would be the same as telling God that we are dissatisfied with our inferiority in the order of being; that neither our souls nor bodies suit us; that he has been too sparing of his beneficence; that we want more wisdom, and organs better fitted for show, agility, and superiority...

“Whosoever lacketh wisdom,” instead of “asking it of God,” let him improve what he has... this is all the possible way of gaining in wisdom and knowledge... But it is too common for great faith and little knowledge to unite in the same person; such persons are beyond the reach of argument... The only way to procure food, raiment [i.e., clothes], or the necessaries or conveniences of life, is by natural means; we do not get them by wishing or praying for, but by actual exertion; and the only way to obtain virtue or morality is to practice and habituate ourselves to it, and not to pray to God for it... This is all the religion which reason knows or can ever approve of.

There are many types of such “prayers of petition”. One type is basically a way of talking to oneself, focusing on a specific attribute (e.g., “Lord, please give me strength to...”), which is sometimes a useful enterprise – though not because of the existence (or involvement) of some giant Jabberwock in the sky! Another type, including prayers for good fortune for yourself or someone else, is bizarre – and sometimes horrible.

There’s a huge variety of such prayers (e.g., “I know I didn’t study for my exam, but please...”, “I know that I didn’t build anything to shelter me from a tornado, but please...”, and so on for yourself, plus those for other people such as “I know that so-and-so means well, so please...” or “I know that so-and-so is a nut, but please...”). The essence of all such prayers is the same: to ask some giant Jabberwock in the sky to intervene to violate natural justice (i.e., the principle of causality) and/or to intervene to violate personal and/or interpersonal justice (i.e., getting what you deserve). Such (nut-case) petitioners should seriously consider the adage “be careful what you pray for; it may come true!” – because it truly would be Hell on Earth if causality could no longer be trusted and if personal and interpersonal justices could be violated by some giant Jabberwock in the sky.

Yet, the clerics do add a neat little twist to their silliness about prayers. They don't completely abandon causality: they advocate the idea that, if believers have sufficient faith (and pay the clerics sufficiently!), then natural and personal justice won't be completely violated, just appropriately bent. That is, the clerics still advocate a connection between cause and effect: praying to the gods (plus, of course, paying the clerics) is proposed as sufficient cause to produce the desired effect, which is to get other than what the petitioner deserves. Instead, Dear, I hope that you'll use the time and money (which you would otherwise waste on praying) to study harder, to build a better shelter against tornados, and so on.

Let me try to state that better. Dear: in contrast to the firm commitment from all who can be called scientists to the concept that all consequences are linked to causes, there's the equally firm commitment from all mystics who "believe" in the "supernatural" that linkages between cause and effect can be altered or broken by some giant Jabberwock in the sky. The clerics even go so far as to claim that (if you'll pay them enough) they can show you how to pray to the giant Jabberwock, so that HE will modify the linkages between causes and effects to lead to outcomes that more nearly match your desires, e.g., that the tornado won't hit your house, that you'll win the lottery, etc. Thus, Dear, when anyone ever "prays for a miracle" (such as surviving a tornado that's bearing down on them), the essence of the prayers is: "Please, giant Jabberwock, intervene on my behalf with one of your supernatural stunts to violate causality." For some strange reason, the giant Jabberwock never seems to intervene on behalf of people praying with any greater frequency than occurs by natural randomness of such events!

Dear, if you want to move a mountain, be reasonable: get yourself appropriate tools (praying is not one of them) and get to work! More generally, if you desire to cause some effect, then don't pray, work! If you do, then courtesy Mother Nature (and her "law" of causality) you'll get pretty much what you deserve. The essence of all "prayers of petition" (whether the petition is for the supplicant or for someone else) is the petitioner's desire to abandon the real world for a wish world, in which some giant Jabberwock in the sky intervenes between cause and effect and, therefore, a world in which Nature's justice is thwarted.

But besides the egotistical silliness of praying as a personal policy, Dear, imagine the chaos for others if people's prayers were "answered". For

example, suppose you went to a lot of effort to plant and nurse a fig tree, and someone “with sufficient faith” came along and “cursed” it, killing it (as the clerics’ Jesus reportedly did). Or suppose you went to a lot of effort to set up windmills to generate electricity from the wind, and someone “with sufficient faith” came along and turned the wind off (as the clerics’ Jesus reportedly did). Or suppose you went to a lot of effort to build a road around a mountain or a tunnel through it, and someone “with sufficient faith” came along and moved the mountain (as the clerics’ Jesus reportedly claimed anyone with “sufficient” faith could do). What chaos! One person’s prayer would be another’s curse!

So, Dear, if ever you should consider petitioning some giant Jabberwock in the sky for some favor (viz., pray for something), then please think again about why you want to cause someone else so much misery! Is that kind? If you pray that you’ll win the race, or get the top marks on the exam, or be awarded the scholarship, or... then what about those who trained harder, studied harder, worked harder, or whatever? Just exactly what’s your beef with personal justice? You want to get what you don’t deserve? Really? There’s another side to that coin. If you think you’d really like to have what you don’t deserve (and pray to the giant Jabberwock in the sky to get it), then how about if your leg just breaks – even though you did nothing to deserve it? How about if two minutes from now you go blind – even though you don’t deserve it? How about...?

Please, Dear, think about such prayers. For example, consider what others have said about praying, such as the following from Aiken’s collection.

Whatever a man prays for, he prays for a miracle. Every prayer reduces itself to this: “Great God, grant that twice two be not four.” [Ivan Turgenev]

Oh god, please bend the laws of the universe for my convenience. [Emo Phillips]

To think that the ruler of the universe will run to my assistance and bend the laws of nature for me is the height of arrogance. [Dan Barker]

Over the years I realized the god I prayed to was the god I invented. When I was talking to him, I was talking to myself. He had no understanding or qualities that I did not have. When I realized god was an extension of my imagination, I stopped praying to him. [Howard Kreisner]

Also, Dear, consider how praying fits in to the clerics’ con game. As I’ll be trying to show you, the concept of prayer (plus the affiliated concept of sin)

is the clerics' chief ticket to free-loading on the public: if clerics can convince simpletons that, with the help of the clerics, the principle of causality can be violated, then people will sign blank checks! Shucks, even I would buy into such a scheme – if data showed that it worked (though I would still write a dollar figure on the check). For example, if through prayer I could win a hundred million dollar lottery, then certainly I would be willing to pay the clerics a few hundred dollars as a part of the “investment”!

Actually, though, I shouldn't joke about praying – when I think of all the harm, all the pain, all the misery that clerics (and so many politicians) have done by advocating such nonsense. Let me show you what I mean by again quoting from the book (apparently published in about 1909) by M.M. Mangasarian entitled *The Truth About Jesus: Is He a Myth?*, which you can find on the internet and which I encourage you to read.

Once more, if it had been reported of Abraham Lincoln that he predicted his own assassination; that he promised some of his friends they would not die until they saw him coming again upon the clouds of heaven; that he would give them thrones to sit upon; that they could safely drink deadly poisons in his name, or that he would grant them any request which they might make, provided they asked it for his sake, we would be justified in concluding that such a Lincoln never existed. Yet the most impossible utterances are put in Jesus' mouth. He is made to say: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do.” No man who makes such a promise can keep it. It is not sayings like the above that can prove a man a God. Has Jesus kept his promise? Does he give his people everything, or “whatsoever” they ask of him?

But, it is answered, “Jesus only meant to say that he would give whatever he himself considered good for his friends to have.” Indeed! Is that the way to crawl out of a contract? If that is what he meant, why did he say something else? Could he not have said just what he meant, in the first place? Would it not have been fairer not to have given his friends any occasion for false expectations? Better to promise a little and do more, than to promise everything and do nothing.

But to say that Jesus really entered into any such agreement is to throw doubt upon his existence. Such a character is too wild to be real. Only a mythical Jesus could virtually hand over the government of the universe to courtiers who have petitions to press upon his attention. Moreover, if Jesus could keep his promise, there would be today no misery in the world, no orphans, no childless mothers, no shipwrecks, no floods, no famines, no disease, no crippled children, no insanity, no wars, no crime, no wrong! Have not a thousand, thousand prayers been offered in Jesus' name against every evil which has ploughed the face of our earth? Have these prayers been answered? Then why is there discontent in the world? Can the followers of Jesus move mountains, drink deadly poisons, touch serpents, or work greater miracles than are ascribed to Jesus, as it was promised that they would do? How many self-deluded

prophets these extravagant claims have produced! And who can number the bitter disappointments caused by such impossible promises?

George Jacob Holyoake, of England, tells how in the days of utter poverty, his believing mother asked the Lord, again and again – on her knees, with tears streaming from her eyes, and with absolute faith in Jesus' ability to keep His promise – to give her starving children their daily bread. But the more fervently she prayed the heavier grew the burden of her life. A stone or wooden idol could not have been more indifferent to a mother's tears. "My mind aches as I think of those days," writes Mr. Holyoake. One day he went to see the Rev. Mr. Cribbace, who had invited inquirers to his house. "Do you really believe," asked young Holyoake to the clergyman, "that what we ask in faith we shall receive?"

"It never struck me," continues Mr. Holyoake, "that the preacher's threadbare dress, his half-famished look, and necessity of taking up a collection the previous night to pay expense's showed that faith was not a source of income to him. It never struck me that if help could be obtained by prayer no church would be needy, no believer would be poor." What answer did the preacher give to Holyoake's earnest question? The same which the preachers of today give: "He parried his answer with many words, and at length said that the promise was to be taken with the provision that what we asked for would be given, if God thought it for our good."

Why, then, did not Jesus explain that important proviso when he made the promise? Was Jesus only making a half statement, the other half of which he would reveal later to protect himself against disappointed petitioners? But he said: "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it," and "If it were not so, I would have told you." Did he not mean just what he said? The truth is that no historical person in his senses ever made such extraordinary, such impossible promises, and the report that Jesus made them only goes to confirm that their author is only a legendary being.

Of course, it's to be expected that Christian clerics would have their Jesus advocate prayer: promising power to the people is part of the clerics' con game. In contrast, the Gnostics had no priesthood; therefore, there was no "need" for prayer (i.e., no need for paying any priesthood). Thus, the Gnostics' *Gospel of Thomas* (which I'll be reviewing later and which you can find on the internet) states:

His disciples asked him [the Gnostics' Jesus]... "Do you want us to fast? How should we pray...?"

Jesus said to them, "If you fast, you will bring sin upon yourselves, and if you pray, you will be condemned..."

You can well imagine, Dear, that Christian clerics rejected such ideas: if the people didn't pray, the clerics' con game would collapse!

And I would agree with the Gnostics' Jesus: "if you pray, you will be condemned". As Gypsy Rose Lee said:

Praying is like a rocking chair – it'll give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere.

And as Lemuel Washburn said:

Prayer is like a pump in an empty well, it makes lots of noise, but brings no water.

That is, Dear, if you pray, you can condemn yourself to inaction.

Alvin Kuhn puts the same idea more forcefully in his essay (which you can find on the internet) *Prayer and Healing*:

The deleterious influence of prayer reaches perhaps its climactic point of disservice [to the people; not to clerics!] in its disastrous inhibition of man's impulse to overt action in all contingencies in which resolute action is crucial. It strikes at man's truest interests when it persuades him to pray instead of acting. When prayer steps in to paralyze the spirit of resolute self-exertion and causes him to stand as an impotent beggar when prompt action alone will save, it is of all things most damaging... It is the contention here that the prayer habit, leading men to substitute prayer for needed action, is the cause of untold evil, wreckage, defeat, and tragedy in the run of history. Prayer puts a specious value on cowardice, or offers a tempting resort to it. And mankind suffers the consequences of its failure to act.

But actually, Dear, I don't think that the principal problem with prayer is its promotion of inaction. I would argue, instead, that the Gnostics' Jesus assessment that "if you pray, you will be condemned" reflects how praying erodes what can be called the human spirit: rather than encouraging people to challenge whatever obstacle, praying encourages people to get down on their knees (or even to fall prostrate on the ground) and beg for help.

In his essay (referenced above), with much more competence with English than I can muster, Kuhn states it well:

The first and most forthright count in the accusation against prayer is that it is infinitely degrading to the human ego. As it springs out of the ego's profound sense of his inferior and dependent status, out of the recognition of his base and helpless nature in relation to the power prayed to, these basic assumptions in the case and the posture and habit of mind bent to conformity with them inevitably tend to strengthen and more deeply ingrain on the subconscious life of the individual so conditioned the dominant obsession of one's lowness and unworthiness.

The “prayer consciousness” thus endlessly renews and sharpens the self-infliction of a most injurious psychological trauma upon the human psyche. In the simplest form of statement prayer thus constantly beats down the human spirit. It throws over it a heavy pall of depression, of negative cast of consciousness, of self-accusation, and self-depreciation...

I hope you’ll consider those ideas, Dear, and I also hope you’ll read Kuhn’s essay. Just type “Alvin Boyd Kuhn Prayer and Healing” into a search engine such as Google’s, and “magically” (by which I mean “astoundingly!”) it will appear. Then, Dear, please consider for yourself what the Gnostics’ Jesus might have meant by saying:

If you pray, you will be condemned.

But setting aside until later chapters the commonly difficult task of trying to understand what Jesus reportedly said (“difficult” not only because the statements are frequently ambiguous but also because the reporters frequently disagree, and therefore, the authenticity of the reported statements is always questionable), I’ll end these comments about the “personal justice” of praying by stating the obvious. If it’s “personal justice” to generally get what you deserve, then to increase the probability that you’ll achieve your goals, then rather than rely on probabilities or prayer, Dear, persevere.

3.3.3 On Persevering

According to my dictionary, to persevere means “to continue in some effort, course of action, etc. in spite of difficulty, opposition, etc.; be steadfast in purpose; persist.” Your grandmother has frequently praised me for my perseverance (e.g., for getting my degrees, hanging on to my job, and even for continuing to write this book), and in case her praise has any merit, Dear, then let me tell you my “secret” for perseverance. It’s like the solution to many Zen koans (or puzzles). Thus, similar to how to successfully pursue happiness (namely, don’t try – instead, make progress toward your goals), the secret of having perseverance is: not to have any!

As an example, Dear (and as I mentioned in an earlier chapter), there’s “no way” I could possibly have the perseverance to sit down and type multi-thousands of pages, even for you. In fact, I have trouble even sitting down and typing for more than an hour or so. And so again, Dear, if ever the tasks required to reach your goals seem overwhelming, then don’t despair and don’t burden yourself with some useless admonishments such as “I must

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persevere” or “I ain’t gonna be a quitter”. Instead, make arrangement to “just push-on for another hour” – and after a while, you’ll probably be hearing some silly compliments about your “amazing perseverance”.

3.3 Judging Interpersonal & Social Justice

Once again, Dear, I must “beg off”; that is, within this chapter, I can’t appropriately address judging interpersonal and social justice. It’s an enormous topic, and for me to even try to “just do it justice” will require many chapters (e.g., see **P8** and **P9**, and **X9** through **X11**). Here, I’ll just restate a central problem, illustrate it, and hint at its solution.

The central problem in the worldwide search for interpersonal and social justice is: such justice is “just opinion”. As Emerson said:

One man’s [opinion of interpersonal and social] **justice is another’s** [opinion of interpersonal and social] **injustice**.

A good illustration of Emerson’s insight can be seen from decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court: read the opinions of the justices (agreeing or disagreeing with the opinions of lower courts) and notice that the law of the land is established by which opinion receives a majority of the votes from the nine justices. Further, in the case of interactions involving only two people, sometimes one person has a veto. e.g., if someone holds the opinion that you’re no longer worthy of being a friend.

As a result, essentially everyone becomes involved in judging interpersonal and social justice; i.e., essentially everyone holds opinions about subjects in interpersonal and social relations. To minimize (or at least manage) potential discord from what’s perceived to be injustice in interpersonal and social relations, almost always it’s critical that perceptions of all parties are based on informed opinions, i.e., opinions based on reliable evidence. Unfortunately, however, such a critical condition is frequently unsatisfied; examples range from your former friend holding the false opinion that you betrayed a confidence to cases settled by the U.S. Supreme Court based on the justices’ opinions (based on zero evidence) that the U.S. is “one nation under God” and “In God We Trust”, i.e., opinions based on the ludicrous idea of the existence of a giant Jabberwock in the sky.

In later chapters I’ll address how opinions can be better informed (using the scientific method) and how residual and (according to Heraclitus) inevitable

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strife in interpersonal and social relationships can be managed. In a nutshell, a reasonable, realistic, and attractive solution (already being at least partially applied in nations such as Sweden and Japan) is to replace all influences of (data-less) religions with guidance from (data-based) secular humanism.

4. JUDGING JUDGES & THEIR JUDGMENTS

Finally for this chapter, Dear, I want to tackle such questions as:

- What are the objectives of different judges?
- On what bases are their objectives defensible?
- How fair is the justice that different judges dispense?
- Who judges the judges and their judgments – and on what bases?
- What are the bases for judgments by different judges?
- Are such bases fair?

Below, I'll at least partially respond to such (difficult!) questions in the same order as I used earlier, i.e., looking at cases in 1) Natural Justice, 2) Personal Justice, and 3) Interpersonal and Social Justice. Also once again, I'll delay until later chapters most of my comments on judging judges and judgments of interpersonal and social justice.

4.1 Judging Nature's Judgments

For cases in natural justice, we don't know if Mother Nature's inanimate part (i.e., the inanimate part of nature) has any objective – although, as I'll indicate in later chapters (especially **Z**), maybe Nature's "objective" is to return this universe to its original state of total nothingness! What we do know, however, is that the inanimate part of Nature does enforce various "laws" (better called "principles", such as the "principle" of gravity). In addition, we know that all animate parts of nature have the prime objective of continuing to live, which then yields various "natural laws", such as the "law of the jungle" that "might makes right".

In upholding her "laws" and pursuing any objectives, Mother Nature is a perfect judge: always totally objective and totally disinterested in the outcome, and never playing favorites, displaying bias, perverting justice by distorting laws, accepting bribes, permitting miracles, listening to prayers, etc. Would that all judges in the world were so honest and fair as Nature! Further, her most important "law" is so beautifully simple and complete that even a baby in a high chair knows it well: the principle of causality.

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Yet, as I wrote earlier, probably at some time or other, all of us would be inclined to submit complaints about Nature's justice – if we thought it would do any good to complain! For example, although none of us should have major complaints about her sweeping jurisdiction (because we're all just part of nature!), sometimes I rather wish that some of her laws weren't quite so hard to understand!

For example, although (with enough study) her laws in quantum and relativistic mechanics eventually can become sufficiently clear, yet as I'll show you in **Z**, there are some details of her laws of “the zigblat mechanics of zero” that I'm unable to decipher! [On the other hand, though, I admit (along with Nobel laureate Richard Feynman) that's it's rather fun trying to decipher her rules!] More relevant, though, is that sometimes we wish that Mother Nature would be a little more “subjective”, taking account of human weaknesses, frailties, muddled thinking, and so on. But again: there's no use whining about it; Mother Nature's justice “just is”!

4.2 Judging Yourself & Your Judgments

For concreteness, I'll address “judging yourself and your judgments” within the context of what I remind myself with ‘J’ when I'm walking – which I'll now (finally!) show you.

J: Judges, Judgments, Justice:

“Natural justice” is just causality; “personal justice” is that you generally get what you deserve; “interpersonal justice” is that “generally, you get out of a relationship pretty much what you put into it”; “social justice” is just opinions – but there's a fair chance for consensus, courtesy Mother Nature.

Next to Mother Nature, I'm the final judge and jury of my actions, and I have my own judicial principles:

- *Try to be fair,*
- *Try to be kind,*
- *Try to obey society's laws – or work to change them,*
- *If in doubt, let the system go free,*
- *Everyone has an equal right to claim one's own existence,*
- *“Give equal value for value received”,*
- *“Reciprocity” – but remember, the best revenge is to live well.*

So, after all is said and done, dismiss the jury and adjudicate this way: from the pleasure of being right, just smile inwardly, and from the pain of seeing (now) that I was wrong (then), just learn from my mistakes and go on, forgiving myself with kindness.

I hope that, for your life, you'll conclude that something similar to what I review for "J" (shown above) is appropriate also for you. But if so, Dear, please be careful: there are some potentially difficult problems with claiming *I'm the final judge and jury of my actions*. One obvious problem (and it can be a huge problem) is one that all religions *should* have addressed but (as far as I have been able to make out) none ever has. Posed as a question, the problem is: On what bases are judgments to be made?

Dear, please think about that question – because it's essential that you answer it for yourself. If you're to be your own judge, how will you decide if some particular action of yours is right or wrong? If you're thinking something similar to "I'll just know", then please dig deeper to determine how you'll "just know". And when you've dug as deep as you can, I expect you'll reach a conclusion similar to what I've been describing:

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*. As for the morality of our goals, the only source of sane values is Nature's apparent goal of helping intelligence continue and expand.

Unfortunately, however, few if any of us are taught the above "principle". For example, when you were a child, your parents defined what was right and wrong. But as an adult, if you're to be your own judge, you must learn to define right and wrong for yourself. At school, the teachers and administrators and others define what's right and wrong, but are they right or wrong? In society, the laws state what's right and wrong, but when are society's laws wrong? The Bible and other "holy books" state what's right and wrong (commonly in the form of "commandments"), but on what are these "commandments" based?

Thus, Dear, please see that your ideas about 'justice' and 'morality' are all meaningless [as are the ideas about 'justice' and 'morality' advocated by your parents, your teachers, lawmakers, judges, clerics (i.e., the ideas of the self-appointed spokesmen for some giant Jabberwock in the sky) all meaningless] – until some meaning is given to the concepts of right and wrong, i.e., until the purpose (the goal) is understood and adopted.

Of course the major way that society manipulates its members is by defining and instilling what's "moral" and by defining and enforcing what's "lawful". Now, Dear, I know that, in earlier chapters of this group, I've already bored you with some of my ideas about morality – "boring", I hope, because you concluded that the concepts were so simple! Yet, even if you found the concepts boringly simple, I want to repeat some of them below, because it's absolutely astounding how many people fail to understand the simple idea that "morality" depends on objectives. More significantly, though, I want to repeat some of these simple ideas to help you overcome a continuous and in many cases a major problem.

Thus, Dear, I know from many personal experiences that it can be extremely difficult to maintain (after a lifetime of experiences indicating the contrary) that you're the final judge of you, and thereby, that the choice is yours to define what's right and wrong – and all shades in-between! Almost from birth, each of us is manipulated to behave in ways that others judge to be "moral", and especially when we're adults, society's representatives are always watching to see if what we're doing is "legal". No doubt this manipulation is valuable to society, impressing its "moral values" on its young and forcing adults to behave "lawfully"; that is, no doubt this manipulation assists the survival of the group.

But, Dear, this manipulation can be evil if there are ingredients in a group's moral code or in society's legal codes that are wrong – which is the case for any group or society that perpetuate silly myths about some giant Jabberwock in the sky who defines morality (based on what objective?!) and who is "the supreme judge of the universe". Further, an individual's "moral values" and "sense of justice" may differ from society's legal code, landing the individual in jail (or worse). Thus, societies can (and do) levy substantial penalties against any individual who maintains (as I do, and as I hope you will): *Next to Mother Nature, I'm the supreme judge of my universe; I'm the final judge of me!*

A much more common problem with being your own judge – and therefore, generally a more serious problem – is that you won't be able to stop "members of the jury" (i.e., the many other "judges" in cases of interpersonal justice) from expressing their opinions. A problem therein is that, quite likely, you may normally respect the opinions of many of the jurors, e.g., your parents and your friends (especially those friends whom you chose because you respect and admire them). Consequently, you should

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<http://zenofzero.net/>

undoubtedly give their opinions “due deliberation”. But as well meaning and respected as the jurors may be, only you will know the full details of each case, and in the end, it’s you who must judge. That is, *after all is said and done, dismiss the jury, dismiss all other judges, and judge for yourself.*

Another difficulty with being the final judge of yourself, Dear, is to dismiss not other people’s blame (which all of us probably have a natural tendency to do!) but their praise. It’s difficult, because we “enjoy” receiving praises (they’re survival signals). But it’s important to be able to dismiss praise from others: if you invariably accept their praise, then thereby, you’re accepting their judgment, i.e., you’re permitting others to be your judge. And if in the past you have accepted someone’s praise, then it’ll be more difficult to dismiss that same person’s blame or criticism – which is the reason, of course, why most people intent on criticizing you will start by describing something about you that they can praise!

And actually, Dear, that’s such a common management technique, you might want to prepare yourself for it, and therefore, maybe you won’t mind my making a few additional comments on the subject – comments that I’ll put in smaller-sized font, to emphasize that it’s an aside.

For example, when your employer or supervisor calls you in for your regular “appraisal” (commonly done in most large companies once per year), prepare yourself to disagree, not with his or her criticisms (theoretically, at least, that’s relatively simple), but to disagree with his or her praise! (To simplify the text, let me assume your supervisor is a male – which, based on the current sexual bias of our society, isn’t an unrealistic assumption.) Of course, if the praise is that you did excellent work on such-and-such, and if you agree, then at least steer some of the praise where it’s appropriate, to demonstrate to your supervisor that he doesn’t have a complete picture. For example, as appropriate, say: “Well, thank you, but I don’t deserve all the credit; Jane and Joe provided excellent support, and don’t forget...”

Then, when he gets around to his planned criticism, e.g., “On the other hand, I’ve heard some complaints about your interactions with Tom”, then start by agreeing (if it’s true): “Oh, you’re right; interactions with Tom have not been going well. I’ve tried to ignore his sexist remarks and attitudes, but I’ve found it to be quite difficult because they’re so pervasive. Perhaps you’d speak to him about his problem, or maybe send him to one of those sexual-awareness seminars. I’m afraid that if he doesn’t learn how to get over his biases, he’s in for a lot of trouble in his life.”

And I should add, Dear, that preparing for such meetings is really quite important, not only to stay true to the principle that you’re your own judge, but because these appraisals can be very threatening to one’s survival – the nearest that many modern

humans have to confronting a wild beast! Of course, if you can work for yourself, that would be best (although that has its own set of wild beasts). Next best is if you report to a supervisor whose goal was to get you to produce more, and therefore, the appraisal (if given at all!) would normally not be threatening.

But, by far, most people in our society work only for a supervisor, and the goals of supervisors range all over the map, from wanting to maintain their power to wanting sexual favors. Only on a few lucky occasions will a supervisor's prime goal be to help you and the organization succeed. For example, after having had about 10 supervisors during my career, I had only one such competent supervisor – and he never held a formal “appraisal”! He just dropped in every week or so to ask if he could help me with anything. One time, when he knew I was having a lot of trouble (e.g., testifying almost daily before the state legislature), he dropped in to ask if I'd like to walk with him over to the bookstore to get an ice cream cone! Small wonder that, after his short time as being Dean of Research, he became president of the University (a position he then held for about 15 years, until he retired).

Sorry to ramble, Dear, but I'm thinking more about that wonderful fellow. I remember one time, when he was holding one of his non-regular meetings of the heads of all the “research institutes” at the university, a heated argument developed about something – I've forgotten the subject. But I remember his response (close to verbatim): “Wait a minute. Let's calm down. Look, I don't know about all of you, but I don't plan to be here very long.” [And that remark didn't surprise me, because he had recently returned from Washington, where he was head of a major government agency, and I could easily imagine that he was soon headed for some other high-level position.] “So,” he continued, “let's see how we can settle this so that, when we leave, we can look back and be pleased with how we helped this institution.” This remark took the “discussion” to a higher, objective plane, and all of us then tried to solve the problem for the benefit of those who would follow.

But again, I'd better stop musing and return to the topic at hand. Dear, you might think that you'll be able to accept only the praise from others, but I've found that to be difficult – sometimes extremely difficult. I therefore have concluded that I'll be the final judge of my thoughts and actions, with I alone deciding when either blame or praise is appropriate. Actually, though, if the truth be known (and certainly it should be!), I don't do this entirely on my own. When I'm walking in the desert, after I praise “Mother Nature” for her beauty and thank “Father Sun” for his perseverance, I ask them: “how am I doing?” I find that they speak to me quite bluntly, praising me for progress and criticizing me for errors. And I find that, generally, I do accept their judgments! [And yes, Dear, I know, I know... but I prefer to examine my performance from their perspectives!]

And when you reach your judgment, Dear, again take care. The lesser problem occurs if you judge that you were correct. But even then, be careful: try to avoid arrogance; tell yourself (not others) that you did well. When I'm walking, I remind myself of this with: *from the pleasure of being right, just smile inwardly*. The bigger problem is if you judge you were wrong. Of course try to make amends, but also, Dear, you must learn to forgive yourself. For years, I thought that the familiar line “charity begins at home” meant to be kind to family members, but now, I'm fairly certain that it means something even closer to home: be kind to yourself!

Dear, although you may not yet have enough experience to fully appreciate this, we all make mistakes! But there's the important line (I've forgotten its source): “the biggest mistake is not to make any!” Further, there is this. At the time you made what you *now* call a “mistake”, what you did was (almost certainly) the best you could: most likely, you did what you considered best to promote your trio of survival goals based on your unique experiences in life, your assessment of the situation, and reacting appropriately to your syntheses as given to you by your feelings and instincts. If you now blame yourself, you're forgetting that the current *now* is not the prior *then*.

Further, if you *judge*, now, that previously you were wrong, this judgment is a left-brain analysis of what, then, was quite likely a mixture of left-brain's, right-brain's, and body's reaction to the prior circumstances. That is, quite likely your current *analysis* inadequately summarizes what you experienced and reacted to (in a way that you now *analyze* to be mistaken). Stated differently: what you *did then* you *now judge* to be a “mistake”; but at the previous time, when *then* was *now*, your *actions* were almost certainly correct! Therefore, Dear, what I hope you will do is adopt something similar to my commitment: *from the pain of seeing (now) that I was wrong (then), just learn from my mistakes and go on, forgiving myself with kindness*.

The need to forgive ourselves seems to be especially important as we grow older, when apparently we have more inclination (or maybe it's just more time!) to reflect on the past. Blaming ourselves can become a horrible burden, debasing our lives. During my life, I've made a great many (and some very serious) mistakes, most of which I can now do nothing about – save learn from them. And maybe the main lesson to learn is the benefit of making mistakes: our past mistakes increase the probability of our making fewer mistakes in the future, not debasing, but improving us!

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In fact, Dear, here is one of the most astoundingly stupid concepts that has ever polluted humanity, a concept described in the earliest written records (from the Sumerians of Mesopotamia and from the Egyptians), and a concept with which all subsequent clerics have contaminated us, namely, ‘sin’. Humans make mistakes. The clerics call these mistakes “sins” against their gods – and then claim authority to forgive “sins”, of course provided that “the sinners” fills the clerics’ collection plates. What astounding audacity; what an astounding con game; what astounding stupidity!

Of course I’ll go into this idiotic idea of “sin” in later chapters (e.g., in the “excursions” **Qx** and **Yx**), but for now, Dear, at least let me mention a critical point, namely: **There’s no such thing as “sin”!** If you make a mistake, you offend no god. The “repentance” that you feel is not from offending some god, but because you realize that the mistake was (or was potentially) damaging to your trio of survival goals. This repentance is your way of telling yourself to try to do better next time, to promote your trio of survival goals. Thereby, the entire experience is not a “sin” against some god but (as someone else said) one of the best characteristics of any human (and of many other animals, as well): to learn from our mistakes, to try to do better next time. Please, Dear, never ask any cleric for “forgiveness” for some “sin”; if appropriate, seek to make amends to someone you have wronged; but in all cases, never ask some cleric to wipe the slate “clean” with “forgiveness”; instead, record your mistakes in indelible ink – to help you remember not to make the same mistakes again!

But I’d better ease myself down from that soapbox. As a summary of the above, I’ve been trying to show what I consider to be important characteristics of my most important judge, i.e., me! In contrast, in what follows, let me mention a few relatively unimportant characteristics of the many other judges with which each of us must deal. I describe these characteristics as “relatively unimportant” not only because usually we can’t do anything about them (i.e., usually we can’t change other people) but also because I’ve found that usually what’s of dominant importance is, not the characteristics of the other judges, but in some case their objectives and in other cases the “laws” that they attempt to uphold.

4.3 Judging Other Judges & Their Judgments

In cases for which “outcomes” are totally controlled by someone whom we call “a judge” (for example, a judge of our legal system), not only are the characteristics of the judge critical, but it’s critical to whom the judge is responsible.

Probably the briefest description of the judge’s required characteristics is that he or she be as close as possible to the perfection of Mother Nature: demanding that all laws be observed, otherwise totally disinterested in the outcome, completely honest, unbiased, and unmoved by the superfluous and the irrelevant (such as bribes, prayers, and so on). Should any judge fail to meet such standards, then he or she should be “impeached”, that is, thrown out of office on his or her ear (or some other, more fitting, extremity).

From which I hope that you’ll notice, Dear, that if anyone is to judge the people – and in turn, if there is to be any ‘justice’ – the judge’s fitness for office must be subject to the judgment of these same people. That is, Dear, judges of interpersonal and social justice must be responsible to the people.

For example, if you turned to some judge to help you settle “what’s fair” in the case of you and the young man of the previous chapter (let’s now assume that he’s your husband), a huge number of people would probably be willing to give their opinions, but only a judge of our legal system has the power to enforce his or her opinion. Other “judges” might include relatives, friends, and “professionals” (such as marriage counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists). Because each of these people has been taught by Nature the meaning of “personal justice”, there’s a fairly good chance that they would express a quite-consistent opinion about “what’s fair” – and there’s a chance that your husband would change his opinion to conform more closely to the consensus expressed by all these “judges”. Failing that, you could end your marriage in divorce by taking your case to a judge who has the ability to enforce his or her opinion (with police power).

For cases in social justice, judges serve to help ensure that society’s laws are obeyed and serve to define “what’s fair” when two or more parties disagree. In 1946, a rather famous U.S. judge, Judge Learned Hand, wrote:

Justice, I think, is the tolerable accommodation of the conflicting interests of society...

In my judgment, however, I think that Hand's assessment is, not only wrong, but has terrible implications. Thus, if "social justice" is accepted to be "just" matters of compromise (accommodating conflicting interests), then when such an idea gains wide acceptance (as it has in our country today), courts become clogged with what should be seen as bogus claims for compromise (on topics as crazy as suing McDonald's for serving hot coffee to suing gun manufactures for selling dangerous weapons).

Instead, when two or more parties disagree, a judge's job is to define "what's fair" based on what Mother Nature has been teaching each of us every day of our lives: people should generally get what they deserve. That is, Dear (once again!), although social justice is just (an enforced) opinion, there's a good chance that any judge's opinion will be consistent with the opinion held by most people – provided that the judge has learned what Mother Nature has taught all of us.

Therefore, Dear, for people to accept judgments of their judicial system (and not start riots, revolutions, and wars), characteristics of the system's judges are critical. In the best of all systems, each and every judge will possess all of Mother Nature's characteristics: totally honest, unbiased, incorruptible, and disinterested in the outcome. In addition, it's absolutely essential that each and every judge has learned Mother Nature's lesson that it's justice to get what we deserve.

In addition, although those characteristics and that knowledge are essential (and yet, not possessed by many of our judges!), there's an additional critical characteristic that each and every judge should possess (but few in our judicial system do): the ability to think clearly. And the reason why I say that few of our judges possess this ability is because, if they thought clearly, then they'd understand the prime objectives of humans and would understand that 'morality' means the value of any act in promoting our trio of survival goals. If they understood this, then in contrast to what occurs, they wouldn't permit Bibles in their courts and they'd never ask any witness "to swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you [giant Jabberwock in the sky]."

In contrast, Dear, think of the clerics' crazy concept of a supernatural Jabberwock who gets to judge every one. To whom is this (fictitious) giant Jabberwock responsible? If you don't agree with God's judgment, what do you plan to do about it? Impeach him?

If you do plan to impeach God (and his claimed representatives), Dear, I wholeheartedly support your plan! For example, as I'll show you in a later chapter, there's a huge mountain of evidence to support impeaching the clerics' Jesus (as well as every other "prophet", including Moses, Zoroaster, Muhammad, and assorted riff-raff such as Sidney Rigdon and his "mouthpiece" Joseph Smith).

In particular, as I'll show you in later chapters, the clerics' Jesus, the depicted Muhammad, and the devilish duo Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith should be impeached not just for blatant incompetence but also for evil. Thus, any judge who advocates *torturing humans* (in Hell) not for just a second (which would be sufficient grounds for impeachment of any judge), not for a few minutes (which would be sufficient grounds for me to try to disbar such a judge), not even for a lifetime (which would be unbelievably horrible, the perpetrator of which should be shot), but who advocates torturing humans for eternity, in Hell, should be (as a minimum) impeached. The hideousness of such "judges" defies description.

And what, according to Christian (and Mormon) clerics, is the hideous "sin" committed and for which we'd get our toenails pulled off for eternity (or whatever)? Don't gasp quite yet, Dear, because the horrible sin, the sin for which these clerics would have their Jesus never forgive us, the sin that leads to eternal punishment in Hell, is to think for ourselves – in particular, to have the audacity to think that the clerics' Jesus wasn't the son of any god and that the holy ghost is the same as all other ghosts, viz., figments of primitive people's imaginations. You can find that statement repeated many times in the Bible, e.g., at *Matthew 12, 31* there is:

And so I [Jesus] tell you this: no sin, no slander, is beyond forgiveness for men, except slander against the Spirit, and that will not be forgiven... if anyone speaks against the Holy Spirit, for him there is no forgiveness, either in this age or in the age to come.

So yes, Dear, I favor impeaching the clerics' Jesus, as well as other alleged "prophets". While I'm at it, I'd also throw out all clerics: someday (I hope at least before another 10 generations have passed and surely it won't take 100 generations), I trust that it'll be, not only immoral (which it is now!), but also illegal to indoctrinate children with any balderdash that doesn't have a crumb of data to support it.

* Go to other chapters *via*

Further, Dear, not only do people want judges who emulate Mother Nature, we want – and, if necessary, will demand – laws that are “just”. For example, if the law that a particular judge is enforcing describes details (as given in the Bible reportedly as written by Moses) about how to sell one’s daughter into slavery or about how to get away with beating your slaves to death, then it doesn’t matter if a particular judge is impeachable: if the law is “unjust” then the judge is irrelevant. Stated differently, Dear, we demand justice in our entire “legal system” (including in our judges and in our laws).

And I should probably warn you, Dear, that it’ll take me many chapters to show you how it has taken humans thousands of years to achieve the degree of justice that we now enjoy in this country, where although it’s not yet the happy circumstance that we enjoy “liberty and justice for all”, yet enormous progress has been made. Still, though, there’s much for youngsters such as you to do – including wrestling all supernatural judges (including Jesus, Muhammad, and various other riffraff such as Rigdon and Smith) to the ground, removing their robes, halos, false “prophethoods”, and fake “auras of perfection” in which the damnable clerics have enshrouded them, and then, throwing the bums out on their rears, into the trash can of human mistakes, where they belong.

Now, Dear, perhaps it’s obvious not only that I get quite upset when I begin to address clerical involvement in social justice but also that there’s much to the topic of social justice that I have yet to address. In the chapters that immediately follow, I want first to show you some basic ideas about interpersonal moral codes, then show you a little about how horribly the clerics of the world have corrupted some of these simple concepts, then revisit with more focus the concepts of opinions and objectives, and then, finally, address problems in social justice and potential solutions. I hope, Dear, that you’ll not dismiss the subsequent chapters dealing with social justice as irrelevant: many people have fought and died so that you can experience better justice than did they.

I also hope that you’re beginning to learn about the personal morality and justice of getting more exercise!