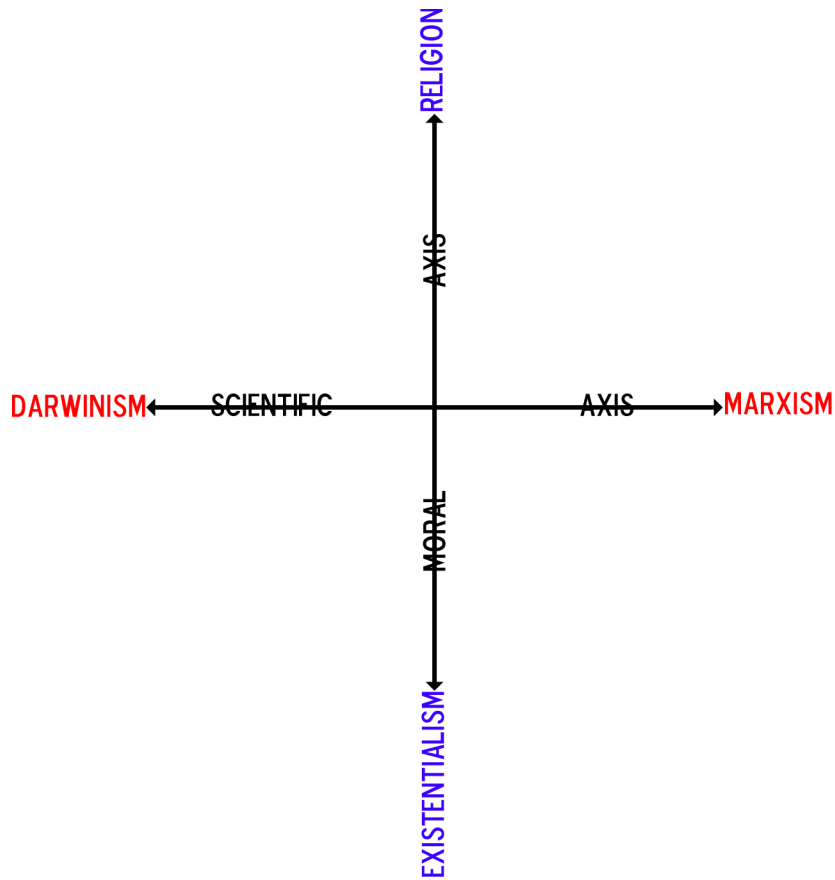


Introduction

What is human nature? Is it a cognitive formula that accepts our environment as variables and perpetually dictates our behavior? Is it a fictional concept that has been concocted as an explanation as to why humans behave the way we do? Human nature is one of the most perplexing mysteries and factual gaps in the philosophical pursuit of knowing the human being. It is a concept that many theories and beliefs throughout history have tried to tackle and define, but due to the vast complexity and current intangibility of all facts and clues that may answer the question, “What is human nature?” there has yet to be an answer that is unanimously accepted and most potentially correct. However, there are many philosophies and dictations that do have the potential to answer the question; some of these are very similar to each other while other are polar opposites. Since there is a great variety of these ideologies and theologies, they generate many different spectrums of thought. These different beliefs and theories can be composed into a graph that illustrates a broader view—one axis being philosophies and beliefs that address the question in terms of morality, and the other axis being conclusions reached through study that address the question in terms of science. This graph creates two different spectrums; the quadrants between axes depict a grid in which most schools of thought fall. The moral axis’ endpoints are Existentialism and Religion, and the scientific axis’ endpoints are Marxism and Darwinism.



The Moral Axis

The y-axis on this graph is the axis of morality. Morality refers to the cognitive manifest of values and priorities that dictate our behavior; in other words, our moral and ethical code. These codes act like an equation in which different instances and decisions act as variables, and the outcome is our behavior. Morality is something that is very personal; the construction of an individual's morality is strongly based off the individual's nurture and experience, thus causing an endless variety of moral codes to exist in the global population. Religions and philosophies can also define a person's morality, thus constructing common morals that the followers of said schools must accept. This allows these schools to dictate an individual's behavior through the medium of morality. This is where morality ties in with human nature; one school of thought may argue that morality is unanimous amongst all humans as our nature, (i.e. that there is a set 'good' and 'bad'), while another school may argue that morality is but a personal concoction that is constantly developing based off of the individual, and thus a unanimous nature is nonexistent. Considering the number of these schools of thought, there is a very large spectrum of moral connotations in regards to human nature; this variety creates the moral axis. The bottom of this axis is Existentialism, and the top of this axis is Religion. These are both schools of thought that have very contradictory and 'other end of the spectrum' perspectives of human nature in relation to the other, making them the best fit for the moral axis' endpoints.

Religion

(All content in reference to Religion is not targeting any specific Religion or organization of beliefs and/or values, but instead is generally referencing the epitomized concept of religion in its most broadly defined frameworks and elements.)

There are many religions in the world, and their characteristics vary to some degree, but they all have a common definition as to what type of institution they are. Religion is the organized faith in and worship of a set framework of beliefs and conducts. Throughout history, there have been a countless amount of religions, all with a huge range of attributes that distinguish them from others. In terms of morality, all religions have ethical codes that stem from the base values and beliefs of the religion; these codes act as rule books that dictate the behaviors, values, and morals of followers. These parameters and expectations are generated by belief, faith, and supernatural entities (i.e. afterlife, gods, myths, etc.) If the followers are fully committed to the religion, they will accept and practice the moral code and expel that which disobeys that code. Committed followers will believe and support wholeheartedly that which the religion claims, even if it contradicts their personal beliefs and values. What does this say about human nature?

Human beings, in the eye of Religion, are a single body that naturally has to obey the frameworks that said religion sets for them. Morals and parameters are set for the followers of religions regardless of the individual follower, causing the behavior of said followers to be synchronized under dictation. Thoughts, judgments, and ethical code are all unified amongst the followers in religious initiation; this attribution is certain and concrete with no exceptions. Religion reflects the concept that our human nature is a set code that we must obey in order to act as the religion's supernatural entities expect us to; this is unanimous amongst all beings and

no one is exempt from this nature. This is what puts Religion on one end of the moral axis, for morals and ethics under religion are etched into its followers regardless of the independent or unique qualities of the follower.

Existentialism

Opposite Religion on the moral axis is Existentialism. Existentialism is a philosophy coined by the Danish philosopher Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, in which it is believed that existence precedes essence. The philosophy dictates that every individual is unique and independent, and that every thought, decision, belief, judgment, etc. stems from the individual and only the individual. What a person defines as his or her essence is *his or her* definition, and nothing should be pushed or attributed to an individual by someone other than him or herself. Another important concept in Existentialism is the notion of the Absurd, which claims that the world is nothing other than what we make it, and essence is assigned *by us* and not *for us*. In terms of morality, Existentialism believes that there is no ethical code, only choices and unbiased judgments; nothing is a 'good action' or a 'bad action,' there is only action. For instance, if an Existentialist were to read the Bible, they wouldn't take every sentence as an absolute truth that must be regarded as such, but instead they would critically regard the scriptures as a recollection of events that readers can assign their own essence to. If the Bible told an Existentialist to turn left, he would absorb that information and come to his own conclusion as to which way he would turn. What does this say about human nature?

Human beings, in the eye of Existentialism, are unique beings that make their own behaviors and ethics. Human beings are not born into any institution, and if a human is to join an institution it is by their own will and for their own personally generated reasons; there is no us, there is only you and I. Existentialism reflects the concept that there is no set or inherited nature for an individual, and the nature of an individual is unique and defined willingly *by* the individual. This is what puts Existentialism on the other end of the moral axis, for ethics and morals are all a part of the essence the individual generates with their unique will.

Conclusion

Although Existentialism has roots in religion, and religions can have attributes that are similar to that of Existential beliefs, the two have very contradictory ideas as to what human nature is. In religion, essence precedes existence, and in Existentialism, existence precedes essence. Religion believes that each human is the same and that a religion's set moral frameworks unanimously apply to everyone due to the fact that we are all human beings seeking the same destiny under the law of the same divinity. Existentialism believes the opposite, in that each human being is unique and independent; we concoct our own morals and ethics, and whether we choose to believe in one or ten divinities and destinies, or even none at all, is under our own dictation and jurisdiction. In a sense, Religion is spiritual fascism and Existentialism is moral anarchy. In religion, we are all sheep born into a herd walking single-file down the one way path under the command of a shepherd, in Existentialism we are sheep with a sheep's biological and physical capacities, but there is no automatically assigned shepherd or herd, and

our path is defined by us. These two endpoints illustrate the spectrum of schools of thought regarding the definition of human nature as it applies to the moral axis.

The Scientific Axis

The x-axis of this graph is the axis of science. Science is the accumulation of all factual information regarding the study of the universe. Science differs from morality, because science is based off of fact regardless of ethics, while morality is based off of ethics regardless of fact. All explanation based in morality or faith is excluded from science until proven factual. However, theories that are generated based off of fact to explain the presently unexplainable, although not proven factual, can still be considered scientific. One commonly targeted subject of hypothesis is human nature. Many different definitions and understandings of human nature have been generated based off many different types of scientific of study (i.e. socioeconomic, biological, etc.). Many of these speculations about human nature support or contradict others, causing a vast spectrum. The endpoint on the left side of this axis is Marxism and the right side is Darwinism (specifically Social Darwinism). These are both schools of thought that have very contradictory and ‘other end of the spectrum’ connotations of human nature in relation to the other; this makes them the best fit for the scientific axis’ endpoints.

Darwinism

Darwinism is the accumulation of Charles Darwin’s (an English naturalist and geologist) scientific research and conclusions based off said research. Darwin’s most substantial contribution to science is his idea of natural selection. Natural selection is the evolutionary process of a species’ biological traits becoming more or less common based off their effectiveness in the environment around them; this process is enabled by success in reproduction correlating with which beings bear the effective traits. Natural selection is a concept that Darwin spawned based off of the study of wildlife and fossils, and then wrote about in his book, On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, and Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle of Life (more commonly known as, On the Origin of Species). Herbert Spencer (an English scientist and psychologist), after reading On the Origin of Species, coined the term, “survival of the fittest,” to describe a nutshell version of Natural Selection; Darwin approved this term.

Spencer then changed the context of this notion from biological to social, and created the concept of Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism is the idea that “survival of the fittest” is naturally present in social interaction and dynamics between human beings. For example, in socioeconomics, the person with the most money has the most power and freedom (in terms of finances and that which is accessible through currency-oriented trade), and thus is stronger than their weaker counterpart who is the person with less money; this ‘stronger’ person is guaranteed more potential stability as well as luxury in their life, and is thus more attractive to a spouse looking for a ‘strong’ partner. This also assures that the children of this ‘strong’ family, will also be ‘strong’ due to the inherited socioeconomic traits of the initially ‘strong’ individual; this reproduction and passing down of traits is a perfect example of Social Darwinism. This is one out of many arguable examples in which Social Darwinism is naturally real within our

contemporary world, with other contexts such as political, occupational, primal, etc. What does this say about human nature?

Human beings, in the eye of Darwinism, are animals subconsciously obedient to the dictation of our biology and environment. Our evolution is in constant motion, which means that the process of natural selection is always in motion as well. Considering that which is necessary for natural selection, as a living species we must procreate to pass down the 'stronger' traits, and this is done through social interaction. Social dynamic in the contemporary world has become far more complex than that of the average animal, due to man-made artificial concepts such as economics, politics, and even smaller institutions such as competitive sports or favorite coffee shops; these concepts spawned due to the evolution of the modern world, for our environment is the embodiment of these concepts. However, Darwinism dictates that natural selection commences alongside our evolution, and even though we (*and* our modern environment) are evolving, natural selection still plays a role. This is why through the scope of Social Darwinism, the notion of 'survival of the fittest' is still alive even within our contemporary society, and our behavior, even in a modern situation, is dictated by these natural laws (this goes for any animal in any biome as well, since we are all under these natural laws). Darwinism reflects the concept that our human nature is completely subordinate to our natural law as animals, and that as living creatures, all of our actions, progresses, and organizations are products of our nature, and we cannot extend our reach past that. This is what puts Darwinism at one end of the scientific axis, for Darwin's studies suggest that human beings have no free will over themselves and the environment, and that all behavior and progress is solely a product of animal nature; thus natural law defines the parameters and production of the human being.

Marxism

Opposite Darwinism is Marxism. Marxism is the cumulative political and socioeconomic views and philosophy of Karl Marx (a German philosopher, economist, and revolutionary socialist) and Friedrich Engels. The main aspects of Marxism are the critique of capitalism and classism, and the worldwide solution to a better society through Communism. Marxists believe that capitalism is an unfair and selfish means of political and economic organization, and that the distribution of labor and profit cause the mass working class to be subordinate to the bourgeoisie. This dynamic causes those who are doing the most labor (the working class) to receive the least profit. Consider this class as the lower part of the class-oriented pyramid—as classes are higher on the pyramid they receive more profit with less labor, and as the classes rise, they get smaller and smaller in number, leaving the majority of society to be working for the small minority of the bourgeoisies. Marx analytically critiques the manner of this system in his book Das Kapital, in which he expands on the critiques he uses to support his idea of Communism in his and Engels' book The Communist Manifesto. In The Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels concisely summarize the critical analysis of capitalism expressed in Das Kapital, and then suggest the solution of Communism. Communism is the social organization of all property and wealth being evenly distributed by the government to all of its citizens and making private labor and education public; doing so would demolish capital and class, and therefore capitalism. Marxists believe that this organization is not only a best fit for society, but can easily override capitalism as long as the working-class masses are dedicated. What does this say about human nature?

Human beings, in the eye of Marxism, are creatures that have the ability to shape their nature and the nature around them; human beings are the *only* creatures that have the ability to change the physical and societal nature of the environment around them. While other animals have the ability to construct and self-support nature around them, it is by natural instinct and is motivated by physical impulse (an example of this is a spider weaving a web); this makes animals very limited by biology in the sculpting of environment. Human beings have the unique ability to be conscious in this construction, however, and harness intellect, imagination, creativity, and to be constantly innovative and make the environment and nature a malleable sandbox. No other animal has consciously constructed economies, politics, religions, etc. Human beings can also apply this same sculpting to other species, with sciences such as selective-breeding or genetic modification, as well as being able to domesticate and train animals. The effects of human constructs also impact the environment in ways the inhabitants naturally adjust to *through* natural selection; for instance, the peppered moth's uncommon trait of being dark shades of color became extremely common during the Industrial Revolution as it adapted to blend in with the black soot on trees (a product of factories). As civilization has evolved, human beings have applied these artificial evolutions and concepts onto nature, and amongst our species, created an entirely new nature of living and socializing. In the times of hunter-gatherer societies, there were no governments, businesses, prisons, etc. Marx uses the notions of conscious living and the ability to sculpt our environment and society to support the idea that Communism can be pursued as the best fit for our society. Marxism reflects the concept that we are unique amongst all living creatures, in that we can dramatically sculpt the environment around us regardless of natural law, and claims that we are not under any natural parameter as to how we dictate our behavior. This is what puts Marxism on the left side of the scientific axis for Marxist understandings of human beings, and puts humans above any sort of environmentally and evolutionarily defined nature, allowing us to shape our nature as well as that of the nature around us.

Conclusion

Although Marxism focuses on socioeconomics and politics while Darwinism focuses on biology, both have strong opinions on human nature that are very contradictory. Through the scope of Darwinism, human beings are under the complete dictation of natural law due to unanimous biological equality, and through Marxism, humans are unique creatures, above this natural law. Darwin suggests that "survival of the fittest" is an evolutionary law that, no matter the context or situation, plays a dominant role in all social interaction, a big example being the socioeconomic and political organization of capitalism. Marxism suggests that we can override this natural law of behavior, and instead replace it with a completely different organization. These two endpoints of the scientific axis illustrate the spectrum of schools of thought regarding our definition on the scientific axis.

Conclusion

These four schools of thought define the graph of ideas as to what human nature is. The spectrum of these axis combined together allow for the mixture of ethical and factual thought; allowing for every sort of proof or justification to schools of thought that can be featured on the

graph. The spectrum within axis' is defined by a common contrast; the common contrast between the two endpoints of each axis are views (Darwinism and Religion) saying that there is a dominant nature or entity that defines humans, and the other views (Existentialism and Marxism) say that there is no nature, we are just humans beings who have the ability define nature for ourselves. The shades of grey between these black and white opinions are what allow the spectrum to be so vast; while one side says yes and the other says no, there can be endless mixed feelings and maybes. This is how the graph can capture every school of thought while attempting to answer the initial question, "What is human nature?"

After studying this graph and the endpoints of each axis, I attempted to generate my own perspective on what human nature is. I supported this perspective by testing the ideas on each side from the spectrum, but in doing so I ended up contradicting myself with just as potentially correct information from an opposite side of the graph. I would end up broadening my view after every mistrial of perspective, becoming more and more perplexed as to what possibly could be the answer to the question "What is human nature?" What ended up happening was that I had to ask a new question: "Is there such a thing as human nature at all?" I realized that the reason there are so many schools of thought that try and tackle this question, each with as much potential to be correct despite contradictions, is because human nature is an intangible concept. Whether one theory is factual or not, we will never know, giving each school of thought the same potential capability to pinpoint human nature. This puts the study of human nature at a superposition, where there both *is* a human nature and *not* a human nature. This conundrum parallels the story of Schrodinger's cat. To explain, in short, a cat is put into a steel box with a deadly gas that can be triggered by a specific action of the cat; whether this action will happen we do not know. So until the box is opened, thus exposing whether or not the cat is alive or dead, the cat is both alive and dead. This is the human position on human nature. At this instance in the history of philosophical progress of understanding the human being, we do not have the ability to open the box and expose the state of the cat, thus leaving the answer to the question "Is there even a human nature," intangible.

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