

Humanist Frame

Author: Jonathan Pearson

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Values?

Julian Huxley proposes in his book - Humanist Frame: "The immediate need is for the scientific study of values. Philosophers and theologians sometimes assert that this is impossible, claiming that values lie outside the range of science."

I translate this to the question – why do humans behave the way they do or more specifically “why do humans make the choices they make”. To a large extent the amount of work done by scientists, psychologists, market manipulators and advertising firms since Julian’s question was posited in the “Humanist Frame” has been answered. A more nuanced interpretation of the question might lead us to examine whether the concept of “values” is important and whether striving to make “good” choices instead of “bad” choices represents morality. Humans will make bad choices but when they continue to make bad choices this then reflects on the character of the human – their trustworthiness - should other humans trust any future choices they make or believe anything they say?

I suggest that morals and ethics are words we use to describe the frames for decision making – choices - which have evolved into patterns which make decision making a less energetic endeavor. They are short cuts which work for many problems for an individual human – or at least do not result in immediate death. This is why questioning anyone around their deeply held assumptions is so problematic – the work to rewire the brain into different patterns is seen as potentially life threatening and at least a hugely expensive and time consuming operation. Of course – humans who are trained to constantly re-assess their assumptions and retain an “open mind” would, at the extreme, not be able to make a choice, so once again it’s a balance between rigid frameworks and assumptions and total open enquiry.

Context

The book represents an attempt to understand the human condition within organizing frameworks with the intellectuals and researchers of the time providing their understanding of the world. Historically the world was coming to grips with communism, socialism, war, potential for nuclear annihilation, united nations, end of colonialism, religion versus science, environmental damage, advances in science, medicine and communication.

It was a time of thoughtful discourse and respectful discussion. People who researched and thought were more respected than people who expressed opinions or were popular. People were eager to learn , understand and make sense of the world.

It was tempting to some of the writers to suggest that intervention for social good might be required – the problem was how much and what sort?

Population and standard of living were key problems – medicine was advancing – so were costs to people and the environment. India’s population seemed out of control.

Questions about Eugenics, gene manipulation, medicine, interventions – to which humans? -good humans or bad humans? Do the ends justifies the means? Who should intervene - human intervention by “the elite”? On what basis should some humans be helped and not others?

He Aint Heavy, He’s My Brother – [the Hollies](#) 1969 ([youtube](#))

One issue arising for me was the acceptance that people had different skills. Art, science, crafts, music and not just science, economics and politics; the idea that every human is of value and to be appreciated. If one human was “better” at doing something than another human that did not make them a “better” human.

In some of the writings the ideas of Marxism seemed to look attractive – I suggest this had more to do with the removal of “elitism” in particular and searching for solutions for the tendency for powerful humans to become greedy, virtuous, superior, dictatorial and warlike as illustrated by the world history from 1900 in particular.

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(humour and satire where chapters he wanted included as well)

References

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2. Humanist Frame Book Images <https://archive.org/details/humanistframe017703mbp/page/n8>