

Chapter 1 : Marxism and human nature - Counterfire

The study of human nature is a legitimate scientific enterprise. My fellow PT blogger Nigel Barber wrote a post on November 6, in which he questioned the notion that there may be universals.

An older, right-wing relative sits you down and explains, kindly, that communism sounds like a nice idea in theory, but will never work because people are just naturally greedy and competitive. This stands-to-reason view of human nature may find modern expression in places like the pages of the Daily Mail, but it has its roots in the fundamentals of bourgeois ideology. Consider, for example, the histories which attribute change to the movement of ideas alone, like those which put the Russian Revolution down to a failure of liberal confidence. In considerations of human nature, this is a Cartesian dualist position, which sees consciousness—ourselves—as separate from the body that houses it. For Descartes, this separation was a necessary resolution to a contradiction between his view of human nature and his Catholicism. His description of human bodies as if they were fleshy machines was expressive of an emerging capitalist view of workers as reducible to interchangeable moving parts. On its own, however, it presented a difficulty from a religious point of view, as it left no room for a soul. Even among those who do not share his religious need to include the soul, there can be a view of the body as not part of ourselves but as simply a container allocated to our consciousness. This is also true for human societies. The way that human cultures have developed is clearly not unrelated to the physical realities of human existence. If, for example, humans had wings, like birds, or photosynthesised, like plants, our societies and the environment we built would look very different. This, however, the argument might go, is at such a basic level that it can tell us little of importance about human nature. The physical human needs provide the base for human culture, but the superstructure, the realm of ideas, then takes over. This is of course untrue; every time you see a homeless person reading a book disproves it. A better alternative to this mechanical view of a base and superstructure for human needs would be to appreciate how, while human universals like our need to eat are part of every culture, they are mediated through those cultures. Basic human needs are socially experienced and expressed. Genetic determinism A dialectical understanding of the relation between human bodies and human culture shows the fallacy of the dualist position, but that is far from the only ideological misconception about human nature. Rejecting the dualist conception of a consciousness separate and theoretically divisible from the body raises the question of how far we are determined by our bodies. Perhaps our bodies are all we are? This is in essence the nature versus nurture question: This is, of course, a simplification of a range of more nuanced positions; no one serious posits that human traits are either entirely or not at all influenced by culture. While our socialisation can have some effect on our genetic predispositions, fundamentally, human traits from aggression to altruism arise from our genetic inheritance. We are the vehicles for our genes, through which they compete by natural selection to propagate themselves in forthcoming generations, and everything we are is shaped by that genetic imperative. The concomitant conclusions are first that differences between individuals and, as importantly, between groups must be genetic, if genes are the basis for our behaviour. The second conclusion is that innate traits could only be changed through natural selection: The political implications of this position should be clear, as described by Gould in a passage discussing arguments about differences between the sexes: The socio-political line of the pop argument now leaps from the page: In reality, we are only vehicles for actions prompted by our genes. For Marx, of key importance were human social relations; rather than on the abstract, isolated human individual, the focus should be on human activity. Activity does not simply arise from human nature; it is human nature. Marx describes in *Capital* how humans are the only creatures to undertake planned, purposeful work on the world around us: A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of the bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination

of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will. They are not the results of instinctual, genetically determined behaviour but are planned and conceptualised in a way that, over human history, has developed human social relations and human capacities. In human development, for example, a genetic determinist model would have the template for the individual being set by their genetic make-up, with culture then allowed some secondary effects on top of this genetic base. Rather, a dialectical understanding of development sees a process between genes and environment including not just the environment external to the body but the environment for each cell which is both relational and contingent. One of the fallacies of genetic determinism is the idea that genes are analogous to a computer program. However many times you re-run the program, barring code corruption, you would expect to get the same result each time. In human development, even starting from the same genes and the same environment, each result would be different, precisely because it is a relational process and not a program. This is, incidentally, why cloning would never be able to produce the same person twice. Viewing human development dialectically also places humans as active participants in rather than passive recipients of our own development. In the genetic determinist model, weâ€™the finished human organismsâ€™are simply the end result of the genetic program and the social decorative flourishes. In fact, new developments in epigenetics reveal that genes can be turned on and off by environmental factors. In contrast, a dialectical understanding shows not only that genes and environment are constantly developing in relation to each other, but that as we develop, we are actively involved in shaping this process. In other words, we shape the pathways of our brains by thinking. It is generally agreed that the hominids were bipedal before they developed large brains. This was the driver for the growth of the large hominid brains, which then drove more and complex tool use, and so on in a dialectical process. The answer to the genetic determinists is not to deny the importance of our biology for the development of human society, but to understand ourselves as active participants in our own development on an individual and a societal level. We are the inheritors of not merely the genes, but also the cultures and technologies of our forebears. The view that what we areâ€™our personalities, tendencies, intelligence etcâ€™is genetically determined relies on there being genes, or combinations of genes, for these genetically determined traits. These traits, therefore, have to have some objective existence. If our genetic inheritance gives us a tendency towards a particular behaviour, then that behaviour must be naturally delimited in some way. It must, in other words, be a thing. It is however a thing which is at the same time no more than an abstraction; an ideal which has no existence outside the world of ideas. The difficulty for the genetic-determinist view is that reifying behavioural traits like aggression merely obfuscates the way in which these are socially determined. Aggression is not an objective trait, but a value judgment on a range of behaviours which, in other contexts or from other groups, would be deemed entirely appropriate. Women in the workplace, for example, will be condemned for being aggressive when men exhibiting exactly the same behaviour will have been showing drive and forthrightness. Despite racist arguments to the contrary, we are not dealing here with a greater genetic predisposition on the part of black people in the USA or Palestinians in Gaza to aggression. It would make as much sense, after all, to ask if there is a genetic predisposition on the part of white U. The difficulty of isolating an objective condition called aggression is true even in laboratory settings. There are a number of studies on aggression in rats and mice, but what these are really measuring is how long they take to attack another animal in the same cage which could of course be due to many different factors aside from a tendency to prefer to fight or a propensity to bite the lab assistant. Even in rodents, it seems, fighting back against your captors is liable to be labelled as pathological behaviour. This does not make reifying aggression legitimate. Reification is also the basis of one of the most resilient of the racist applications of genetic determinism: The validity of IQ for measuring individual and population-level intelligence found champions throughout the twentieth century, despite setbacks such as when one of its proponents, Sir Cyril Burt, was found to have falsified much of his key data. It came to prominence again in with the publication of *The Bell Curve* by Richard Herrnstein and Charles

Murray, which reasserted the old argument that black people had on average lower IQs than whites. In the twenty-first century it hit headlines recently with the argument that Ashkenazi Jews have the highest average IQs, championed by academics like Richard Lynn, Nicholas Wade and Steven Pinker. It is obvious that famous early IQ tests, like those administered to immigrants arriving at Ellis Island or illiterate U. Full of questions requiring familiarity with U. As Russian neuro-psychologist Alexander Luria found in the s when he interviewed peasants in remote regions of the USSR, abstract reasoning has a different value in different cultures. He also found, perhaps, that peasants may not take kindly to big-city scientists and their stupid questions. In Novaya Zemlya there is always snow; what colour are the bears there? If a man is 60 or 80 and he had seen a white bear there and told me about it, he could be believed. This is corroborated by the way in which IQ scores increased in general worldwide in parallel to more generally widespread schooling. Tests had repeatedly to be made more difficult throughout the twentieth century to keep the overall average mark at. Enthusiasts for IQ testing could still try to argue that these are flaws in the tests, rather than in the concept. It could be that IQ is still innate and heritable, even if we have not found a good enough way to measure it separately from education and cultural familiarity. The difficulty for the hereditarian argument here though is in showing that IQ is a reification of intelligence actually exists. In essence, g is simply a mathematical expression of the assumption that if there is a correlation between achievement in different sorts of academic tests, that correlation must reveal a causal factor which must be innate intelligence. There is, of course, no must about it. Correlation does not equal causation Gould points out that there is a perfect correlation between his age and the expansion of the universe, but there is unlikely to be a causal relationship between them, and the correlation further does not help us identify what any such causal factor might be. The maths does not require us to conclude that it must be an innate, reified intelligence as opposed, for example, to good, all-round schooling. The continued appearance of genetic determinist ideas to make racist arguments about intelligence shows the political uses to which these can be put, and the importance of countering the view that we are nothing more than expressions of our genes. Genetic determinism may purport to provide an alternative to a dualist view of human nature but ultimately it is reliant on the same idealism. Only the Marxist understanding of human nature has us as active participants, making ourselves through the interaction of our genes, our environment and our history. Genetic determinism, like dualism, does not give us any hope of changing the world. Its central argument is that our natures are fixed by our genes, which are often suspiciously like capitalists in their selfish, winner-take-all behaviour. Any attempts to make society fairer, in this view, is fighting against our natures and may well be doomed to failure. Against this, a dialectical understanding of human nature shows that on the contrary, what we are is adaptable. We make ourselves and the world. It is this insight that tells us that, despite supposed common sense about human nature, we can change it. Biology, Ideology and Human Nature, London, p. Essays about books and ideas, London, p. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, London, pp. A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, vol. Sayers, Marxism and Human Nature, p. How modern biology is rewriting our understanding of genetics, disease and inheritance, London

Chapter 2 : Gregory of Nyssa | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Kopnina Human Nature 61 INTRODUCTION Most observers agree that the increase in adverse effects of human activity on the environment is linked to the processes of industrialization, consumption.

I here recount how that book came about, along with notes on what followed. In the early s, however, some of those refutations in turn were refuted on the basis of competent field research: Ekkehart Malotki refuted the claim by Benjamin Lee Whorf published posthumously in Carroll [] that the Hopi lacked a sense of time. So much was then beginning to be published on universals that before long I changed my mind about the need for the book I had envisaged. The most effective part of HU was probably that chapter. The Modern Denial of Human Nature appended a very slightly modified list of human universals that I supplied, which then introduced them to a much wider reading audience supplemented by variants of the list posted on the internet. The totality of academic interest in human universals has almost certainly been greater outside of anthropology than in it, where specifically cultural anthropologists are most numerous and less persuaded by the thinking entailed by the existence and importance of universals. Nonetheless, particular anthropologists have been highly influential in the development of studies centrally concerned with identifying and illuminating those universals that comprise human nature. As the label indicates, many psychologists collaborate in it. Psychology may well be the discipline most influenced by the ferment of the s that challenged the Standard Social Science Model. Primatologists, often themselves in anthropology departments, have contributed to the study of universals in distinctive ways, given that our relatives in the animal world allow comparisons that throw a distinctive light on the human psyche and behavior. It shows that features of human society long considered to be cultural, with origins irretrievably lost in the mists of time, were actually parts of our primate heritage. Those observed behaviors common to one or more chimpanzee populations but not to all are then candidate cultural behaviors. Reflections on Cultural Primatology pursues this line of thought. Outside of the social sciences, one of the fields in which thinking about universals has been most stimulated is literary analysis. This will of course be addressed far more competently by others in this forum. Amusingly, in her novel *The Family Tree*, Carole Cadwalladr used reference to a short list of human universals to set up a later wry comment on male proclivities. Universals in the graphic and plastic arts have, very justifiably, not been ignored. *Where Art Comes from and Why*, for example, were thoroughly anchored in considerations of human universals, human nature, and the evolution-minded critiques of the arch relativism of anthropology at that time. But my impression is that few who are professional historians have made it a major focus of their work recall however the mention of Carl Degler above. The historian-sociologist Keith Hopkins entered the debate over the Westermarck effect incest avoidance as an adaptation but to my knowledge did not further address the study of universals or human nature. Two criticisms of HU that I considered valid were presented to me personally. One referred to the credence I gave to the universality of the Oedipus Complex. The critique was toward the underlying tripartite model of the mind that the Complex entails for a different and comprehensive critique see Sugiyama The other criticism was that I should get on with a second edition of HU. If I were to do that I would rethink counting the Oedipus Complex as universal. I do not have a second edition on my agenda, [3] but am happy to report there are now other book-length treatments of universals. Moreover, I have had the opportunity to repackage my arguments or expand on particular points in various short essays. Turning to those essays first, encyclopedia entries allowed brief Brown and even briefer summaries of the argument and evidence presented in HU. Brown goes well beyond HU via a wider discussion of the implications of universals, particularly in understanding what it is to be human. What those essays have not addressed, and would definitely be in any re-write of HU, would be updates to its roster of universals. The universals in color nomenclature that HU summarized, for example, have undergone considerable debate and revision. Claims, arguments, and data to support universals not listed in HU have been numerous. Psychologists, perhaps even more than anthropologists, have been particularly

active in both finding universals and offering explanations for them—proximate and ultimate. The latter refers to why the particular universals evolved as features of human nature, a key part of the subject matter of Evolutionary Psychology see e. While I have not kept an expanding list of newly claimed or demonstrated universals, they surely are numerous. Many, coming out of Evolutionary Psychology or related research orientations, are invariant features of human nature that in themselves are neither readily observable nor commonly named entities. Analogous to the edge-detecting or movement-detecting neurological features of vision, they are revealed through one or another form of research experimentation. Each discharging its specific function, such features operate in combination with other features of human nature—and inputs from the senses—to produce behavioral outputs of potentially infinite gradation Pietraszewski [1] gives a concise description. Important book-length, theoretical treatments of human universals have been produced by the German anthropologist, Christoph Antweiler [2], [3]. The first two appeared in German; the third, in English, is a condensed and up-dated version of the former two, with an extensive bibliography that includes more than a few citations that were missed in HU. And also of Literary Studies: Antweiler specifically cites key papers in this field e. My view is that whether a trait or complex is biotic or not—that is, a feature of human nature or not—widely comparative ethnographic studies, or proxies for them, are the ultimate method for verifying human universals. How to explain or ascertain their kind of universality is the point at which the determination of biotic or not comes into play. Given that the research costs of ethnographic studies in the field are high, and that the extant studies of many peoples commonly omit the relevant details to identify particular universals, a variety of less-than-perfect methods are regularly employed. They may employ cross-cultural samples from existing studies, comparisons of textual materials produced in times and places widely separated, pencil-and-paper experiments conducted in classrooms, comparisons of two or more very distantly related peoples, [4] and so on. Imperfections in the methods for identifying universals are widely discussed e. That claims of universality are ethnocentrically biased is a very common charge, and surely is to be guarded against. A critique of Relativism and a Defense of Universals The critique of relativism is the clear aim of the book, but the extensive marshalling of evidence for absolutes stretches from physics to literature and myth. The Literary Universals Project is cited. One of, if not the most prolific writer on universals, is the linguist Anna Wierzbicka. Thus a suitable classification of the formal types of linguistic universals was readily adapted in HU for human universals, e. The paper just cited provides references to some of her many volumes on semantic universals, which are, of course, an important part of human universals. Let me close with the principal regret that I have about HU: Was ist den Menschen gemeinsam? New York and Oxford: Temple UP, New York: Reprinted in The Return of Science: Evolution, History, and Theory. Philip Pomper and David Shaw. Rowman and Littlefield, [5]. Robert Wilson and Frank Keil. Anthropological Universality and Particularity in Transdisciplinary Perspectives. Walter de Gruyter, [6]. In Race and Ethnicity: The United States and the World, 2nd Edition. McGee and Richard Warms. The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology. Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf. Technology P of MIT. Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature. Chomsky, Noam and Michel Foucault. The Basic Concerns of Mankind. In Search of Human Nature: What is Art For? U of Washington P. Where Art Comes From and Why? Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth. The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead: The Book of Absolutes: A Critique of Relativism and a Defense of Universals. U of Chicago P, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan. Le Vine, Robert and Donald Campbell. Evolution and the nature of narrative. Jonathan Gottschall and David Wilson. Coming of Age in Samoa. Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies. The Modern Denial of Human Nature. An Evolutionary Critique of the Oedipal Paradigm. An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal The Trashing of Margaret Mead: Anatomy of an Anthropological Controversy.

Chapter 3 : Marxism and human nature - The Social Science Collective

Human universals and human nature / Tom Gregor. Religion, science, and cognition: explorations in pluralistic integration / Gary Jensen. 'The little divine machine': the soul/body problem revisited / John McCarthy.

Globalization and the uniform desire of the citizens of both developed environment are closely related since environmental and developing nations to accumulate material problems are inherently global for example, chloro- goods, and to distinguish themselves on the basis fluorocarbons released into atmosphere contribute to of their possessions e. The processes leading to over-exploitation controlling the so-called natural resources and to are intimately linked to broader political and socio- providing moral impetus for moral constraint in economic processes, such as the generation and regard to non-human environment. An appeal to human nature is characteristic of humanity. Foucault, however, sees peoples in the course of human history were quite lead to positive environmental outcomes Lidskog one of the most ubiquitous forms of explanation or human nature merely as an epistemological indicator. The concept is used in to develop certain mental traits, but also as something quite simplyâ€”to say no to McDonaldization. How As a social anthropologist, I was trained to recognize cases when other explanatory theories of social ac- connected to universal sense of morality, ethics, come the proclaimed nature-friendly or holistic re- cultural differences and employ cultural explanations. The classical of certain innate psychological mechanisms employed Zimbabwean, Brazilian, Japanese, Turkish, or Dutch as a human nature independent of culture. Men thinkers often grappled with questions of human in environment problem-solving strategies Miller citizens do not seem to be prepared to give up their without culture. Miller, similarly to Chomsky, postulates personal possessions and comforts such as cars for ties with very few useful instincts, fewer recognizable in essence, could be seen as similar to other species that certain cognitive systems, or modes of reason- the sake of non-materialist religious or ideological sentiments, and no intellect: We are left with the staggering question of According to another prominent anthro- to their environment. While there is considering the supposed diversity and resilience of what human beings are independently of the mani- environment e. One of the contemporary proponents respect for nature of the traditional societies. However, it al political relations as well as socio-economic factors. Steven Pinker, or any other political or social systems, to control depending on historical and structural context. Repetitive universal features are neither may push their interests with the governments as muchâ€”or moreâ€”than environmental groups or relationship with nature, we need to pay attention The linguist Noam Chomsky and philosopher Mi- context-independent nor culture-free, but nonethe- ecologically oriented citizens do. Within complex not only to nature but to human nature. A society governed resorting to reductionism through the nature-nurture ized to humans. Developed universals, based on the classifications developed Catton ; Hornborg Future research could explore in greater depth how countries argue that growing economies increasingly by Murdock and Kroeber and Kluckhohn temporary historical and spatial cultural varia- contribute to this problem themselves. At present any right to ask them to curb their economic growth significance in the industrial context. Developing countries rec- We may think of a number of universals, which, in environmental problems. Poor ism or socialism are responsible for the detrimental In the modern world, increasing rates of resource use, technocratic mechanism that has created them, nation-states fear that international agreements will effect of human activity on the environment. Defini- prevents humanity as a whole from halting indus- limit their attempt for economic growth, whereas population growth, and armed conflict have tended tions of these universals may be ambiguous as there trial activities. If we consider Seeking Status not make a similar sacrifice. While the blame is still placed on the middle ecology, landscape planning, risk management, and define and capture as the range of behaviors associated bases. Yet, the author believes the explanation as to how global justice issues have tims of progress, we may argue that there are certain that generalizations about such behaviors are possible. The mechanisms that govern the behavior of both the While optimists of industrial development believe These universals partially explain global patterns of mechanism behind the

consumptive urge of both the poor and the affluent that cause environmental degradation - that humans can solve most of the environmental consumption, including but certainly not limited to: The mechanism to Easterly Aeronautics and Space Administration alike. Human ingenuity, may be challenged by real-world limits. While sharply raise their need for ingenuity. Furthermore, justice, fairness, and the resulting propensity for judging environmental problems under previous systems, the negative effects of technological development are future societies may experience greater social friction - others' - expands to whole countries. In regard to the why is the focus on structural issues not sufficient? Certain capacities of Rather than going against the grain of human nature Problem Solving: Psychosocial Barriers Oxford, UK: New York aggregate with structural characteristics of modernity. Review of Books June If the basic formula proposed in this article were be found in the human universals themselves. I am arguing that the use of technological innovation Human Universals. Edited by Baylis and just historical conditions and structural constraints to improve the production and medical technology - McGraw-Hill. Anthropological Environment, Scarcity and Violence. Edited by the German chemist Michael Braungart Global for sustainability as it is usually defined in terms produce an unintended and detrimental effect on the environment. While defining the universals may Dunlap, R. McDonough and Braungart ask us to think of the results of such behavior under industrial Inquiry Epistemology, Language and Culture. Bendegem, to exist through using the very human universals. The sense of guilt and impotence in solving huge and D. Retrieved June Ideally, using capacity for technological innovation environmental problems may be indeed beyond the Netherlands: Journal of Social nutrient within either a biological or technological well-informed about environmental and social issues. A Critical Review of Concepts tions can be made: Be sensitive to going with the grain, to recognizing some positive changes could perhaps be seen. Multi-level governance, transnational 2. Sustainable Development 18 1: An We Make Things. Anthropological Critique of Sociobiology. University of Miller, A. Psychosocial Barriers to Adaptive Change. The University of Oxford, UK.

Chapter 4 : - NLM Catalog Result

Human universals and human nature / Thomas A. Gregor Religion, science, and cognition: explorations in pluralistic integration / Gary Jensen The little divine machine: the soul/body problem revisited / John A. McCarthy.

References and Further Reading 1. Life Gregory of Nyssa was born about C. He came from a large Christian family of ten children--five boys and five girls. Along with Basil and fellow-Cappadocian and friend Gregory of Nazianzus c. Basil, who became the powerful bishop of Caesarea, was the most politically skilled churchman of the group. He appointed his younger brother to the see by which he is now known, and rightly predicted that Gregory would confer more distinction on the obscure town of Nyssa than he would receive from it. Gregory of Nazianzus was a brilliant orator, best known for his five "theological orations," which succinctly summarized the Cappadocian consensus. But the deepest thinker of the three was Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory stands at a crossroads in the theological development of the Christian East: So Basil in all probability became the teacher of his younger brother. If so, he certainly did an excellent job, for in this case the pupil went on to outshine the teacher. Gregory is thoroughly at home with the philosophers that were in vogue in his day: On reading his works, one cannot but be struck by the abundance of allusions to the Platonic dialogues. Yet it would be a mistake to say, as Cherniss famously does, that "Gregory. Moreover, the reader will discover an originality in Gregory that anticipates not only his Byzantine successors, but also such moderns as John Locke - and Immanuel Kant - The burning issue at the time was the Arian heresy, which by then had entered its last and most logically rigorous phase. Arianism was a Christological heresy, named for its founder Arius c. The principal defender of Arianism at the time, Eunomius of Cyzicus c. Thus began the most productive period of one of the most brilliant of Christian thinkers--far too little known and appreciated in the West. Many of these will be discussed below. Gregory was present at the final defeat of Arianism in the Council of Constantinople of Nothing more is heard from him after about CE. Arianism arose out of the need to make sense of the apparently conflicting Biblical depictions of Christ. This sort of problem prompted Arius to postulate that Christ was neither divine nor human, but something in between--a demigod, the oldest and most perfect created being, to be sure, but created nonetheless. Gregory counters Eunomius, not by simply staking out the opposite position and defending it with Scriptural artillery, as most of his fellow Nicenes had done, but, more interestingly, by repudiating the central presupposition of Eunomian theology--that one can derive by a process of analysis concepts that are essentially predicated of God. God is incomprehensible; thus, it is presumptuous in the extreme to suppose that God can be defined by a set of human concepts. In saying this, Gregory anticipates the negative theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius and much medieval thought. After all, in the Beatitudes Christ promises, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. More generally, if God is simply some remote, unknowable entity, what possible relation to the world could God ever have? Does all of this have any sort of rational basis? Though he frequently appeals to Scripture to support his claims, Gregory does in fact argue for the existence of God. This does not mean, however, that God does not have a transcendent nature. As will be seen below, for Gregory everything that exists has an inner nature that cannot be known immediately and is knowable only through its energies. God is only the most striking instance of this. The indirect route relies on the order apparent in the cosmos. In noting this, Gregory is relying on an argument that had been around since the early Stoics--the argument from design cf. Cicero , Nature of the Gods II 2. Now there are several things to notice about this argument. In the first place it is an analogical one: For that there are laws of nature is nothing surprising: If this is all that Gregory means, his argument at best reduces to the cosmological, or "first cause," argument that any chain of creating or sustaining causes requires a first member, which "everyone would call God," as Thomas Aquinas puts it Summa Theologiae I q. Such an argument, however, is not very convincing. Why not an infinite chain of causes, for instance? However, what Gregory has in mind seems to be something more specific. In certain passages Gregory suggests that it is not order in general but the blending of opposites into a harmonious whole that would have never happened

spontaneously, but only through the power of a Creator. The heavens accommodate contrary motions, and these motions give rise to unmoving, static laws. In the Psalms I 3 [-] ; heavy bodies are borne downward and light bodies upward, and simple causes bring about complex effects. Soul and Resurrection [25 - 28]. In all these situations opposites not only fail to annihilate each other, but they even contribute to an overall harmony. The emphasis here is not on order in general, but on unexpected order. Given what we know about motion and rest, heaviness and lightness, and the rest, Gregory argues, we would expect to find them excluding, rather than complementing, each other. The fact that they behave in unanticipated ways can only be explained by the exercise of divine power. Now one could object at this point that these phenomena are by no means surprising; they are surprising to Gregory only because the scientific knowledge of the fourth century is not as advanced as that of the twenty-first. Yet our hypothetical objector still has a point, as is particularly obvious to us who are examining the thought of a fourth century figure seventeen centuries later. The fact that a phenomenon seems to violate what we think we know of the laws of nature does not imply that it really does violate those laws. Our knowledge may simply be too limited. As Gregory puts it, "Deity is in everything, penetrating it, embracing it, and seated in it" Great Catechism 25 [65]. So we directly experience the divine energies in the only thing in the universe that we can view from within--ourselves. Thus we encounter them in the experience of virtues such as purity, passionlessness, sanctity, and simplicity in our own moral character: Some scholars for example, Balas, Metousia Theou, p. Summa Theologiae I q. But such an interpretation will not do for two reasons. The account unfolds via an allegorical reflection on the first chapter of Genesis, and closely follows the much earlier work of Philo of Alexandria. Like Philo Creation of the World 3. Within this atemporal framework, the key "event" was the creation of the firmament on the second day Work of the Six Days [80 - 85] , for it is the firmament that divides the intelligible world, created on the first day Work of the Six Days [68 - 85] , from the sensible world, created on days three through six Work of the Six Days [85 -] --again, broadly similar to Philo Creation of the World 7. The classic problem with this view, going as far back as Plato himself, was to explain how these forms become instantiated in the material world. Gregory recasts this problem in theological terms: The answer lies in the Aristotelian distinction between the category of substance and the other categories--relation, quality, quantity, place, time, action, passion Categories 1 - 9 --which Gregory designates with the Stoic term "qualities" ποιότητες. In themselves, qualities are ideas in the mind of God. But they can also be projected out from God; and when that happens, they become visible. Now Gregory observes that although we ordinarily speak of these immanent qualities as inhering in substances, all we really perceive are the qualities of things, not their substances. It is but a short step to the conclusion that a physical object is nothing more than the convergence of its qualities. Elsewhere, Gregory explicitly uses the term "energies" to cover those qualities that are immanent in the physical world. Energies, Gregory contends, are the "powers" and "movements" by which substances are "manifested"; the energy of each thing is its "distinguishing property" ιδιότητα --a technical Stoic term for a specific, as opposed to a generic, quality. Gregory goes so far as to assert that apart from its energies a nature not only cannot be known, but does not even exist. Thus substance is a "something. All we really know of substances are their attributes, which constitute their nominal essences Essay II xxxi 6 - 10, III iii 15 - In this light consider the following passage from Against Eunomius: Even the inquiry as to that thing in the flesh itself which assumes all the corporeal qualities has not been pursued to any definite result. For if any one has made a mental analysis of that which is seen into its component parts, and, having stripped the object of its qualities, has attempted to consider it by itself, I fail to see what will have been left for investigation. For when you take from a body its color, its shape, its hardness, its weight, its quantity, its position, its forces active or passive, its relation to other objects, what remains that can still be called a body, we can neither see of ourselves nor are taught by Scripture. Wherefore also, of the elements of this world we know only so much by our senses as to enable us to receive what they severally supply for our living. But we possess no knowledge of their substance. The most important consequence of this extension is its application to the capstone of the cosmic order--human nature. Humanity The fundamental fact about human nature according to Gregory of Nyssa is that humans were

created in the image of God. This means that because in God a transcendent nature exists which projects energies out into the world, we would expect the same structural relation to exist among human beings vis-a-vis their bodies. And in fact that is precisely what Gregory argues concerning the human nous a word that is traditionally translated "mind" but which by the fourth century CE had submerged its intellectual connotations into the religious idea of its separateness from the physical world. In fact, so central is the nature-energies distinction to his conception of human personhood, that Gregory, again taking his inspiration from Philo Creation of the World The original creation, in which God makes the human race "in our image, after our likeness" Gen. The second creation, in which God "formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," Gen. The most important characteristic of the nature of the nous is that it provides for the unity of consciousness. How are my varied perceptions, deriving from various sense organs, all coordinated with each other? Aristotle himself had addressed this problem by postulating the existence of a common sense On the Soul III 1 - 2. But this unity of consciousness is entirely mysterious and so is much like the mysterious nature of the Godhead Making of Man 11 [-]. Yet the nous is also extended throughout the body by its energies, which constitute our ordinary psychological experiences Making of Man 15 [-]; Soul and Resurrection [41 - 44]. Furthermore, the nous may at different times be more or less present to the body. During waking life the energies of the nous are present throughout the body. But during sleep the presence of nous to body is much more tenuous, and at death is even more so though not absolutely nonexistent Great Catechism 8 [33]; Making of Man 12 - 15 [-]; Soul and Resurrection [45 - 48]. The parallels between the divine and the human extend all the way down to the evidential basis for the existence of the human nous. For the existence of the nous rests on a "design" argument analogous to the argument for the energies of God. Indeed the body resembles a machine; and because the latter is governed by nous, it is probable that the former is also.

Chapter 5 : On Human Nature | Revolv

A dialectical understanding of the relation between human bodies and human culture shows the fallacy of the dualist position, but that is far from the only ideological misconception about human nature.

Elaine Graham-Leigh argues that we can only understand nature through the dialectic method. It will be a familiar experience to many Marxists. An older, right-wing relative sits you down and explains, kindly, that communism sounds like a nice idea in theory, but will never work because people are just naturally greedy and competitive. This stands-to-reason view of human nature may find modern expression in places like the pages of the Daily Mail, but it has its roots in the fundamentals of bourgeois ideology. Consider, for example, the histories which attribute change to the movement of ideas alone, like those which put the Russian Revolution down to a failure of liberal confidence. In considerations of human nature, this is a Cartesian dualist position, which sees consciousness "ourselves" as separate from the body that houses it. For Descartes, this separation was a necessary resolution to a contradiction between his view of human nature and his Catholicism. His description of human bodies as if they were fleshy machines was expressive of an emerging capitalist view of workers as reducible to interchangeable moving parts. On its own, however, it presented a difficulty from a religious point of view, as it left no room for a soul. Even among those who do not share his religious need to include the soul, there can be a view of the body as not part of ourselves but as simply a container allocated to our consciousness. This is also true for human societies. The way that human cultures have developed is clearly not unrelated to the physical realities of human existence. If, for example, humans had wings, like birds, or photosynthesised, like plants, our societies and the environment we built would look very different. This, however, the argument might go, is at such a basic level that it can tell us little of importance about human nature. The physical human needs provide the base for human culture, but the superstructure, the realm of ideas, then takes over. This is of course untrue; every time you see a homeless person reading a book disproves it. A better alternative to this mechanical view of a base and superstructure for human needs would be to appreciate how, while human universals like our need to eat are part of every culture, they are mediated through those cultures. Basic human needs are socially experienced and expressed.

Genetic determinism A dialectical understanding of the relation between human bodies and human culture shows the fallacy of the dualist position, but that is far from the only ideological misconception about human nature. Rejecting the dualist conception of a consciousness separate and theoretically divisible from the body raises the question of how far we are determined by our bodies. Perhaps our bodies are all we are? This is in essence the nature versus nurture question: This is, of course, a simplification of a range of more nuanced positions; no one serious posits that human traits are either entirely or not at all influenced by culture. While our socialisation can have some effect on our genetic predispositions, fundamentally, human traits from aggression to altruism arise from our genetic inheritance. We are the vehicles for our genes, through which they compete by natural selection to propagate themselves in forthcoming generations, and everything we are is shaped by that genetic imperative. The concomitant conclusions are first that differences between individuals and, as importantly, between groups must be genetic, if genes are the basis for our behaviour. The second conclusion is that innate traits could only be changed through natural selection: The political implications of this position should be clear, as described by Gould in a passage discussing arguments about differences between the sexes: In reality, we are only vehicles for actions prompted by our genes. For Marx, in contrast, of key importance were human social relations; rather than on the abstract, isolated human individual, the focus should be on human activity. Activity does not simply arise from human nature; it is human nature. Marx describes in *Capital* how humans are the only creatures to undertake planned, purposeful work on the world around us: A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of the bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the

end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his *modus operandi*, and to which he must subordinate his will. They are not the results of instinctual, genetically determined behaviour but are planned and conceptualised in a way that, over human history, has developed human social relations and human capacities. In human development, for example, a genetic determinist model would have the template for the individual being set by their genetic make-up, with culture then allowed some secondary effects on top of this genetic base. A Marxist view does not simply invert this; Marx, contrary to some views, [x] did not believe that humans are born as *tabula rasa* for society to mould. Rather, a dialectical understanding of development sees a process between genes and environment including not just the environment external to the body but the environment for each cell which is both relational and contingent. One of the fallacies of genetic determinism is the idea that genes are analogous to a computer program. However many times you re-run the program, barring code corruption, you would expect to get the same result each time. In human development, even starting from the same genes and the same environment, each result would be different, precisely because it is a relational process and not a program. This is, incidentally, why cloning would never be able to produce the same person twice. Viewing human development dialectically also places humans as active participants in rather than passive recipients of our own development. In the genetic determinist model, we “the finished human organisms” are simply the end result of the genetic program and the social decorative flourishes. In fact, new developments in epigenetics reveal that genes can be turned on and off by environmental factors. In contrast, a dialectical understanding shows not only that genes and environment are constantly developing in relation to each other, but that as we develop, we are actively involved in shaping this process. In other words, we shape the pathways of our brains by thinking. It is generally agreed that the hominids were bipedal before they developed large brains. This was the driver for the growth of the large hominid brains, which then drove more and complex tool use, and so on in a dialectical process. The answer to the genetic determinists is not to deny the importance of our biology for the development of human society, but to understand ourselves as active participants in our own development on an individual and a societal level. We are the inheritors of not merely the genes, but also the cultures and technologies of our forebears. The view that what we are “our personalities, tendencies, intelligence etc” is genetically determined relies on there being genes, or combinations of genes, for these genetically determined traits. These traits, therefore, have to have some objective existence. If our genetic inheritance gives us a tendency towards a particular behaviour, then that behaviour must be naturally delimited in some way. It must, in other words, be a thing. It is however a thing which is at the same time no more than an abstraction; an ideal which has no existence outside the world of ideas. The difficulty for the genetic-determinist view is that reifying behavioural traits like aggression merely obfuscates the way in which these are socially determined. Aggression is not an objective trait, but a value judgment on a range of behaviours which, in other contexts or from other groups, would be deemed entirely appropriate. Women in the workplace, for example, will be condemned for being aggressive when men exhibiting exactly the same behaviour will have been showing drive and forthrightness. Despite racist arguments to the contrary, we are not dealing here with a greater genetic predisposition on the part of black people in the USA or Palestinians in Gaza to aggression. It would make as much sense, after all, to ask if there is a genetic predisposition on the part of white US cops or Israeli soldiers to keep on shooting unarmed people dead. The difficulty of isolating an objective condition called aggression is true even in laboratory settings. There are a number of studies on aggression in rats and mice, but what these are really measuring is how long they take to attack another animal in the same cage which could of course be due to many different factors aside from a tendency to prefer to fight or a propensity to bite the lab assistant. Even in rodents, it seems, fighting back against your captors is liable to be labelled as pathological behaviour. This does not make reifying aggression legitimate. Reification is also the basis of one of the most resilient of the racist applications of genetic determinism: The validity of IQ for measuring individual and population-level

intelligence found champions throughout the twentieth century, despite setbacks such as when one of its proponents, Sir Cyril Burt, was found to have falsified much of his key data. It came to prominence again in with the publication of *The Bell Curve* by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, which reasserted the old argument that black people had on average lower IQs than whites. In the twenty-first century it hit headlines recently with the argument that Ashkenazi Jews have the highest average IQs, championed by academics like Richard Lynn, Nicholas Wade and Steven Pinker. It is obvious that famous early IQ tests, like those administered to immigrants arriving at Ellis Island or illiterate US army conscripts in the First World War, would have done little to measure any sort of intelligence. As Russian neuro-psychologist Alexander Luria found in the 1940s when he interviewed peasants in remote regions of the USSR, abstract reasoning has a different value in different cultures. He also found, perhaps, that peasants may not take kindly to big-city scientists and their stupid questions. In Novaya Zemlya there is always snow; what colour are the bears there? If a man is 60 or 80 and he had seen a white bear there and told me about it, he could be believed. This is corroborated by the way in which IQ scores increased in general worldwide in parallel to more generally widespread schooling. Tests had repeatedly to be made more difficult throughout the twentieth century to keep the overall average mark at 100. Enthusiasts for IQ testing could still try to argue that these are flaws in the tests, rather than in the concept. It could be that IQ is still innate and heritable, even if we have not found a good enough way to measure it separately from education and cultural familiarity. The difficulty for the hereditarian argument here though is in showing that IQ is a reification of intelligence that actually exists. In essence, *g* is simply a mathematical expression of the assumption that if there is a correlation between achievement in different sorts of academic tests, that correlation must reveal a causal factor which must be innate intelligence. There is, of course, no way to test that. Correlation does not equal causation. Gould points out that there is a perfect correlation between his age and the expansion of the universe, but there is unlikely to be a causal relationship between them, and the correlation further does not help us identify what any such causal factor might be. The maths does not require us to conclude that it must be an innate, reified intelligence as opposed, for example, to good, all-round schooling. The continued appearance of genetic determinist ideas to make racist arguments about intelligence shows the political uses to which these can be put, and the importance of countering the view that we are nothing more than expressions of our genes. Genetic determinism may purport to provide an alternative to a dualist view of human nature but ultimately it is reliant on the same idealism. Only the Marxist understanding of human nature has us as active participants, making ourselves through the interaction of our genes, our environment and our history. Genetic determinism, like dualism, does not give us any hope of changing the world. Its central argument is that our natures are fixed by our genes, which are often suspiciously like capitalists in their selfish, winner-take-all behaviour. Any attempts to make society fairer, in this view, is fighting against our natures and may well be doomed to failure. Against this, a dialectical understanding of human nature shows that on the contrary, what we are is adaptable. We make ourselves and the world. It is this insight that tells us that, despite supposed common sense about human nature, we can change it. *Biology, Ideology and Human Nature*, London, 1985, p. *Essays about books and ideas*, London, 1985, p. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, London, 1985, pp. *A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, vol. 1, London, 1985, p. Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature*, p. *How modern biology is rewriting our understanding of genetics, disease and inheritance*, London, 1985.

Chapter 6 : Kelly Cosgrove | Literary Universals Project

Abstract. In *How to Read a Book*, Laura Bohannon wrote her classic essay challenging the supposition that great literary works speak to universal human concerns and conditions and, by extension, that human nature is the same everywhere.

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a. individual differences; human universals Male peacocks have colorful tails because over the course of the history of the species tail feathers indicated a good immune system and reproductive health, is an example of a(n) _____ explanation.

Chapter 9 : Donald Brown (anthropologist) | Revolvly

human universals, human nature, human culture By Donald E. Brown Human universals--of which hundreds have been identified--consist of those features of culture, society, language, behavior, and mind that, so far as the record has been examined, are found among all peoples known to ethnography and history.