

**It Is Not Our Humanity, It Is Our Society**

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### **Abstract**

This paper goes in-depth on how human nature is inherently good and our outside influences are what makes us imperfect people. Our human nature may not be perfect, but we are programmed to help others and be kind. Factors such as capitalism, media, consumerism, and religious decline push us farther and farther away from a better world. Religion will promote community bonds and counteract the negative influences around us with the common goal of becoming better. Consumerism manipulates, and exploits human flaws, encouraging greed and selfishness, and does nothing to better human society. This paper advocates for change towards a less capitalist and more family-focused society. This paper discusses our modern mental health crisis, attributing it to the effects of the pandemic and social media. These social flaws may draw us back but our human nature will keep us caring about people that will eventually fix our world. If we trust our inherent kindness and need for community, we will be okay.

### **It Is Not Our Humanity, It Is Our Society**

Human nature is innately good, and the world today is what is turning humans into selfish, immoral people. Everyone has the ability and the want to be a good person, but capitalism, media, consumerism, and religious decline have led humankind down a dark path. Humans' natural instinct has always been to help others in need and the communities instead of committing selfish acts. Humankind needs to fix the root of the problem, society, before progression to a more caring community can happen. Humanity will start to decline due to our lack of kindness and care for one another, if people cannot work together to improve the world war everywhere will eventually break out. We are seeing the start of an economic crisis in many places due to the low birthrate. Currently, we are in one of the biggest mental health crises due to factors like the pandemic and social media. These are all things that could lead to humanity's downfall, but human nature will prevent the world from collapsing due to the factors we created. The main thing that will save us is the compassion and caring we have for others, the world is truly doomed if we cannot figure out how to work together to solve our modern-day problems.

Human nature is good and always has been, according to science. When a person hears a child crying the first instinct is to help the child. The human instinct to help the child is not “to get in the good graces of the parents, nor because he wished to win the praise of his fellow, villagers or friends, know yet, because he dislikes the cry of the child” but because his human nature automatically inclines him to have an “immediate, spontaneous, and unreflective urge to save the child”(Stevenson, 2013, p. 30). This example shows that humans' immediate reaction is to be helpful to their fellow humans. There was a study done in 2012 to test if humans would cooperate and help the community before themselves. This study proved “faster—that is, more intuitive—decisions were associated with higher levels of cooperation” and the “results suggest

that our first impulse is to cooperate”. The researchers followed with two more experiments, “both studies showed the same pattern—whether people were forced to use intuition (by acting under time constraints) or simply encouraged to do so (through priming), they gave significantly more money to the common good than did participants who relied on reflection to make their choices. This again suggests that our intuitive impulse is to cooperate with others”. Both of these examples talk about how the quick, automatic reaction is our human instinct. When people do not think before they act they use their primal brain, which is our nature. The first thought experiment referenced shows that even without personal gain humans want to help others. The modern experiment shows that when people make quick decisions they help the community, but when the choice is thought about more people will choose the selfish decision. This proves that our modern brain, which is manipulated by our environment, is what makes people less caring and selfish. This discovery can help us lead to a new, better society because the base of humans being community-orientated, kind people is already there (Ward, 2012).

## **Religion**

Human nature in combination with religion will bring our morality back. Religion holds people to a moral standard, and the lack of it harms us because there is nothing to combat the immorality of the modern world. Multiple religions have heaven, this gives people who follow that religion extra reasons to act morally and with kindness towards others. The Holy Bible has many quotes about treating others well and forgiving. Humans are already inclined to help each other, and religion just gives an extra push. Confucians believe “all human beings have the capacity to cultivate virtue and bring themselves into harmony with the decree of Heaven” and that humans are “free to reject or pursue morality and proper conduct” (Stevenson, 2013, p. 21).

This shows that every person can be good, but we choose to not be. The only reason people would choose to be immoral is because of the effect of society and learned greed.

The ability to be good is naturally there, and it is possible to combat society's negative effect on character and morality. Religion creates a community that fosters relationships where you help others. Being isolated is against human nature and our modern-day isolation from others due to media and the pandemic is making us more apathetic. Gathering in a social setting like a church benefits everyone's morality because they are all there to gain community and become better people. An outcome of modern technology is that “daily interactions occur primarily through the internet [now], the feeling of loneliness is [more] likely to prevail” which can lead to more apathetic people who show less care for others (Fulalas, 2018). That is why community in churches, schools, and other social settings are important to fixing society. Especially after the pandemic made more of the population chronically online.

Some may argue religion makes or enforces morality which means we are not naturally good. People are naturally good but can be swayed by their environment, that is why as the world gets more progressive with consumerism and media we stray away from religion. Religion would not value good behavior if we are not innately good, because going to heaven would be nearly impossible without an instinct to do well. Heaven is used as a concept to promote good behavior and is portrayed as something anyone can achieve. The important thing is to always do better. Religion is not about perfection but progression toward a better society through your own small actions.

The Holy Bible admits to our human faults and accepts we will not always get along. “But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against

the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:15-17). This shows that humans act selfishly and sometimes we harm others, but this verse reminds us that if we do not show acceptance and forgiveness to one another, we will all be “consumed”. According to Christianity we are God’s creation, and when God created the earth “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31). God would not make us people who are naturally evil, but creatures that are caring, and although we have flaws, we can overcome them. God admits we are terrible cruel people at times. “Those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man”(Matthew 15:18-20). The reason people go to church is to repent for their sins. People will always make mistakes and do and say hurtful, terrible things. But as long as we ask for forgiveness and better ourselves God will accept us. The point of religion is to comfort and better people, God does not expect perfection but instead progress.

Certain people will use The Holy Bible as a cover for their actions and society has to accept that those people do not represent every religious person. Immoral people will always find something to justify their actions and religion can be used as a shield. It is important to recognize not everyone who takes part in church or practicing religion is in it for the right reason. People need to teach their kids to use religion as a support system, not a weapon. Lots of powerful people use religion as a way to manipulate people and we as a society need to watch out for that. Lots of politicians will say to vote for them because they are a certain religion. It is important to realize that just because religion can help save humanity's morality, it must be used carefully and

not as a manipulation tactic. Many cult leaders and politicians use religion to steal from those who are less fortunate because they are desperate. These immoral people in power can use their harmful and bigoted beliefs to push ideas onto others which harms society as a whole. As long as society is aware of religion's danger it can be used to help many people by providing a support system and moral guidance.

Religion can have bigoted beliefs, so why should people follow any of its ideas? One argument could be the Holy Bible disagrees with homosexuality. A lot of the bible has been translated many times and it is important to not follow religion blindly, but to also question. When the bible references man lying with man it quotes: "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done" (Romans 1:26-28). This gives a direct indicator that God thinks punishment is deserved for a man lying with a man. Although this is the case, we must remember the bible has been edited and translated so much it may be different from the original writing. Even if this is the original meaning, we must understand the modern world has moved passed these bigoted beliefs and it is important to love everyone. Lots of modern-day oppression due to religion is due to people in power using religion as a weapon and taking the many times translated words at face value without critical thinking. We must now consider the Bible's true meaning and not follow every word to perfect; this is how we better our world using religion.

## **Exploitation of Consumers**

Modern consumerism is bringing out humans' worst characteristics, human nature in addition to the decrease of consumerism will improve the world. “Manipulating people and getting them to think that you could not have real democracy in anything but a capitalist society” has been many politicians' and marketers' tactics to get people to spend more on what they do not need. Manipulation of the modern consumer leads us to more greed and selfishness which is not our human nature. The world needs to go back to its roots and become less capitalist for us to heal the rifts in society. Media and marketing work together to make people feel like they always need more products by triggering jealousy and the want for what others have. In 1929 Sigmund Freud claimed, “that cigarettes were a symbol of the penis and of male sexual power he told Bernays if he could find a way to connect cigarettes with the idea of challenging male power then women would smoke because then they would have their own penises”. Freud succeeded in exploiting human flaws. Humans are not innately perfect and still have bad traits like jealousy and greed. When people lack power and rights, they will want any kind of power they can get, in this case, women wanted cigarettes because they were marketed as giving women the power of a man. Human nature overrides those selfish needs to have more than others and our natural, caring nature keeps people in line (Curtis, 2016).

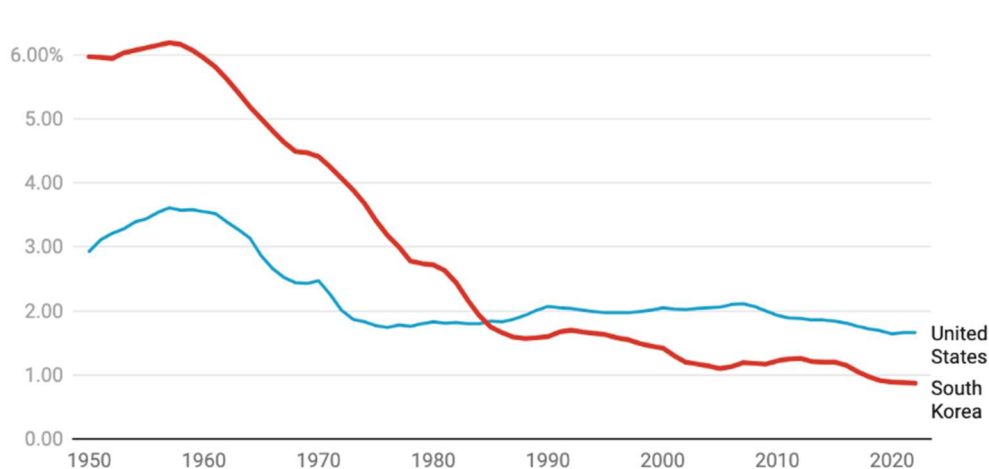
A lot of our nature is based on the connections we have with others, relationships with people bring out our nature because that is how the world is supposed to be. The pandemic isolated everyone and caused more anxiety in our current time related to going outside and interacting with others which leads to more online shopping and susceptibility to marketing. When humans live in their own bubbles it is harder to show compassion for others because they

cannot see their humanity as clearly, and marketers have less human compassion and do not care about manipulating fellow people into buying their bad product.

### Fixing the Population Crisis

Part of our nature is to reproduce; it is biological to want to continue the species and human nature to care for offspring. In the modern day, more people are deciding to not have children due to media, birth control, and the state of the economy. In many places around the world the economy is collapsing or something similar because the birth rate is so low and there are no kids to grow up and become workers. Once the world returns to normal and humans regain social skills our human nature will kick in and save some places from losing their economy due to lack of people. Modern media is now promoting a child-free life and influences are claiming children would “interfere with [their] passions for spontaneous travel, football training and regular lie-ins”. This is now creating a “trend for owning the ‘child-free’ label and discussing that choice more openly”. This new trend is affecting birth rates, in 2009 the birth rate was 13.5 births for every 1,000 population. In 2019 the birth rate dropped to 11.0 births for every 1,000 population according to the CDC (Savage, 2023).

If this trend continues it could start to affect our economy and slow production in all areas. “States are already feeling some effects of low fertility, such as lower school enrollment,



but many of the most significant potential hits to tax revenues

won't occur for decades"; not many people discuss how the low birth rate is affecting the United States because the effects have not hit yet (The Pew...2022).

The current state of the birth rate in the United States will have a long-term effect that will be too late to help once the economy is harshly impacted. Not only is the United States being affected, but other countries like Japan, South Korea, and Germany. Recent data from Japan says, "fewer than 800,000 babies were born in Japan last year, the lowest figure since Japan began tallying births in 1899 and the seventh year of declines in a row, according to government data" (Kuhn, 2023). Many Japanese people do not want to have kids due to "bleak job prospects, corporate cultures that are incompatible with both parents — but especially women — working, and a lack of public tolerance for small children. Many couples also hesitate to have children due to rising cost" (Yamaguchi, 2023). In Korea the "falling birthrate will lead to a shrinking, aging workforce and an eventual major drop in labor supply" (Jung, 2023) and "Over the last 60 years, South Korea has undergone the most rapid fertility decline in recorded human history. In 1960, the nation's total fertility rate – the number of children, on average, that a woman has during her reproductive years – stood at just under six children per woman. In 2022, that figure was 0.78. South Korea is the only country in the world to register a fertility rate of less than one child per woman, although others – Ukraine, China and Spain – are close" (Poston, 2023) which will have detrimental effects on Korea's future. Eventually the "public savings and investment will suffer as a whole" (Jung, 2023). "Much of this transformation of South Korea from a poor country to a rich country has been due to the demographic dividend realized during the country's fertility decline. But the demographic dividend only works in the short term. Long-term fertility declines are often disastrous for a nation's economy" (Poston, 2023). "These will all factor in slowing down economic growth and weakening the social

welfare system's sustainability" and eventually the effects will be irreversible (Jung, 2023). "As a demographer who over the past four decades has conducted extensive research on Asian populations, I know that this prolonged and steep decline will have huge impacts on South Korea. It may slow down economic growth, contributing to a shift that will see the country end up less rich and with a smaller population" (Poston, 2023).

Not only can this lead to an economic downfall, but it will be a poorer country overall, once a country slips into poverty it is hard to escape and Korea might not be able to. Poverty can lead to it becoming a third-world country or just a complete collapse of government and production. "Countries need a total fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman to replace their population, when the effects of immigration and emigration aren't considered. And South Korea's fertility rate has been consistently below that number since 1984, when it dropped to 1.93, from 2.17 the year before". "The South Korean fertility rate has not increased in the past 16 years. Rather, it has continued to decrease. This is due to what demographers refer to as the "low-fertility trap." The principle, set forth by demographers in the early 2000s, states that once a country's fertility rate drops below 1.5 or 1.4, it is difficult – if not impossible – to increase it significantly". With this extremely low birth rate, the older population will begin to grow. "The older people population is projected to be 20% of the country by 2025 and could reach an unprecedented and astoundingly high 46% in 2067. South Korea's working-age population will then be smaller in size than its population of people over the age of 65". Korea would need to double its birth rate plus more just to replace the people in their country, Korea might be the first example of what happens when a birth rate gets so low the country collapses, but before then we can fix that even if it is nearly impossible. An increase in emigration is key (Poston, 2023).

With the percentage of older people increasing, fewer people will be able to work and support the economy. If more emigrants can be channeled towards these countries it will be able to boost the younger population, bringing in more workers and increasing the birth rate at the same time. Germany is also in a dire situation where their declining birth rate is “crimping economic growth and compounding Germany's labor shortage as baby boomers retire” (Thomasson, 2021). Modern-day culture makes it uncomfortable for people to have kids because they feel unwelcome. Society has become money and business-focused instead of family-focused. People's biology and nature are what is keeping the birthrate from being zero, when the world becomes less capitalist and business-forward more people will start having children which will save the economy. The declining birth rate will not be able to produce enough kids to handle the consumerist's needs.

### **Mental Health**

Due to the pandemic and social media mental health has been decreasing rapidly. If we keep going down this path eventually not enough people will be emotionally well enough to work and support society. Thankfully many people are working to get educated in mental health so they can help others in need. According to the CDC “Over 1 in 5 youth (ages 13-18) either currently or at some point during their life, have had a seriously debilitating mental illness” and “more than 1 in 5 US adults live with a mental illness” (CDC, 2023). This may seem like a dark statistic, and we are going downhill. In some ways we are, more people are experiencing mental illness, and this is due to “feelings of loneliness or isolation”, “alcohol or drugs”, “biological factors or chemical imbalances in the brain”, “childhood experiences, such as trauma or a history of abuse (for example, child abuse, sexual assault, witnessing violence, etc.)”, and more (CDC, 2023). All of these factors are becoming more prevalent in the modern day. The saving grace

will be the people studying to become therapists, “there are over 198,811 therapists and over 81,000 psychologists practicing in the US” currently practicing (Zaunders, 2023). People rarely go into medical professional jobs unless they truly love helping people. This proves humans will be able to save each other. Mental health used to be ignored and never talked about in schools, now it is very common to teach all grades how to manage their mental health. Not only will this lead more kids to become mental health professionals, but acknowledgment also does so much for mental health because then people can get support in school, work, and even at home.

Humanity has declined in many ways but one way it has improved is acceptance of differences. Human nature leads us to be more forgiving and accepting of people, in recent years we have become more tolerant of differences in how people look, sexuality, and mental health. This is one way we have started to heal our society. If we continue and start accepting differences universally, we can eventually tackle bigger issues.

There is so much hatred in the world. People are discriminated against based on their skin tone, sexuality, gender, and more. Yes, we have become more accepting but not enough. The argument could be made that there is still hate in the world and if we were truly good there would be no discrimination. Babies are not born with prejudices, they are taught them. Babies can distinguish between skin tones and categorize, but that is not the problem. “Babies as young as three months can distinguish faces by color, and 3-year-olds are fully capable of understanding racial categories, and even the hierarchies that come with them. The trick is to accept that this categorization is normal, and to keep it from mutating into racism” (Davis, 2022). Every parent has the ability to help their child grow into a caring, tolerant person. According to Gather “Children are born into a world that has systemic racism, and they’re born into a culture that harbors racist attitudes and racist ideologies and those ideologies seep into everything”, this

means that we do not have an inherent problem with racism. It should be easy to fix in theory. But humans are not perfect so there will always be flaws in society, but progression is the first step to getting close to perfection. In order to give humanity the best chance we must do our best to prevent prejudice in the media and schools. Eventually, it will be phased out of society.

### **Conclusion**

Human nature is good, but the influence of social factors and our outside world is harmful. Humanity's nature is fundamentally good, as evidenced by science and religion. Although humans are good, capitalism, media, consumerism, and religious decline contribute to the suppression of these natural tendencies, leading to a darker path due to immorality. Humanity could fall down a darker path, but I believe our instincts will prevail and save humankind.

To fix our future we need to address problems in society and not blame it all on our humanity decomposing. Religion has been used as a moral compass, it can reinforce positive behavior by providing a moral standard and fostering a healthy community with healthy relationships. Modern consumerism manipulates and exploits people which contributes to greed and selfishness, deviating from our natural instincts. Kindness and compassion can be increased in society when we place less value on superficial items and ideas.

Declining birth rates will start to show devastating signs soon if not dealt with. A less capitalist and more family-focused society would increase how many women want to have children and increase the birthrate. If given time the birthrate will naturally go up now that the pandemic is over because of our biological actions.

Mental health is another big problem in modern-day society that we as humans can fix. It is our nature to be good people. Human compassion is the key to fixing the mental health crisis. People who are more naturally inclined to help others will become therapists and almost single-

handedly fix the crisis. As we continue to show compassion by becoming more tolerant of different races, sexualities, and genders around the world we will progress to a more caring world.

Humanity's problems are not always due to our flaws, but society and how its modern influences affect humankind. By fixing rifts in society, we can become a more whole, compassionate, tolerant world.

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