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Human Nature, Nurture, and Culture **Mortimer J. Adler**

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On July 1, 1950, I gave the first formal lecture at the opening of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. The title was “The Nature of Man,” a subject I thought appropriate for, that occasion. Now, 40 years later, I am going to attempt a summing up of my views on human nature, nurture; and culture.

The issue falls into three related parts: First, the unity of the specific nature of the human race and its place in the world of living-organisms, Second; differences within the human world—between human individuals and between human groups—that are nurtural not natural in their origin and overlay the natural sameness of all human beings, and especially the natural’s sameness of the human mind. Which leads, finally, to the third and concluding section of this discourse about cultural pluralism and cultural unity.

The Nature of the Human Species and Its Difference From That of Other Animal Species

I must begin by commenting on an extraordinary error made by twentieth-century social scientists and by the existentialist philosophy that arose in France in this century. It consists in denying that man has a specific nature comparable to the specific natures to be found in the zoological taxonomy—in the classification of animals according to their generic and specific natures. As the existentialists put it, man has an existence, but no essence: the essence of each human being is of his or her own making. As the social scientists put it, the differences among human groups—racial, ethnic, or cultural—are primary; there is no common human nature in which they all share. The French existentialist, Merleau-Ponty, sums up this error by saying: “It is the nature of man not to have a nature.”

Before I explain how this profound mistake came to be, made, let

me call your attention to its serious consequences. If moral philosophy is to have a sound factual basis, it is to be found in the facts about human nature and nowhere else. Nothing else but the sameness of human nature at all times and places, from the beginning of homo sapiens 45,000 years ago, can provide the basis for a set of moral values that should be universally accepted. Nothing else will correct the mistaken notion that we should readily accept a pluralism of moral values as we pass from one human group to another or within the same human group. If the basis in human nature for a universal ethic is denied, the only other alternative lies in the extreme rationalism of Immanuel Kant, which proceeds without any consideration of the facts of human life and with no concern for the variety of cases to which moral prescriptions must be applied in a manner that is flexible rather than rigorous.

I turn now to the explanation of the mistaken denial of human nature, which while conceding that all human beings have certain common anatomical and physiological traits—number of bones, number of teeth, blood type, number of chromosomes, the period of parturition, and so on—denies their psychological sameness—the sameness of the human mind and its behavioral tendencies. How was that mistake made?

Consider other animal species. If you were to investigate any one of them as carefully as possible, you would find that the members of the same species; living in their natural habitats, manifest a remarkable degree of similarity in behavior. You might find differences in size, weight, shape, or coloration among the individuals you examined. You might find behavioral deviations here and there from what would have become evident as the normal behavior of that species. But, by and large, you would be impressed by the similitudes that reigned in the populations you examined.

The dominant likeness of all members of the species would lead you to dismiss as relatively insignificant the differences you found, most of which can be explained as the result of slightly different environmental conditions. That dominant likeness would constitute the nature of the species in question.

Now consider the human species. It inhabits the globe. Its members live in all hemispheres and regions, under the most widely divergent environmental conditions. Let us suppose you were to take the time to visit human populations wherever they existed—all of them. Let the visit not be a casual one, but one in which you lived for a time with each of these populations and studied them closely. You would come away with the very opposite impression from the

one you took away, from your investigation of the populations that belonged to one or another animal species. You were there impressed by the overwhelming similitude that reigned among its members. Here, however, you would find that the behavioral differences were dominant rather than the similarities.

Of course human beings, like other animals, must eat, drink, and sleep. They all have certain biological traits common. There can be no doubt that they have the nature of animals. But when you come to their distinctive behavioral traits, how different one human population will be from another. They will differ in the languages they speak, and you will have some difficulty in making an accurate count of the vast number of different languages you will have found. They will differ in their dress, in their adornments; in their cuisines, in their customs and manners, in the organization of their families, in the institutions of their societies, in their beliefs, in their standards of conduct, in the turn of their minds in almost everything that enters into the ways of life they lead. These differences will be so multitudinous and variegated that you might, unless cautioned against doing so, tend to be persuaded that they were not all members of the same species.

In any case, you cannot avoid being persuaded that, in the human case, membership in the same species does not carry with it the dominant behavioral similitude that you would find in the case of other animal species. On the contrary; the behavioral differences between one human race and another, between one racial variety and another, between one ethnic group and another, between one nation and another, would seem to be dominant.

It is this that might lead you to the conclusion that there is no human nature in the sense in which a certain constant nature can be attributed to other species of animals. Even if you did not reach that conclusion yourself, you might understand how that conclusion is plausible.

Unlike most other species of animals, the members of the human species appear to have formed subgroups that differentiated themselves; one from another. Each subgroup has a distinctive character. The differences that separate one subgroup from another are so numerous and so profound that they defy you to say what remains, if anything, that might be regarded as a human nature common to all.

Let me be sure it is understood that the denial of human nature rests ultimately on the striking contrast between the dominant be-

havioral similitude that prevails among the members of other animal species and the dominant behavioral differentiation that prevails among the subgroups of the human species.

Looked at one way, the denial of human nature is correct. The members of the human species do not have a specific or common nature in the same sense that the members of other animal species do. This, by the way, is one of the most remarkable differences between man and other animals, one that tends to corroborate the conclusion that man differs from other animals in kind, not in degree. But to concede that the members of the human species do not have a specific or common nature in the same sense that the members of other animal species do is not to admit that they have *no specific nature whatsoever*.

An alternative remains open; namely, that the members of the human species all have the same nature in a quite different sense.

In what sense then is there a human nature; a specific nature that is common to all members of the species? The answer can be given in a single word: *potentialities*. Human nature is constituted by all the potentialities that are the species-specific properties common, to all members of the human species.

It is the essence of a potentiality to be capable of a wide variety of different actualizations. Thus, for example, the human potentiality for syntactical speech is actualized in thousands of different human languages. Having that potentiality a human infant placed at the moment of birth in one or another, human subgroup, each with its own language, would learn to speak that language. The differences among all human languages are superficial as compared with the potentiality for learning and speaking any human language that is present in all human infants at birth.

What has just been said about one human potentiality applies to all the others that are the common, specific traits of the human being. Each underlies all the differences that arise among human subgroups as a result of the many different ways in which the same potentiality can be actualized. To recognize this is tantamount to acknowledging the superficiality of the differences that separate one human subgroup from another, as compared with the samenesses that unite all human beings as members of the same species and as having the same specific nature.

In other species of animals, the samenesses that unite the members and constitute their common nature are not potentialities but rather

quite determinate characteristics behavioral as well as anatomical and physiological. This accounts for the impression derived from studying these other species—the impression of a dominant similitude among its members.

Turning to the human species; the opposite impression of dominant differences among subgroups can also be accounted for. The explanation of it lies in the fact that, as far as behavioral characteristics are concerned, the common nature that all the subgroups share consists entirely of species-specific potentialities. These are actualized by these subgroups in all the different ways that we find when we make a global study of mankind.

The mistake that the cultural anthropologists, the sociologists, and other behavioral scientists make when they deny the existence of human nature has its root in their failure to understand that the specific nature in the case of the human species is radically different from the specific nature the case of other animal species.

Having established the sameness of the human species, which consists in its common human potentialities, psychological and behavioral, in addition to its common anatomical and physiological traits, let us now consider the difference between the human species and other animal species.

That we differ from other nonhuman animals in many respects is doubted by no one. But among these differences, are *some* differences in kind, or are *all* differences in degree? Differences in degree are all differences of more and less with respect to the same property or trait. For example, all animals mature from infancy at different rates, humans more slowly than other animals. That is a difference in degree. Two things differ in kind rather than degree if one has a property that the other totally lacks: it is a difference between *haves* and *have-nots*. For example, the difference between animals that have and lack backbones is a difference in kind.

In a book I wrote in 1967, *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes*, and in a book I have just written, *Intellect: Mind Over Matter*, I think have shown, beyond a reasonable doubt, that mentally and behaviorally, human beings differ in kind from nonhuman animals. All the differences between humans and nonhumans are not differences in degree.

I shall not state all these differences in kind, but only the most important and obvious ones.

Intellect is a unique human possession. Only human beings have intellects. Other animals may have sensitive minds and perceptual intelligence, but they do not have intellects. No one is given to saying that dogs and cats, horses, pigs, dolphins, and chimpanzees lead intellectual lives; nor do we say of nonhuman animals that they are anti-intellectual, as some human beings certainly are. Other animals have intelligence in varying degrees, but they do not have intellectual powers in the least degree.

Free will or free choice, which consists in always being able to choose otherwise, no matter how one does choose, is an intellectual property, lacked by nonintellectual animals. Some of their behavior may be learned and thus acquired rather than innate and instinctive, but however it is determined by instinct or by learning, it is determined rather than voluntary and freely willed.

A person is a living being with intellect and freewill. That is both the jurisprudential and the theological definition of a person. Everything else, animate or inanimate, totally lacking intellect and free will, is not a person but a thing.

Only persons have natural and unalienable rights. These we call human rights. There are no comparable animal rights. Morally, human beings may be obliged to treat some, but not all, other animals humanely. We are not obliged to treat a coiled rattlesnake about to strike or a charging tiger humanely.

In addition to the foregoing basic differences in kind between human and nonhuman animals, there are the following behavioral differences in kind.

Other animals live entirely in the present. Only human individuals are time-binders, connecting the present with the remembered past and with the imaginable future. Only man is an historical animal with an historical tradition and an historical development. In the case of other species, the life of succeeding generations remains the same as long as no genetic changes occur. Human life changes from one generation to another with the transmission of cultural novelties and with accretion of accumulated cultural changes and institutional innovations. Nothing like these innovations and changes can be found in any other species.

Other animals make things, such as hives, nests, dams, and, in the case of birds, songs. It may even be that in doing so, other animals-use rudimentary tools as well as their own appendages.

But only man makes machines, which are not hand tools, for the purpose of making products that cannot be produced in any other way. It not enough to say that man is the only manufacturing animal. We must add that he is the only machine-facturing animal. The kind of thought that is involved in designing and building a machine betokens the presence of an intellect in a way that the use of hand tools does not.

Among the things that man makes are works of art that we regard as fine rather than useful because they are made for the pleasure or enjoyment they, afford rather than to serve some further purpose. Are the songs made by birds comparable? No, because even if the songs birds make serve no biological purpose and are simply, made to be enjoyed, the songs made by a given species of bird remain the same for all members of that species generation after generation. In contrast, in the making of drawings or paintings, from the sketches drawn on the walls of the Cro-Magnon caves down to the present day, the extraordinary variation in human works of art shows that human artistry is not instinctive, and therefore not the same for all members of the species from one generation to the other.

As I see it, all the differences in kind so far mentioned cannot be explained except by reference to mans exclusive possession of an intellect, with its power of conceptual thought and its power of free choice. If any doubt about man's difference in kind remains in you. minds, let me, try to persuade you by the following distinctive, unique human performances that I think you will find unquestionable.

Only human beings use their minds to become artists, scientists, historians, philosophers, priests, teachers, lawyers, physicians, engineers, accountants, inventors, traders, bankers, statesmen.

Only, among human beings is there a distinction between those who behave ethically and those who are knaves, scoundrels; villains, criminals.

Only among human beings is there any distinction between those who have mental health and those who suffer mental disease or have mental disabilities of one sort or another.

Only in the sphere of human life are there such institutions as schools, libraries, hospitals, churches, temples, factories, theaters, museums, prisons, cemeteries, and so on.

I hope you are now persuaded that human and nonhumans differ in kind, not merely in degree, but you may still ask what difference—what practical difference—it makes. I have already answered that question in part by calling your attention to the meaning of human personality—that only humans are persons, not things, and have the dignity and worth that belongs only to persons, the rights that belong only to persons, and the moral obligations that belong only to persons.

There is, in addition, one further consequence that I have not yet mentioned. The Declaration of Independence asserts that all human beings are by nature equal and that they are equally endowed with the same natural or unalienable rights. All of us know, as a matter of fact; that any two individuals that we may, compare with one another will be unequal in a large variety of respects. How shall we understand the equality that all humans possess—all, with no exception whatsoever—and how shall we understand, their myriad individual inequalities?

What do we mean by equality and inequality? Most persons, I have found, do not know the answer to this question, yet it is both short and simple. Two things are even in a given respect, if in *that* respect, one is neither more nor less than the other. Two things are unequal in a given respect if in *that* respect one is more and the other less than the other.

There is *only one* respect in which all human beings—all without any exception—are equal; that is as members of the human species. One human being is neither more nor less human than another. They all have the same species-specific common properties—the innate potentialities that constitute their human nature.

But individual human beings may differ from one another in the degree to which they possess these common human properties, and with respect to such differences, they may be unequal in many respects. These individual differences in degree may be either due to their different innate endowments or their different individual attainments. Thus understood, there is no incompatibility between the statement that all human beings are equal in only one respect and the statement that they are also unequal in many other respects.

Finally, there is one other consequence of man's difference in kind from all nonhuman animals. Human and some other nonhuman animals are gregarious and are naturally impelled to associate with one another. But while man is not the only social animal, humans are the only political animals. Because they have intellects and free

will, they voluntarily constitute the societies in which they live—their domestic, tribal, and political associations. All animal societies or groupings are instinctively determined and thus they are all purely natural societies, differing from species to species, but everywhere the same in the same species. Only human societies are both natural, and conventional, natural by natural needs, not by instinctive determination. Motivated by natural need, they are conventionally instituted by reason and free will; and so, within the same species, they differ at different times and place,

The Role of Nurture in Human Life

What is the role of nurture in human life?

All the knowledge we acquire, all the understanding we develop, everything we learn, is a product of nurture. At birth, we have none of these. All the habits we form, all the tastes we cultivate, all the patterns of behavior we accumulate, are products of nurture. We are born only with potentialities or powers that are habituated by the things we do in the course of growing up. Many, if not all, of these habits of behavior are acquired under the influence of the homes and families, the tribes or societies in which we are brought up. Some are the results of individually chosen behavior,

What nurture adds to nature in the development of human beings should be so dear to all of us that we do not make the serious mistake that results from the failure to distinguish what human nature is from all of its nurtural overlays. That serious mistake has been made again and again during the last 4,000 years. We found it being made in the 20th century by those sociologists and existentialists who deny the existence of human nature itself because of the pluralism they find in differently nurtured groups of human beings. Equally serious is the mistake of regarding human inequalities that result from nurtural influences as if they were the manifestation of unequal natural endowments.

To be sure this is clear, let me repeat once more the difference between human nature and that of all other animal species. In the case of other animal species, the specific nature common to all members of the species is constituted mainly by quite determined characteristics or attributes. In the case of the human species, it is constituted by determinable characteristics or attributes. An innate potentiality is precisely that—something determinable; not wholly determinate, and determinable in a wide variety of ways.

Man is to a great extent a self-made creature. Given a range of po-

tentialities at birth, he makes himself what he becomes by how he freely chooses to develop those potentialities by the habits he forms. It is thus that differentiated subgroups of human beings came into existence. Once in existence, they subsequently affected the way in which those born into these subgroups came to develop the acquired characteristics that differentiate one subgroup from another. These acquired characteristics, especially the behavioral ones, are the results of acculturation; or, even more generally, results of the way in which those born into this or that subgroup are nurtured differently.

No other animal is a self-made creature in the sense indicated above. On the contrary, other animals have determinate natures, natures genetically determined in such a way that they do not admit of a wide variety of different developments as they mature. Human nature is also genetically determined; but, because the genetic determination consists, behaviorally, in an innate endowment of potentialities that are determinable in different ways, human beings differ remarkably from one another as they mature. However they originated in the first place, most of those differences are due to differences in acculturation to natural differences. To confuse nature with nurture is a philosophical mistake of the first order. That philosophical mistake underlies the denial of human nature.

The correction of the philosophical mistake just mentioned is of the greatest importance because of the consequences that follow from not doing so. Most important of all is overcoming the persistent prejudices—the racist, sexist, elitist, even ethnic prejudices—that one portion or subgroup of mankind is distinctly inferior by nature to another. The inferiority may exist, but it is not an inferiority, due to nature, but to nurture.

When, for most of the centuries of recorded history, the female half of the population was nurtured—reared and treated—as inferior to the male half, that nurturing made them apparently inferior when they matured. To have correctly attributed that apparent inferiority to their nurturing would have instantly indicated how it could be, eliminated. But when it is incorrectly attributed to their nature at birth, it is accepted as irremediable.

What I have said about the sexist prejudice concerning inequality of men and women applies to all the racist and ethnic prejudices about human inequality that still exist among mankind. All these apparent inequalities are nurtural. None is a natural inequality between one human subgroup and another. In the centuries prior to this one, the elitist view taken by the propertied class about the in-

feriority of the working class was similarly grounded in grave deficiencies in the nurturing of workers who went to work at an early age without schooling and who often toiled, fourteen hours a day and seven days a week.

Thomas Jefferson was right in declaring that all human beings are created (or, if you will, are by nature) equal. They are also, in terms of their individual differences, unequal in the varying degrees to which they possess the species-specific potentialities common to all. When inequalities between human subgroups that are entirely due to nature are taken for natural inequalities, that mistake must be overcome and eradicated for the sake of social justice.

The correction of the mistake that confuses nature with nurture leads to certain conclusions that many individuals may find disconcerting. All the cultural and nurtural differences that separate one human subgroup from another are superficial as compared with the underlying common human nature that unites the members of mankind.

Although our samenesses are more important than our differences, we have an inveterate tendency to stress the differences that divide us rather than the samenesses that unite us. We find it difficult to believe that the human mind is the same everywhere because we fail to realize that all the differences, however striking, between the mind of Western man and the mind of human beings nurtured in the various Eastern cultures are, in the last analysis, superficial—entirely the result of different nurturing.

If a world cultural community is ever to come into existence, it will retain cultural pluralism or diversity with respect to all matters that are accidental in human life—such things as cuisine, dress, manners, customs, and the like. These are the things that vary from one human subgroup to another accordingly as these subgroups differ in the way they nurture their members. When that happens, we will have at last overcome the nurtural illusion that there is a Western mind and an Eastern mind, a European mind and an African mind, or a civilized mind and a primitive mind. There is only a human mind and it is one and the same in all human beings.

Cultural Unity and Cultural Pluralism

The unity of mankind and of the human mind underlies all the differences that are caused by differences in nurture and by their consequences—differences among diverse human creatures.

That being the case, should not an ultimate desideratum of human life on earth be the formation of a single cultural community to which all human beings belong—a single; global cultural community?

You may ask why this should be an ultimate desideratum?

My answer to this question is twofold. First, because world government is necessary not only for world peace, but also—and now more urgently—to preserve the planet as a viable place for human life. In 1943; I wrote a book that argued for world government as indispensable to permanent world peace, and predicted that it would occur in about 500 years, In the years subsequent to 1945, after the destruction of Hiroshima by the first atomic bomb, I changed my prediction of world government to two hundred years, because of the then threatening nuclear holocaust that would make life unlivable on a large portion of this planet. Now as we near the end of the century and the threat of a nuclear holocaust has dwindled almost to disappearance, another and more serious threat has loomed up—the prospect of climatic and environmental changes that, when they become irreversible, will make the whole planet unlivable for human beings

It is clear that without worldwide enforced control of all human activities that pollute the environment, its degeneration will continue to the point where lethal disabling environmental conditions are irreversible: To enforce such world-wide control of human activities world government is necessary. The UN will not suffice. Nor will the global commons.

This leads to the second reason: World government is impossible without world community; but the existence of world community requires a certain degree of cultural unity—unity of civilization. These things being so, the problem to be solved can be stated as follows. What is the kind and the degree of cultural unity that is required for world community as a basis for world government? How much cultural diversity or pluralism should persist? How much is appropriate and tolerable? What is the basis for determining the matters with regard to which it is reasonable to expect worldwide cultural unity, as well as the basis for determining the matters with regard to which cultural diversity or pluralism should be tolerated because it is not incompatible with the unity of mankind and of that human mind?

The key to the solution of the problem as stated is to be found in a

fundamental difference between matters that belong to the sphere of truth and matters that belong to the sphere of taste, together with the moral obligations imposed upon us by our commitment to the pursuit of truth with regard to all matters that properly fall in the sphere of truth. We must also take account of a principle that should regulate our pursuit of truth the principle that the sphere of truth is itself unified, that it is not divisible into a plurality of separate and incompatible domains.

To illustrate the difference between matters of truth and matters of taste, let me offer you some examples: There is a spectrum of matters some of which clearly, belong to the sphere of truth and some as clearly belong to the sphere of taste. Let us start with clear cases at the extreme ends of the spectrum. At one extreme, clearly belonging to the sphere of truth, is mathematics, and associated with it the exact sciences, especially the experimental sciences. Placing these disciplines in the sphere of truth does not mean that there is perfect agreement among all mathematicians or experimental scientists about everything in their fields. But it does mean, that, when they disagree, we expect them to be able to resolve their disagreements by rational processes. An irresolvable disagreement about any matter that properly falls in the sphere of truth would constitute an intellectual scandal. Not only would we find an irresolvable disagreement scandalous and intolerable, not only do we expect mathematicians and experimental scientists to be able to resolve whatever disagreements exist among them, but we also think that it is their obligation not to rest in their efforts to resolve such disagreements until they finally succeed in doing so.

At the opposite extreme, clearly belonging to the sphere of taste, are such matters as cuisine, social manners, styles in, dress or dance, and soon. Here we do not expect that men should be able to resolve their differences in taste. We do not expect them to seek to achieve uniformity. On the contrary, we would regard as monstrous any attempt to impose conformity upon all with regard to any one culinary program or set of social manners or style of dress. Here the adoption of one style rather than another is an act of free choice, not an act of the intellect necessitated by completely objective considerations.

Between these extremes, where there is no doubt that we are dealing with matters of truth on the one hand and with matters of taste on the other, philosophy and religion represent a difficult middle ground. The prevalent view today in academic circles at least, tends to place philosophy and religion on the side of taste rather than the side of truth. In what follows, I will take the opposite

view—that philosophy belongs to the sphere of truth, not of taste. With regard to the very difficult problem of locating the position of religion on one or the other side of the line that divides matters of truth from matters of taste, I reserve comment for later.

I turn now to the bearing of the points so far considered on the problem of cultural unity and cultural pluralism. Two things should be immediately obvious. There is no question about worldwide cultural unity with regard to mathematics and the exact and experimental sciences. We have already achieved a high degree of transcultural agreement in these fields, and we should expect it to continue and approach completeness. Nor is there any question about worldwide cultural unity with respect to the principles of technology that are now also transcultural—adopted worldwide. Unity, with respect to these principles is, after all, nothing but an extension by application of the agreements achieved in mathematics and the exact sciences.

Tabling for the moment the insistent question about the status of religion, we can say, that in all other matters which are matters of taste, we should both expect and tolerate cultural diversity and pluralism even in a world community when that comes into existence.

There is one whole of truth, no matter how many diverse parts there are and no matter how diverse the methods by which the truth of the parts is attained. The irrefragable unity, of the sphere of truth is merely an extension, but nonetheless a very important extension, of the principle of contradiction, that two propositions—or sets of opinions or beliefs—cannot both be true if they contradict one another. Truth in these different parts may be attained by quite different methods: investigative and experimental, noninvestigative and nonexperimental, intuitive, mystical, or even by the acknowledgment of divine revelation.

Staying within the boundaries of Western civilization or culture, the principle of the unity of truth entails the consequence that the several parts of the one whole of the truth to be attained must coherently fit together. As we have already seen, there cannot be irreconcilable contradictions between one segment of the whole truth and another. What is regarded as true in philosophy and, religion must not conflict with what is regarded as true in science.

Since it is only in the spheres of mathematics and experimental science that doctrinal agreement has been achieved in large measure, if not completely, the truths agreed upon in those areas at a given time test the claims to truth that are made in philosophy. In

other words, a particular philosophical view must be rejected as false if at a given time it comes into conflict with the scientific truths agreed upon at that time.

The same mandate that has been operative within the Western tradition should, therefore, be operative when we go beyond the Western tradition and consider the philosophies of the Far East as well as the philosophies of the West. Just as within the Western tradition, the truths of mathematics and science that are agreed upon at a given time have been employed as the test for accepting or rejecting Western religious beliefs or philosophical views, so, in exactly the same way, they should be employed as the test for accepting or rejecting Far Eastern religious beliefs or philosophical views. The principle that whatever is inconsistent or incompatible with the truths of mathematics and science that are agreed upon at a given time must, at that time, be rejected as false is universally applicable—to Eastern as well as to Western culture.


There are only two ways in which this consequence can be avoided. One is to deny the principle of contradiction and, with it, the unity of truth. The other is to regard Eastern religions and philosophies as making no cognitive claims at all and putting them along with cuisine, dress, manners, and customs on the slide of taste rather than on the side of truth.

However, if the several Far Eastern cultures regard philosophy as an area in which the criteria of truth and falsity are applicable, and if the criteria are operative in the same way in philosophy as they are in science and mathematics, it must be possible to establish a measure of dialectical agreement, as between the Far East and the West as well as between the several Far Eastern cultures, a measure sufficient to make some progress toward resolving the doctrinal disagreements that exist

In conclusion, let me repeat the point that constitutes the nerve of my argument. The fruits of technology are now universally put to use. This confirms the universal acknowledgment of a worldwide transcultural doctrinal agreement about the best approximations to truth that we have made so far in mathematics and experimental science. That agreement involves an agreement about the rules of logic and of discourse which enables men to pursue the truth cooperatively and to resolve their disagreements. The logic of science and of mathematics is, like science and mathematics, global, not Western.

Though the method of philosophy may not be the same as that of

mathematics or science, the basic framework of its logic is the same. A contradiction is a contradiction whether it occurs in philosophy, in mathematics, or in science. Unchecked equivocation in the use of words generates fallacious arguments, whether in philosophy or in science and mathematics.

The problem of religion is much more difficult than that of philosophy. If religion claims to involve knowledge, there we must face a further question. Is it indistinguishable from philosophy as a branch of natural knowledge, or does it regard itself as quite distinct from philosophy and all other branches of natural knowledge because its beliefs are articles of faith, not conclusions supported by empirical evidence and rational arguments. The problem thus raised is so difficult that it requires a separate discourse on the Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth, a subject to be addressed in the next issue of the Aspen Quarterly. 

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