

Among all the animals, we human beings are the ones with by far the most power to foresee the results of our actions and with the greatest interest in the welfare of other individuals. We are also the animals with the greatest variety of purposes.

But the same human reason whence we have this power and that bids us to act for future results also informs us that the final outcome of our action is likely to be the destruction of all we have cared for.

There is an enormous increase in freedom that comes to an animal if and when it develops language and so can think clearly and easily about causes and effects, near and far, self and others, and countless other aspects of reality. By contrast, the nonhuman animals have very little freedom, since instinct and situation decide all but trivial details of their actions. But a thinking animal with speech has to choose its patterns of action, each generation starting to some extent over again, and each individual making plans for years ahead. The problem, then, is obvious: how to achieve harmony and cooperation with others who are creative even as one oneself is creative. With few built-in patterns or instincts to control us, the wonder is not that conflicts occur, but that cooperation, harmony, and peace are real though partial and always precarious aspects of human existence.

As for downright wickedness, ill-will, hatred, malice, and the like, they are explained by remembering that human animals are extremely dependent on other human animals not only for survival but also for moral as well as intellectual development. Infants and children are likely to have their emotional life stunted and perverted by parents or guardians who treat them badly, just as children or youths have their intelligence blunted or perverted by bad teachers. Considering, then, all the difficulties implied by the very idea of an animal so loosely controlled by instinct, is it really surprising that such animals should fall far short of ethical infallibility even as of cognitive infallibility?

The difficulties inherent in being human explain why we should be patient with one another. We should not be surprised if others have purposes or beliefs that conflict with ours. Rather, we should be surprised and grateful

when this does not occur. We are all groping our way, partly blindly, in the difficult task of being animals largely set free from instinctive guidance. We are all engaged together in creating each moment a partly new world. And none of us can make more than our own decisions, even if we can influence the decisions of others.