

[For those who missed chapter one: Batman has discovered that the Evil Doctor is planning to murder city attorney Rachel Dawes, to avoid being caught trying to poison the water of Gotham. Unaware of her fate, Rachel is walking into a trap. Will Batman make it in time? Now read on...]

Beyond the Porcelain Throne

Series 1 / 2 - Selfishness is Altruism, Up is Down, and Backwards is Sideways

When people do something stupid to nature, there's normally an equal and opposite reaction.

This happens often [at least every couple of minutes]. Here's just one example: Whales eat plankton. From the point of view of current life on Earth, that's beneficial. 70% of the world's oxygen is produced by plankton. Without the whales to control it, the plankton population increases out of control, creating an excess of yet another greenhouse gas that adds to our climate problems, at best costing billions in resources to restore and at worst destroying the habitat on Earth for humans completely. People hunt whales to the point of extinction, and nature comes right back and kicks them up the ass. What they thought was 'progress'-moving up- turns out to be a big slide downhill that seriously holds our development back, or skews it sideways into having to correct each error we cause trying to correct the previous error. People scutter backwards and forwards in the error-correction-error trap. -"Oh, dear, mosquitos are killing people! Let's invent DDT!...Oh, dear, DDT is killing people! Let's invent..." and so on. Peering down the porcelain throne and not liking what we see, we try to cover it up with more of the same, and eventually, it really stinks.

You could take the point of view, "Forgive them their stupidity, for they are but little children, naive of the greater workings of the universe". Unfortunately most activities such as whaling and insecticide spraying are done in full knowledge of the possible repercussions, by people so dumb that they are only out for themselves and making a fast buck.

...Or are they? –What is the point of making your fortune in whaling, or McDollars burgers, or deforestation, if your children are left with a planet on which they can no longer survive? If selfishness is all about yourself and passing on your genes, such activity is a definite non-starter. Okay, so maybe such people really are that dumb –maybe they are superstitious enough to believe things like "Oh, it will never happen to me" or "Oh, god will put it all right again", or "Oh, we'll just build spaceships by then and live on Mars or something" [and believing anything, against all the available evidence, is superstition].

Another superstition is that "success" equals enormous quantities of money, and vice versa. The number of suicides committed and antidepressants swallowed by relatively rich westerners pokes that one in the eye. No, stupid as such people may be, one thing they are not, is selfish. To genuinely care about the self, one has to give it the optimal situation for survival and thriving, and, curiously enough, the requirements for that turn out to be both utterly selfish and utterly altruistic.

WTF? In nature's laws, this is true. What human beings need to achieve their optimal potential are three things: A safe place in which to develop, enough energy to develop with, and input to shape development. The womb provides all three because nature designed it to do so for an individual or a couple of lives, and so does the planet, for all life. Biological life needs planets, and it appears to need water, for [active] life is never found without them. It also needs energy, whether from the sun, thermal vents, food or chemical reactions. But when it achieves a certain complexity of form, life also needs input, in order to develop. For humans, that comes at first through parents, then from nature itself, from each other, our cultures, and as we mature, from our own minds as our imaginations, hopes, ideas, thoughts and dreams. We also begin to create input for each other –for our own children and for our culture as a whole; we write stories, we sing songs, we paint pictures, we invent tools, we build communities. Our output becomes somebody else's input, and vice versa. And so life goes on.

The greatest asset to surviving and thriving that any intelligent living creature can have, is allies. Together we stand; divided and alienated from each other we get depressed, lonely, morbid, and fall into apathy. Together, we hunt and gather; alone, we get eaten by predators and

BTPT 1, 2

Written by NHA

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recycled as leopard shit. Together, we help each other through times of sickness. Alone, we die of some disease we don't know anything about. Together, we inspire each other. Alone, we get bored and stuck in a rut. Making allies and interacting is both the most selfish thing we can do [for our own health and wellbeing] and the most altruistic thing we can do [for others' health and wellbeing]. Fulfilling our own needs for company alleviates the loneliness of others. Teaching each other, we learn from each other, in true interaction. Natural morality is based on need. Current western societies' morality is based on greed, and consequently, it will never work when applied to nature, because it just causes action/reaction.

Interaction is the key here, but true interaction is becoming as rare as whales. We'll start to find out why, in chapter 3.