
The Science of Sin - by Jack Lewis

A notebook and summary

Michael Obernhumer

9.4.2025



1 In the Beginning

1.1 Notes

- 7 deadly sins: pride, gluttony, lust, sloth, greed, envy, wrath
- The sins are not entirely evil, e.g. lust is necessary for the survival of a species.
- Neuroplasticity describes the process by which more or less anything we do regularly and intensively, and sustain over long periods of time, induces physical changes in the very fabric of our brain.
- InGroup: The group of people you identify with and show loyalty, empathy, and trust toward. (max 150 people)
- OutGroup: The group of people perceived as different or outside your social circle, often treated with less empathy or fairness.
- 7 deadly sins = categories of human behavior that leads to dispute and social isolation
- Gods help to enforce codes of conduct (e.g. punish vices)
- The concept of religious coping suggests that blaming god for disasters helps people deal with stress and traumatic events.
- Gods help to organize very large groups of interacting humans under a shared belief system.
- Belief helps us to cooperate with the OutGroup.
- When a belief system places constraint on what other people should and shouldn't think, it goes too far, particularly when used to sanction violence.

1.2 Cues / Questions / Keywords

- What is Neuroplasticity?
- What is InGroup and OutGroup?
- What is the role of god/religion in society?
- In an increasingly post-religious world, where is the incentive to stay on the right side of the seven deadly sins?
- Is science sufficient to inspire us to do the things that keep us happy and healthy?

1.3 Summary

The seven deadly sins (albeit necessary sometimes) are behaviors that lead to conflicts and social isolation. God/religion are concepts that help to maintain order and cooperation between a large group of humans. Religion fostered group membership, but what will fill the gap with the increasing disbelief remains to see.

2 Pride

2.1 Notes

- Pride can be a positive as it helps us conquer our fears and stay motivated in the face of adversaries.
- The problem are the extremes.
- There is a big difference between feeling proud and letting it show to the outside world.
- The self-obsession of pride prevents meaningful relationships with others.
- The sin of pride is formed when a person believes they are superior to all others.
 - =narcissism
- vanity is one of 7 contributing factors
 - it has risen dramatically in recent years (e.g. plastic surgery, social media)
- Narcissists are self-absorbed, belligerently indifferent to other people's opinions or best interests, and fully prepared to manipulate others to get what they want.
- The same brain areas that light up when we feel physical pain also become activated when we feel social pain.
 - Narcissists seem to feel the social pain of rejection more powerfully than other people.
- Neglectful- & Helicopter parents prevent the child from forming a healthy independent sense of self.
 - There is also trouble when feedback is framed in absolute terms that sound much more permanent: "You are such a naughty child"

2.2 Cues / Questions / Keywords

- Why do we need pride?
- What are the consequences of the sin of pride?
- When is pride a sin?
- How to foster narcissism through parenting?
- How does the internet nurture narcissism?

2.3 Summary

Pride in moderate amounts is a virtue otherwise it is a vice. Narcissism prevents meaningful relationships with others through a superiority belief. Parenting has a big impact on the development of narcissism.

3 Gluttony