

NOTES ON JONATHAN HAIDT'S ACCOUNT OF FALL OF VIRTUE ETHICS IN THE WEST

ZULFIKAR MOINUDDIN AHMED

Jonathan Haidt's *The Happiness Hypothesis* contains a nice account of how Immanuel Kant's deontologists and Jeremy Bentham's consequentialists, in the name of Reason and Science had transformed issues of morality away from Character and Virtue in Western thought. This is very important.

I am strongly of the view that even from a scientific viewpoint, these sorts of efforts as systematising of action by Reason are inadequate to understand fundamental substance of Virtues and Character, and I had advocated Empirical Virtue Ethics as a far more refined approach to Scientific understanding of Human Moral Nature.

Quite recently, I had established that Virtues do lead to Higher Life Satisfaction in individuals, proving empirically that Aristotle's Virtue Theory including Eudaimonia is correct for the Human Race. This breakthrough allows us to sidestep Kant and Bentham altogether.

Kant and Bentham were engaged in a very different sort of intellectual project than the one I am interested in. Their sort of organisation of systems of rationality is valuable for rules or organisations. I like the sort of work that John Rawls had done in *A Theory of Justice* as well.

Now what interests me is Human Nature, and paths for fulfilling individual lives and flourishing Human Civilisation on Earth. The sort of picture Kant and Bentham might have had in their mind is perhaps "Give us a chart of rules and rational coherence that will allow organisations to work to fulfill certain goals"; they seem to have been more interested in engineering rules of organisations.

That's one sort of picture. Another sort of picture is more interesting for me. I want to imagine eight billion closed boxes each containing the genetic material of all people in the world, and ask for understanding what is provided in our nature that leads to flourishing civilisations for people of these genes. I differ from not just from Kant and Bentham but also from Plato and Aristotle in holding the view that Reason is not part of Human Nature at all, and the idea that Reason is part of Human Nature is the propaganda of Aristotle that is not true about Human Beings at all.

At the same time, I want to understand how to produce a flourishing Civilisation of all Human Beings on Earth, and fulfilling lives with maximal Life Satisfaction for every single person.

For me it is actually important that every single human being born on Earth belongs here, and it is very important that they have opportunities to have a fulfilling productive meaningful life. So I have a sort of ideological conviction here, a zealous religious conviction. For Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Kant and Bentham, they held other convictions and so I will not be able to agree with them partly just

because I am holding different fundamental *ought* convictions and I am asking for answers to different questions.