

# Being Fully Human

## Part 1

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We admire tigers and wolves and falcons and dolphins, and many other creatures. They are often graceful and elegant. They are “natural”, and we know what we mean by this, even if we cannot define it exactly. They are able to survive in difficult situations, without any of the comforts and supports that we take for granted. They are invariably ecological, living in balance with each other and the planet. Apart from the relatively few who are injured, or very old, or suffering from lack of food, they are all in perfect health. Within the limitations of who they are, they behave intelligently. All this is obvious when we observe them. And it is surely significant that, when we speak of “tiger nature” or “dolphin nature”, or about the nature of any other creature, we have something admirable in mind, possibly a kind of perfection.

In contrast, when we speak about “human nature”, we usually have imperfection in mind. We seem to believe that it is human nature to be flawed, to make mistakes, to behave less than perfectly. How different it is for all other creatures! If they were flawed, if they made mistakes on the scale that we do, if they behaved as imperfectly as we do, they would soon be in serious trouble. If large numbers of them were not in perfect health, and did not act intelligently and ecologically, they would soon cease to exist. Why, then, do we make ourselves the sole exceptions? Why are so many of us not in perfect health? How many of us can truly say that we are in good shape, fit, and free from any physical, mental or emotional health problems? Why is truly wise, intelligent behaviour the exception for us, and not the rule? And why do so few of us live ecologically, in harmony with each other and planet?

It would take a long time to answer these questions fully, because there are so many factors. However, two things spring to mind. First, we have become very dependent on technology. This has probably had the unintended consequence of making us “soft”, and not as healthy and self-reliant and “natural” as we should be. If you doubt this, then just imagine doing without your car for a month or spending a week or more camping alone in the country. Once you adjusted to the change, you would almost certainly become healthier, more self-reliant, more ecological and, in some senses, more intelligent. In short, you would become more fully human. While I accept that it may not be easy to do without your car or to get away on your own, I do think that this would bring benefits that far outweigh any sense of sacrifice. A second reason that we are not being fully human is that we are obsessed with economic growth. Although it is rarely stated explicitly, this has effectively become the central purpose of most countries and most governments. Economic growth is often assumed to be a universal panacea, the eventual solution to all our problems. While it is true that some growth is needed for those people who do not even have the basics of food, water, shelter and warmth, the fact is that too many of us have too much and consume too much. The last thing we need is even more growth. The damaging effects of endless economic growth on society and the environment hardly need stating. It is putting unsustainable pressures on individuals, communities and the planet. In all kinds of ways this prevents us from being fully human.

In the next part of this article, I will suggest some ways in which we can be more fully human and live up to our potential to be the most intelligent species on this planet.

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