

“ASK MORE QUESTIONS!” RULE 3 TO LIVE BY

1. Thank you so much for being part of our Monday Night Book Study. You saw a bit too much of me last night. We hope that the summary of the reading to open the study brings to mind lots of things to discuss. This is quite a revolutionary book. “When in doubt, assume the best.” Right?
2. Wayne thought that reviewing the “Castaways” documentary from 1966 would show clearly a different view of human nature than that left by Golding in 1953. Interesting fact to me was that he described himself as being a bully in younger years and his six years in the Royal Navy would not have mellowed him. Ironically enough, I worked for an ex-Navy principal years ago and he ran our school like a well-oiled machine. If we didn’t march down the two flights of stairs to our Remembrance Day assembly, he made us return to our classrooms and repeat our walk. Same difference with singing O Canada — if we didn’t sing it “properly”, we repeated our singing. Hmmm! Maybe I understand him even better now, having worked through “Lord of the Flies.”
3. Summary of Reading for Session 49-02:

PROLOGUE

The familiar story of the Blitz of London — which is part of our current SS curriculum — tells the story of British bravery in the early part of World War II. On September 7, 1940, 348 German bombers crossed the Channel.

The infamous book “Psychology of the the Masses” by Gustave Le Bon stated, “Panic and violence erupt, and we humans reveal our true nature.” His book became the handbook for WWII leaders. British reaction, totally different from Le Bon’s prediction, was credited to “British stiff upper lip” however, when the bombers from Britain and the Allies bombed Germany in the latter part of WWII, the reaction (but for the leaders of the German forces) was the same. “Crisis brought out not the worst, but the best in people.” Consider Hurricane Fiona and NFLD.

“There was no evidence of breakdown of morale” stated the report that was returned to Lindemann, Churchill’s advisor. The findings post-war was that civilian bombing of Germany actually strengthened the German wartime economy and prolonged the war.

USA dropped three times as much firepower on Vietnam than used in WWII.
Conclusion: "The resilience shown by the British people is... not singularly British. It's universally human."

CHAPTER ONE: A NEW REALISM

What planet do we live on? where people help each other, even giving up their lives to do so **or** where everyone fends for themselves.

Bregman refers us to the sinking of the Titanic, the September 11, 2001 evacuation of the twin towers, August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina. The conclusion: "Katrina didn't see New Orleans overrun with self-interest and anarchy... (but) with courage and charity."

Continuing, Bregman tells the story of mass hysteria beginning in 1999 in Belgium with a reaction to Coca Cola that "was one of the worst financial blows in the company's 107 year history." In the case like that of Katrina, the press created the reaction. He asks, "**What is truth?**" and goes on to talk about self-fulfilling prophecies. "We are what we believe. We find what we go looking for. And, what we predict, comes to pass."

"What wolf are you feeding?" Which wolf will win — the one you feed, says the Grandpa.

Bregman asks, "Why do we imagine humans are bad? What made us start believing in the wicked nature of our kind?" ... His answer is "the News." He calls it a mental health hazard. He goes on to talk about the **mean world syndrome** that is cynical, pessimistic... His conclusion: The reality is exactly the opposite. Over the last several decades, extreme poverty, victims of war, child mortality, crime, famine, child labour, deaths in natural disasters and the number of plane crashes have all plummeted. We're living in the richest, safest, healthiest era ever." However... the decline has encouraged news casters to give the fewer incidents more coverage. Conclusion: "News is to the mind what sugar is to the body."

Bregman continues by examining the **negativity bias** as it exists in historical documents beginning with Original Sin with Augustine (354-430 a.d.) and launches into a review of recent research findings as to the nature of humans. "The time has come for a new view of human nature. It's time for a new realism. It's time for a new view of humankind."

CHAPTER TWO: THE REAL LORD OF THE FLIES

What follows in Wayne's presentation looks more closely at this fictional story that has definitely fed the wolf and defined the planet upon which we live. It is a surprise to some that the story as told by William Golding reflected more about his life than it did about human nature. I won't elaborate at this time. **Conclusion:** "As media scientist George Gerbner summed up: He who tells the stories of a culture really governs human behaviour."

PART ONE THE STATE OF NATURE

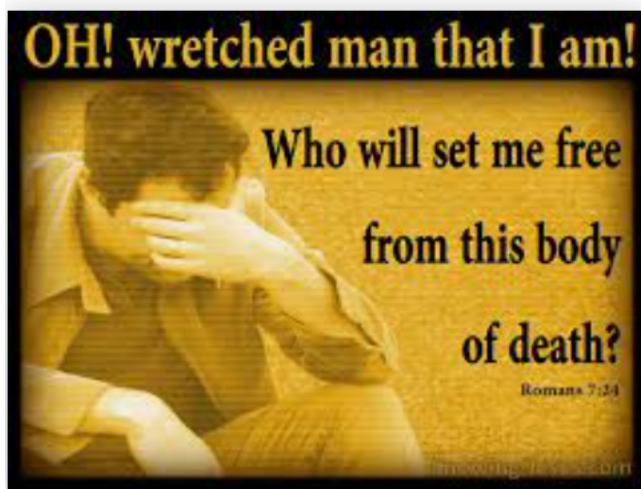
Bregman asks, "Are we as humans, in other words, more inclined to be good or evil?" And in his research, he reviews the works of philosophers of the past: Hobbes

and Rousseau. He tells us about them, and speculates on why their views are still with us. Summarizing on page 73, he says, "The whole science of economics became premised on the Hobbesian notion of human nature, which sees us as rational, self-serving individuals. Rousseau, for his part, has been enormously influential in education, due to his belief — revolutionary in the eighteenth century — that children should grow up free and unfettered.... Hobbes and Rousseau were armchair theorists... whereas today we've been gathering scientific evidence. Which philosopher was right?"

4. More on Gustave Le Bon: *Psychology of the Masses* — a video:



5. A review of Wayne's input and Group Discussion:



"Oh, wretched man that I am!" says Paul in Romans 7:24. Wayne reminded us of this scripture as he discussed the question, "How can my Faith help me deal with a book like this."

Like so many people (of our vintage) were raised with the idea of Original Sin and it was not until later on in our lives that Matthew Fox's book *Original Blessing* came into our lives.

As he discussed the PROLOGUE, he referred to the Blitz of Britain, the invasion of Ukraine, particularly

referring to the amazing human resilience that each demonstrated.

Referring the Chapter One — The New Realism — he again referred to his upbringing of being raised in a climate of Original Sin. Someone in the group mentioned that Hope is sometimes absent in the practice of Christianity. Another said that he rejected the Augustine concept (not Jesus') of Original Sin — especially after holding a new born.

Still someone else reminded us that science is based on facts whereas religion is based on feelings and beliefs. He also acknowledged that the Bible as written must be interpreted with today's condition.

The conversation continued. A pamphlet was delivered to the home of one of us that reflected the fear/ guilt/ shame and grief associated with some religious views. Eldon's quoting of a verse from *South Pacific* summed up his thinking:

You've got to be taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight
To hate all the people your relatives hate
You've got to be carefully taught
You've got to be carefully taught.

He went on to discuss his findings in the reading for last night. The subtitle of the book — A Hopeful History — is what led him to wanting to study the book. As a five year old in Britain, he lived through the Blitz of London in 1940 and has in his possession the brass trivet that stopped a bomb from probable striking of his dad and uncle. He actually spied the unexploded bomb that had lodged itself in the floor joists as he looked through the hole into his Dad's workplace. His conclusion — the spirit of the people was positive.

Ken joined the conversation about William Golding by mentioning his winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature: here is a link to his acceptance speech in 1983: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1983/golding/lecture/>

He also commented on the news coverage of Katrina in 2005 and referred to the Pulitzer Prize winning documentary Five Days at Memorial, written by Sharon Fink:



6. Joan prepared an insightful summary of our readings for tonight and shared some of her thoughts in her closing. We are really hoping that you might be moved to chose an evening and provide a review of your reading experience.

Openings and Closings:

This study we have decided that the opening will be your thoughts on the chapters we are to discuss that evening. Length could be from 1 minute to 12 15 minutes. Longer if required. Let me know.

Closings can be many variations, poem, closing thoughts on the chapter, short story, song, quote, prayer, even a video .if we get in time for Brenda to include it and it feasible.

If thoughts or ideas you want to share and it is a bit long, you could split it up into an opening and closing.

Just contact Joan at jgray1649@gmail.com or 403-478 7683

Thank you, Ken for your thoughts on this book for last week. Thank you, Brenda, for summarizing them so accurately, and your opening this evening.

Closing Thoughts:

Prologue:

The Blitz of London, Dresden, and other German cities, how evidence was ignored by the military and leaders and the bombings continued, Vietnam and even now in Kiev and other Ukrainian cities.

Biography of French psychologist Gustave Le Bon.

From Wikipedia: "Le Bon detailed three key processes that create the psychological crowd: 1)Anonymity, 2) Contagion 3) Suggestibility.

He was a very brilliant man however where leaders took these insights is very depressive.

Chapter 1 A New Realism:

Radical Idea: " That most people, deep down, are pretty decent."

Want to talk most about is my revelation when Bregman said about the news, that it is a drug. He called it a "mental health hazard."

We joke about social media, but I am not sure anymore if it is a joke.

I am beginning to look at media as a whole, not just dividing into social media or mainstream media (social media may have algorithms and bots, even nefarious foreign countries trying to bend the truth to sway the masses; mainstream media has its editors and or sponsors and agendas.)

A quote from Humankind, page 14, "there seems to be non or even a negative relationship between news and reality."

How much does media influence our thinking? Possibly, more important our feelings and opinions

This ties in with one of Wayne's fundamental questions he brought up; "What wolf am I feeding?"

So Bregman went to books for sources of knowledge rather than so much news. And there he found disillusionment on the outlook of innate human kindness I cannot unpack all that he says about books

on **science, human nature, and economics**. Not to mention the Enlightenment, the Protestant Reformation, great known historians, thinkers. theologians.

Bregman does have a point about war or writing about history and war. I have a history book on Europe that is as thick as the Bible, So far it has been much ado about war. It gets a little depressing.

On page 19, Bregman gives us three warnings in having a new view of humankind:

1. To stand up for human goodness is to stand up against the crowd, a hydra Bregman calls it.
2. To stand up for human goodness is to take a stand against the powers that be.
3. To stand for human goodness means weathering a storm of ridicule.

Chapter 2: The Real Lord of the Flies

A refreshing real-life story that counters the novel, (which I never liked either.) I am thankful to those boys, to the captain that rescued them and the story that Bregman is re sharing to a wider audience, the world. It is a "bright light."

Delving into stories such as the past as well as current, there are stories inside the stories and truth between the unwritten lines of stories. There is the human side of the every story.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "there is properly no history only biography."

It is nice to know that if I or we feel like the fool when we look at humanity as essentially good, or are thought of as a naive person, not a "realist", we just might be on the right path. And we can perhaps say politely to the naysayer , "I beg to differ."

Next Monday: October 3, 2022

Chapter 3 The Rise of Homo Puppy,

Chapter 4: Colonel Marshall and the soldiers Who Wouldn't Shoot

Chapter 5: The Curse of Civilisation.

Who would like to do the opening thoughts on the chapters? And or closing.

7. Special thanks to Michael who has sent us his notes for the Prologue, Chapter One, Chapter Two and Part One State of Nature:

NOTES: READING For Session 49-02 by Michael Grammer

PROLOGUE

xiv - xvi — I think you have to analyze the catalyzing feature, which he alludes to. When everyone, high and low alike, is subject to the same stressors, when class differentiation and hierarchical behaviour becomes pointless, it leaves space for a different kind of society. I'd be interested to know if, after the war, the noble gentry kept in close contact with the common poor. But the experience he described is affirmed by the only person I knew who was present during that time.

CHAPTER 1

2. So the first question is this—is capitalism and virtually any form of government antithetical to our humanity? Do they see a danger in being ‘too good’?

12. Distrust. Curiously, I think this view may reflect how crystallized and addicted to certainty we’ve become. And how black-and-white in view. I think we do start out playing on the field of trust but that the *first* time that trust is betrayed, it tilts the see-saw fully in the other direction and it ends up taking a monstrous effort to restore balance. I’ve been all about balance for a while and especially during the pandemic. To stay in balance has become a very slippery exercise. I think *that* is one of the things worth exploring

13 cross-posting some notes I made while reading This Is Not Propaganda

battles and wars are becoming physically bloodless, yet perhaps infinitely more harmful. Death by arms is clean. The sowing of mistrust and hatred will outlast many a regime and be used again and again. It will take root in the everyday person

So the era of realpolitik has ended. And the era of socialpolitik has begun. Physical borders mean nothing to this type of army and alliances can be formed on very different lines. Also---pairing trolling with the ability to access a person’s personal information---any reasonably trained or tech-minded 17-year old can become a harassing terrorist now. Will morals and ethics become nostalgia?

I had thought about the McCarthy witch hunts earlier in the chapter before he mentions them on page 27

One gets the chills to think that if J. Edgar Hoover lived today, he would probably be the ruler of the world. And It would be—and may still become—a low-denominator world. It is ironic that these sophisticated technological means are being used to primitivize our society, to take out the grace and beauty of it.

14 bottom, the negativity bias and caveman outlook is interesting

15 Facebook et al—all true. The interesting question is why these companies don’t use that ‘power of psychological knowledge’ to point everyone in a different and positive direction. I need to think about this some more because I’d think the capitalist model is rigorous enough to allow for positivism-motivated purchasing. I think the underlying scary question for them is ‘If we tilt positive, will we lose their attention—will we no longer be in their face at all times?’

16—scratch an altruist and watch a hypocrite bleed—super-cynical, but I’ll have to keep that one in the memory bank—more as a self-check than anything else.

19 bottom-20. In our small-group Book Study on Hope Matters, I stated the saddest thing I’ll ever have to say about my species. That today? It is *hard work* to be hopeful.

but....I am prepared to do that work

CHAPTER 2

26, stroke of luck—or ‘bashert’. The Yiddish word meaning, roughly, ‘fated to be and why did it take so long for you to figure it out?’

28. I wonder if he lives/lived somewhere around Noosa

36-38 he's right about the reality shows. I have a phrase I murmur quietly when no one can hear, about this sort of thing. Misery doesn't love company—it demands it.

I think we've inherited this from Roman times at least—the lust to spectate at gladiatorial combat. It's maybe a kind of voyeurism, a guilty pleasure. Is it escapism? If so, escape from what? This is where we enter the complex labyrinth of the human being. I definitely want to be on board with his statements that we are all basically good and decent. He's also stated that being good and decent is kinda vanilla and boring. Maybe the 'thrill of the hunt', the human desire for attention....that part calls our own attention to things and stories that—seemingly—attract attention. That's a lot of blathering to describe FOMO

39. Ok, he lives south of Brisbane. One of the few parts of Australia I didn't get to see. I couldn't agree more with the author's—and Peter's—statements here. It gives me a chance to tell a story from quite some time ago. The postscript is that it **was** a wonderful day, Ingrid and Chris are living very fulfilled lives with two terrific kids. Jason was 28 years old when he passed away of cancer---not the only friend or cousin I've lost to the disease, but the youngest:

A joyous/dread-inducing thing is happening this weekend. No, not the 50k Ride for Heart, which I am woefully out of shape for. My friend Ingrid is getting married. Joyous because she deserves it big-time and Christopher is a top-rank fella. Dread-inducing because I hope she makes it through the day. Ingrid is Jason's widower (I first met him through her while in Vancouver). I think I've told you about Jason before---oh, maybe not. Well, I mentioned before that he's one of my friends that I lost to cancer. In fact, they got married the night he passed away, which is heart-rending enough in itself. But let me tell you a bit about Jason.

I met him, as I said, while in Vancouver. Ingrid was quite shy, as I recall, in introducing me to him. But Jason Hill was a very special sort of person. Special because he made a critical assumption once he met you. He assumed you were his friend. And with Jason, that meant all the way. If there was anything he could do for you, he would. I can probably count on two hands the number of times I saw him, and yet every one lingers with razor clarity in my mind---the time I bumped into them coming out of a swing dance lesson in Toronto, the time I saw them at a club in downtown T.O., the time we spent together down at friends Dave and Deanna's going-away party in Ithaca (a soccer nut, I remember we talked about the impending Euro 2000...or maybe it was the 1998 World Cup, but we <did> talk about it) and most of all, the Friday in hospital before he passed away. I was lucky enough to be able to see him then (he had battled on and off with it for about 7 years). I remember he was hooked up to all the machinery, etc. and that he couldn't respond very much. But I remember most his grip when I shook his hand to leave. His grip was strong. That was Jason. Strong. A fighter. And he lived for Ingrid, you could see it in his eyes. I was lucky to have known him. At the funeral, I finally broke down when I helped put the casket in the car. And I turned to the first person beside me, Ingrid's brother-in-law, Steve, who I had just met the day before. And he, too, crying, said something I'll never forget. He said "Look at all the love. Look at all the love here for this man". <That> was Jason's true magic...that he could inspire that kind of love and friendship.

So I worry about my good friend and the conflicting emotions she's sure to have. And the conflicting emotions <I'm> sure to have, for that matter.

8. My input:

As requested here are the reading assignments for the rest of the study:

October 3, Session 03: Chapters 3,4,5 **Ask more questions.**

October 17, Session 04: Chapter 6, Part Two: After Auschwitz, Chapter 7 **Temper your empathy. Train your compassion.**

October 24, Session 05: Chapters 8 and 9. Part Three: Why Good People Turn Bad **Try to understand the other even if you don't get where they are coming from.**

Oct. 31, Session 06: Chapters 10, 11 and 12. **Love your own as others love their own.**

November 7, Session 07: Part Four: The New Realism, Chapters 13 and 14. **Avoid the news.**

November 14, Session 08: Chapter 15 and Part Five: Turn the Other Cheek. **Cynicism is another word for laziness — don't punch Nazis.**

November 21, Session 09: Chapters 16, 17 and 18. **Come out of the closet — don't be afraid of doing good.**

November 28, Session 10: Epilogue and Summary Evening. **Be realistic.**

9. Check out MINISTRIES/ADULTSPIRITUALDEVELOPMENT page if you wish to review many of our previous book studies on sduc.ca and see the pdf from last night.

- **Bible Study** on Thursday mornings on ZOOM at 10 a.m. Romans with a little of Proverbs will keep us busy over the next nine mornings.
- Pastoral Care Wednesday Morning 10:00 a.m. is a very welcoming place to be Wednesday morning. Eva Stanley (DLM) will join us as she can.
- Read Chapters 3,4 and 5 for next week.
- And, if you missed last night's session, find the pdf on sduc.ca / Ministries / Adult Spiritual Development or Events/ Monday Night Book Study.

Thoughtfully yours,

Brenda 403 510 1993