

## Why Things Have Come to Be This Way

*What follows is the message of Ishmael, a highly intelligent mountain gorilla, as re-told by Daniel Quinn in his 1995 novel [Ishmael](#). I offer the following solely as a gift for my friends, an accounting that fully explains why our civilization finds itself in its current existential quandary. What follows has been transcribed from the novel, but has been modified to reflect a different grammatical point of view from the one Quinn uses in the novel. That said, everything that follows is from the mind and "pen" of Daniel Quinn—I have added nothing that reflects my personal views; rather, what follows has dramatically influenced my understanding of how my culture lives. I believe everyone should think deeply about what follows precisely because Mother Culture does not want us to think about a story that explains exactly why things have come to be this way.*

The people of our culture are the captives of a story. We're going to call the people of our culture *the Takers* and the people of all other cultures *Leavers*. This is the way it's done in our own culture. We call ourselves *civilized* and all the rest *primitive*.

Mother Culture, whose voice has been in our ear since the day of each of our births, has given us an explanation of *how things came to be this way*. We've assembled this information like a mosaic: from a million bits of information presented to us in various ways by others who share the explanation. This explanation is ambient in our culture. Everyone knows it and everyone accepts it without question.

A story is a scenario interrelating man, the world, and the gods. To enact a story is to live so as to make the story a reality. A culture is a people enacting a story, and two fundamentally different stories have been enacted here during the lifetime of Man. One began to be enacted some two or three million years ago by the people we're calling *Leavers* and is still being enacted by them today, as successfully as ever. The other began to be enacted here some ten or twelve thousand years ago by the people we've agreed to call *Takers* and is apparently about to end in catastrophe.

If Mother Culture were to give an account of human history using these terms, it would go something like this: The *Leavers* were chapter one of human history—a long and uneventful chapter. Their chapter of human history ended about ten thousand years ago with the birth of agriculture in the Near East. It's true there are still *Leavers* living in the world, but these are anachronisms, fossils. The reality is quite different from this. The *Leavers* are *not* chapter one of a story in which the *Takers* are chapter two. The *Leavers*

and Takers are enacting two separate stories, based on entirely different and contradictory premises.

What have people been told that keeps them from becoming excited, that keeps them relatively calm when they view the catastrophic damage they're inflicting on this planet? We've been given an explanation of *how things came to be this way*, and this stills our alarm.

It pacifies us. We put our shoulders to the wheel during the day, stupefy ourselves with drugs or television at night, and try not to think too searchingly about the world we're leaving our children to cope with. It's a single, perfectly unified story. We just have to think mythologically—any story that explains the meaning of the world, the intentions of the gods, and the destiny of man is bound to be mythological, and the beginning of the story is our own culture's creation myth.

It all started a long time ago, ten or fifteen billion years ago. About six or seven billion years ago, our own solar system was born. Life appeared in the chemical broth of our ancient oceans about three and a half or four billion years ago. Bacteria, microorganisms evolved into higher forms, more complex forms, which evolved into still more complex forms. Life gradually spread to the land; amphibians moved inland and evolved into reptiles. The reptiles evolved into mammals, which were small critters in small niches—under bushes and in the trees. From the critters in the trees came the primates. Maybe ten or fifteen million years ago, one branch of the primates left the trees, and species after species, finally man appeared about three million years ago. This creation story is ambient in our culture. Children assemble it from many media, including science textbooks. The story is full of facts, but their arrangement is purely mythological.

Here's another story that takes place half a billion years ago. Nothing at all stirred on the land except for the wind and the dust and an anthropologist because what sort of world would it be without an anthropologist? One day she saw what seemed to be a living creature in the shallows off shore, just sort of a squishy blob bobbing in the waves. She greeted the creature politely, explained that she was a student of life-styles and customs, and told the creature she wanted to get the creature's creation myth on tape.

The creature responded, "We certainly have an account of creation, but it's definitely not a myth! We're a strictly rational people who accept nothing that is not based on observation, logic, and the scientific method. The universe was born a long, long time ago, perhaps ten or fifteen billion years ago. Our own solar system—this star, this planet and all the others—seem to have come into being some two or three billion years ago. For a long time, nothing whatever lived here. But then, after a billion years or so, life appeared. For

many millions of centuries, the life of the world was merely microorganisms floating helplessly in a chemical broth, but little by little, more complex forms appeared: single-celled creatures, slimes, algae, polyps, and so on. But finally, *jellyfish appeared!*"

In other words, according to this creation story, the whole ten or fifteen billion years of creation were leading up to jellyfish. Why doesn't our culture's creation myth end with the jellyfish? Because there was more to come beyond jellyfish, but our account of creation ends, "and finally man appeared," meaning that there was no more to come, meaning that creation had come to an end. Everyone in our culture knows this. The pinnacle has been reached in man. Man is the climax of the whole cosmic drama of creation. Its objective has been reached. The religions of our culture aren't reticent about it. Man is the end product of creation. Man is the creature for whom all the rest was made: this world, this solar system, this galaxy, the universe itself. Everyone in your culture knows that the world wasn't created for jellyfish or salmon or iguanas or gorillas. It was created for man. Is this mythology? Did the entire cosmic process of creation come to an end three million years ago, right here on this little planet, with the appearance of man? Did evolution come to a screeching halt just because man had arrived? Since the entire universe was made so that man could be made, man must be a creature of enormous importance to the gods. But this part of the story gives no hint of their intentions toward him. They must have some special destiny in mind for him, but that's not revealed here.

Every story is based on a premise, is the working out of a premise. The story being enacted in the world by the Takers also has a premise, and the story the Leavers have enacted in the world has an entirely different premise. Everyone in our culture knows the premise of our story: *The world was made for man*. The people of our culture made it a premise; they asked, "What if the world was made for us? If the world was made for us, then what?" If the world was made for us, then it *belongs* to us, and we can do what we damn well please with it. That's what's been happening here for the past ten thousand years: we've been doing what we damn well please with the world, and of course, we mean to go right on doing what we damn well please with it, *because the whole damn thing belongs to us!*

This story provides us with an explanation of how things came to be this way—it's sort of a sneaky way of blaming everything on the gods. The world is a human life-support system, a machine designed to produce and sustain human life. To our culture, the destiny of man is not to live like a lion or a wombat, and if this is so, what is the destiny of man?

Creation, according to our mythology, was complete only when man appeared. Why did the world and the universe need man? Imagine the world without man...there's a *jungle* down

there. "Nature, red in tooth and claw...dragons of the prime that tare each other in their slime." But in our mythology, the gods did not intend to leave the world a jungle. Without man, the world was unfinished, was just nature, red in tooth and claw. The world was in chaos, in a state of primeval anarchy. It needed someone to come in and straighten it out, someone to put it in order. What sort of person takes anarchy in hand and puts it in order? The world needed a ruler. It needed man. This makes clearer what our story is all about: *The world was made for man, and man was made to rule it.* This premise is mythology of which no trace is to be found in our culture.

It was only about ten thousand years ago that Man finally realized that his place was not in the slime. He had to lift himself out of the slime and take this place in hand and straighten it out, but the world didn't meekly submit to human rule. The world defied him. What Man built up, the wind and rain tore down. The fields he cleared for his crops and his villages, the jungle fought to reclaim. The world would not meekly submit to Man's rule, so he had to conquer it.

We hear this fifty times a day. We turn on the radio or the television and hear it every hour. Man is conquering the deserts, Man is conquering the oceans, Man is conquering the atom, Man is conquering the elements, Man is conquering outer space. This is the ambient story in our culture. It hums in our ears so constantly that no one pays the slightest bit of attention to it. Of course Man is conquering space and the atom and the deserts and the oceans and the elements. According to our mythology, this is what we were born to do.

And how does this part of our mythology contribute to our explanation of how things came to be this way? Things wouldn't be the way they are if the gods had meant Man to live like a wombat or a lion. Man's destiny was to conquer and rule the world, so things came to be the way they are as a direct result of Man fulfilling his destiny. As the Takers see it, all this is simply the price of becoming human. It wasn't possible to become fully human living beside the dragons in the slime. In order to become fully human, Man had to pull himself out of the slime. And the way things came to be is the result. As the Takers see it, the gods gave Man the same choice they gave Achilles: a brief life of glory or a long, uneventful life in obscurity, and the Takers chose a brief life of glory.

The price we've paid is not the price of becoming human. It's the price of enacting a story that casts Mankind as the enemy of the world.

How does the story end? Man's destiny was to conquer and rule the world, and this is what Man has done—almost. Mankind hasn't quite made it, and it looks as though this may be Man's undoing. The problem is that Man's conquest of the world has itself devastated the world.

And in spite of all the mastery we've attained, we don't have enough mastery to *stop* devastating the world—or to repair the devastation we've already wrought.

Only one thing can save us. We have to *increase* our mastery of the world. All this damage has come about through our conquest of the world, but we have to *go on* conquering it until our rule is *absolute*. Carrying this forward is either going to destroy the world or turn it into a paradise—into the paradise it was meant to be under human rule. A hundred years ago—or even fifty years ago—the idea that Man's conquest of the world could be anything but beneficial would have been unthinkable to us.

Among the people of our culture, it was assumed that the whole of human history was *our* history, so when the people of our culture concluded that there's something fundamentally wrong with humans, we were looking at the evidence of our own history. We were looking at a half of one percent of the evidence, taken from a single culture. Not a reasonable sample on which to base such a sweeping conclusion.

There's nothing fundamentally wrong with people. Given a story to enact that puts us in accord with the world, we will live in accord with the world. But given a story to enact that puts us at odds with the world, as ours does, we will live at odds with the world. Given a story to enact in which we are the lords of the world, we will *act* like lords of the world, and given a story to enact in which the world is a foe to be conquered, we will conquer it like a foe, and one day, inevitably, our foe will lie bleeding to death at our feet, as the world is now.

One of the most striking features of Taker culture is its passionate and unwavering dependence on prophets, people like Moses, Gautama Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Mohammed. There is nothing like this among the Leavers—unless it occurs as a response to some devastating contact with Taker culture, as in the case of the Ghost Dance. There is no tradition whatever in Leaver culture of prophets rising up to straighten out their lives and give them a new set of laws or principles to live by. What makes prophets so important to the Takers?

Prophets tell Takers how we ought to live because otherwise we wouldn't know. Questions about how people ought to live always end up becoming religious questions among the Takers and always end up being arguments among the prophets. Why wouldn't we know how to live without our prophets?

We can argue about it for a thousand years, but there's never going to be an argument powerful enough to end the argument, because every argument has a counterargument. So, it's impossible to know what we should do. That's why we need the prophet—the prophet

knows—but why don't we know? We know how to split atoms, how to send explorers to the moon, how to splice genes, but we don't know how people ought to live.

Mother Culture says it's possible to have certain knowledge about things like atoms and space travel and genes, but there's no such thing as certain knowledge about how people should live. It's just not available. In other words, the best we can do is to consult the inside of our heads. We find that not a single one of us has ever wondered whether any such knowledge is even out there to be obtained.

We now know two highly important things about people according to Taker mythology: one, there's something fundamentally wrong with us, and two, we have no certain knowledge about how we ought to live—and never will have any. If we knew how to live, we'd be able to handle what was wrong with human nature; the flaw in Man could be controlled. If we knew how we ought to live, we wouldn't be forever screwing up the world. Perhaps the flaw in Man is exactly this: Man doesn't know how he ought to live.

We now have in place all the major elements of our culture's explanation of *how things came to be this way*. The world was given to Man to turn into a paradise, but he's always screwed it up because Man is fundamentally flawed. Man might be able to do something about this if he knew how he ought to live, but he doesn't—and he never will because, according to Mother Culture, no knowledge about that is obtainable. So, however hard man might labor to turn the world into a paradise, he's probably just going to go on screwing it up. It's a sorry story of hopelessness and futility, a story in which there is literally *nothing to be done*—here we are, rushing headlong toward catastrophe, and all we can do is watch it come.

With nothing but this wretched story to enact, it's no wonder so many of us spend our lives stoned on drugs or booze or television. It's no wonder so many of us go mad or become suicidal. There is another story in which to be, but the Takers are doing their level best to destroy that along with everything else.

It's not uncommon for only tourists to notice local landmarks. For all practical purposes, these landmarks are invisible to the natives, simply because they're always there in plain sight. We've been wandering around our cultural homeland looking at the landmarks we never see because we take them for granted and don't even notice them. One of our most impressive monuments is the axiom that there is no way to obtain any certain knowledge about how people ought to live. Mother Culture offers this for acceptance on its own merits, without proof, since it is inherently unprovable. According to our maps, the world of thought is coterminous with our culture. It ends at the border of our culture, and if we venture beyond that border, we simply fall off the edge of the world; however, we should *reject* the

axiom that there is a wall at the boundary of thought in our culture that says knowledge about how people to live is unobtainable. *We don't need prophets to tell us how to live; we can find out for ourselves by consulting what's actually there.*

According to the Takers, all sorts of useful information can be found in the universe, but none of it pertains to how people should live, i.e. there's no way of studying the universe to acquire the most basic and needful knowledge of all: the knowledge of how we ought to live. A century ago, the would-be aeronauts of the world were in exactly the same condition with regard to learning how to fly. It was far from certain that the knowledge these would-be aeronauts were looking for existed at all. There wasn't a single piece of knowledge about flying that could be considered certain—the early aeronauts didn't know that there were laws—statements that describe what always happens when certain conditions are met.

The people of our culture are in the same condition when it comes to learning how they ought to live. They have to proceed by trial and error because they don't know the relevant laws—and don't even know that there *are* laws. Obviously, there are made-up laws, like the laws against drug use, but these can be changed by a vote. You can't change the laws of aerodynamics by a vote, and there are no laws like that about how people should live—according to Mother Culture's teachings.

The law of gravity was derived by observing the behavior of matter, and if there is a law pertaining to life, it will be found in observing human behavior. Man is not alone on this planet. He is part of a community, upon which Man depends absolutely. It is plausible that the law for which we're looking could be observed in this community. Mother Culture teaches that if there were such a law, *it wouldn't pertain to us because we're so far above all the rest of that community*; however, are there any other natural laws from which Man is exempt? No, which is a contradiction to what Mother Culture teaches about a law that governs behavior in the community of life in general. As to relevance of natural laws, the laws of aerodynamics became relevant to Man when he wanted to fly. Since we're on the brink of extinction and want to live a while longer, the laws governing life might conceivably become relevant.

The law for which we're looking is not about civilizations, but it applies to civilizations in the same way that it applies to flocks of birds and herds of deer. It applies to all species without distinction. This is one reason why the law has remained undiscovered in our culture—according to Mother Culture, the Takers are a biological exception.

The gods have played three dirty tricks on the Takers. First, the gods didn't put the world where the Takers thought it belonged—in the center of the universe. Second, since man was the climax of creation, the creature for whom all the rest was made, they would have had the decency to produce him in a manner suited to his dignity and importance—in a

separate, special act of creation instead of arranging for him to evolve. Third, though the Takers don't know it yet, the gods did not exempt man from the law that governs the lives of grubs and ticks and shrimps and rabbits and mollusks and lions and jellyfish.

Every law has effects, or it wouldn't be discoverable as a law. The effects of the law we're looking for are very simple. Species that live in compliance with the law live forever—environmental conditions permitting. This isn't the law's only effect. Those species that do *not* live in compliance with the law become extinct. The law we're looking for is like the law of gravity: there is no escaping it, but there is a way of achieving the equivalent of flight—it is possible to build a civilization that flies. When the Takers began trying to achieve powered flight, they didn't begin with an understanding of the laws of aerodynamics—they just built contraptions, pushed them off the sides of cliffs, and hoped for the best. Let's follow one of those early trials in detail. This trial is being made in one of those wonderful pedal-driven contraptions with flapping wings, based on a mistaken understanding of avian flight.

As the flight begins, all is well. Our would-be airman is pedaling away, experiencing the freedom of the air. What he doesn't realize, however, is that this craft is aerodynamically incapable of flight because it isn't in compliance with the laws that make flight possible. He's not in flight; he's in free fall. Our airman chose a very high cliff from which to launch and his disillusionment is a long way off in time and space; however, he eventually realizes he doesn't seem to be maintaining his altitude. He doesn't worry about this because up until that moment his flight has been a complete success—he just needs to pedal a little harder. But when he looks down again, he sees the ground rushing up toward him in an alarming way. He's disturbed but far from desperate because, he thinks, my craft has brought me this far in safety, I just have to keep going. He starts pedaling with all his might, which of course does him no good at all, because his craft is not in accord with the laws of aerodynamics.

Ten thousand years ago, the people of our culture embarked on a similar flight: a civilizational flight. Their craft wasn't designed according to any theory at all. Like our imaginary airman, they were totally unaware that there is a law that must be complied with in order to achieve civilizational flight. At first, all was well. In fact, all was terrific. The Takers were pedaling away. They were experiencing the freedom of the air, freedom from restraints that bind and limit the rest of the biological community. And with that freedom came marvels. The Takers couldn't know, couldn't even have guessed that, like our hapless airman, they were in the air but not in flight. They were in free fall because their craft was simply not in compliance with the law that makes flight possible. But their disillusionment is far away in the future, and so they're pedaling away and having a wonderful time.

During the course of their fall, the Takers see the remains of craft very like their own—not destroyed, merely abandoned by the Maya, the Hohokan, and the Anasazi. Why, they wonder, are these craft on the ground instead of in the air? Why would any people prefer to be earthbound when they could have the freedom of the air? The Takers are not about to abandon *their* craft, but a law is catching up with them. We don't even know such a law exists, but this ignorance protects us from its effects. This is a law as unforgiving as the law of gravity, and it's catching up to us in exactly the same way the law of gravity caught up to our airman: *at an accelerating rate!*

Some nineteenth-century thinkers like Robert Wallace and Thomas Malthus did some figuring and said, "if we go on this way, we're going to be in big trouble in the not-too-distant future." The other Takers shrug off their predictions—we'll just have to pedal a little harder. But oddly enough, the harder and more efficiently we pedal, the worse conditions become. Peter Farb calls it a paradox: "the intensification of production to feed an increased population leads to a still greater increase in population." "Never mind," the Takers said. "We'll just have to put some people pedaling away on a reliable method of birth control." But such simple answers aren't enough to reassure the people of our culture nowadays. Basic, irreplaceable resources are being devoured every year. Whole species are disappearing as a result of our encroachment.

Optimists say we must have faith in our craft. After all, it has brought us this far in safety. What's ahead isn't doom, it's just a little speed bump that we can clear if we all just pedal a little harder. But our craft isn't going to save us. Quite the contrary, it's our craft that's carrying us toward catastrophe. Six (now seven) billion of us pedaling away can't make it fly. It's been in free fall from the beginning, and that fall is about to end.

Here is a puzzle. You're in a faraway land and find people there. They're friendly, cheerful, healthy, prosperous, vigorous, peaceable, and well educated. Things have been this way for as long as anyone can remember. You sample their food at dinner and discover it's B meat. Eventually you piece together the whole ghastly scheme. The A's are eaten by the B's, and the B's are eaten by the C's, and the C's in turn are eaten by the A's. There is no hierarchy among these food classes. It's all perfectly dreadful to you, and you ask them how they can stand to live in this lawless way. And they reply, "We have a law, and we all follow it invariably. This law is the foundation of our success as a people and has been so from the beginning." We can determine this law by observing them over a long period of time, observing not only what they did, but what they *didn't* do—what they *never* did—that makes this society work.

The community of life on this planet has worked well for three billion years, but the Takers draw back in horror from this community, thinking it to be a place of lawless chaos and savage, relentless competition, where every creature goes in terror of its life. But people who actually live in this community, the Leavers, don't find it to be so, and the Leavers will fight to the death rather than be separated from it.

Any naturalist will relate that species are not in any sense at war with one another. The gazelle and the lion are not in any sense at war. The gazelle and the lion are only enemies in the minds of the Takers. The lion that comes across a herd of gazelles doesn't massacre them as an enemy would. It kills one, not to satisfy its hatred of gazelles but to satisfy its hunger, and once the lion has made its kill, the gazelles are perfectly content to go on grazing with the lion in their midst. This happens because there is a law that is followed invariably within the community, and without this law the community would indeed be in chaos. It is the peace-keeping law, the law that keeps the community from turning into the howling chaos the Takers imagine it to be. It's the law that fosters life for all.

About ten thousand years ago, one branch of the family of *Homo sapiens sapiens* said, "Man is exempt from this law. The gods never meant man to be bound by it." And so they built a civilization that flouts the law at every point, and within five hundred generations, the Takers have brought the entire living community of the world to the point of death, and their explanation of this is that there is something fundamentally wrong with human nature itself.

When the Takers blundered into North America, the Leavers here were searching for an answer to this question: Is there a way to achieve settlement that is in accord with the law that we've been following since the beginning of Man's time on earth? They were patient and were willing to take however long it took—ten thousand, fifty thousand years—to find the answer to the question. The Takers had no patience because they were operating under the premise that they were exempt from the peacekeeping law that governed the community of life.

There are three things the Takers do that are never done in the rest of the community. First, they exterminate their competitors, which is something that never happens in the wild. Next, the Takers systematically destroy their competitors' food to make room for their own, and then, the Takers deny their competitors access to all food. In the wild, the rule is: you may deny your competitors access to what you're eating, but you may not deny them access to food in general.

The peacekeeping law defines the limits of competition in the community of life—you may compete but you may not wage war. It promotes order. The law also promotes diversity,

which is important because a community without diversity is ecologically fragile. Any change at all in existing conditions would cause the whole thing to collapse. Diversity is a survival factor for the community itself, and diversity is exactly what's under attack. Every day dozens of species disappear as a direct result of the way the Takers compete outside the law. The Takers are destroying the living community of the world because we are, in a very literal and deliberate way, at war with it; unfortunately, the community of life would be destroyed if all species exempted themselves from the rules of competition laid down by the peacekeeping law.

In the natural community, whenever a population's food supply increases, that population increases. As that population increases, its food supply decreases, and as its food supply decreases, that population decreases. This interaction between food populations and feeder populations is what keeps everything in balance. The Takers don't accept this balance. After we kill off our competitors for our game, our population grows until the game begins to get scarce. There are no more competitors to kill off, so we have to increase the game population, but our game has competitors as well—competitors for the grasses. These are our competitors once removed. Kill them off, and there'll be more grass for our game. Once we've killed off our direct competitors and our competitors once removed, we kill off our competitors twice removed—the plants that compete with the grasses for space and sunlight. This all is considered holy work by farmers and ranchers—kill off everything we can't eat, kill off anything that eats what we eat, kill off anything that doesn't feed what we eat.

The holy work in Taker culture is this: the more competitors we destroy, the more humans we can bring into the world, and that makes it just about the holiest work there is. Once we exempt Man from the *law of limited competition*, everything in the world except our food and the food of our food becomes an enemy to be exterminated. One species exempting itself from this law has the same ultimate effect as all species exempting themselves. You end up with a community in which diversity is progressively destroyed in order to support the expansion of a single species, but as we know, Mother Culture teaches that such laws do not apply to Man.

Is agriculture contrary to the law of limited competition? It is if the only definition of agriculture is the Taker definition. Do we want to grow to the point where we can take over the world and put every square foot of it under cultivation and force everyone alive to be an agriculturalist? That's what the Takers have been doing and are still doing. That's what our agricultural system is designed to support: not just settlement but growth, *unlimited* growth. Settlement is a biological adaptation practiced to some degree by every species, including the human. And every adaptation supports itself in competition with the

adaptations around it. If brief, human settlement isn't *against* the law of limited competition, it's *subject* to the laws of competition.

Any species that exempts itself from the rules of competition ends up destroying the community in order to support its own expansion. This isn't something restricted to the human race; the same thing would happen with any species strong enough to bring it off. Given an expanding food supply, any population will expand, but Mother Culture disagrees—she says it's within our power to increase food production without increasing our population. The point of increasing food production is to feed the starving, and as we feed them, we want to extract a promise that those starving won't reproduce, but this never happens. They will reproduce without fail. Global population control is something that is going to happen in the future—it could happen, but not as long as we're enacting the Taker story, and as long as we enact the story, we will go on answering famine with increased food production. Mother Culture talks out of both sides of her mouth. When we say to her *population explosion*, she replies *global population control*, but when we say *famine* to her, she replies *increased food production*. But as it happens, increased food production is an annual event and global population control is an event that never happens at all; nonetheless, it's hard to let people starve—which is precisely what someone says who imagines that he is the world's divinely appointed ruler.

Every increase in food production is answered by an increase in population somewhere. In other words, someone is consuming Nebraska's surpluses, and if they weren't, Nebraska's farmers would stop producing those surpluses. First World farmers are fueling the Third World population explosion.

The law of limited competition is inviolable. Any species that exempts itself from the law will end by destroying the community to support its own expansion. This is a piece of certain knowledge about how people ought to live. The law is beyond argument. It's there, plainly in place in the community of life. What the Takers will deny is that it applies to Mankind. Mother Culture will never accept the fact that Man is not exempt from the peacekeeping law of the community of life. To accept that would finish her off, but Mother Culture must be finished off if we're going to survive. Once we stop listening to her, she ceases to exist. If we refuse to live under the law, we cease to exist. If we defy the law, we automatically eliminate ourselves.

There are actually three laws within one:

- No one species shall make the life of the world its own.

- The world was not made for any one species.
- The world does not need a ruler because the rule of natural law is sufficient.

The Takers cling with fanatical tenacity to the specialness of Man. We want desperately to perceive a vast gulf between Man and the rest of creation. This mythology of human superiority justifies their doing whatever they please with the world, just the way Hitler's mythology of Aryan superiority justified his doing whatever he pleased with Europe. But in the end this mythology is not deeply satisfying. We are a profoundly lonely people. The world for us is enemy territory, and we live in it like an army of occupation, alienated and isolated by our extraordinary specialness.

Among the Leavers, crime, mental illness, suicide, and drug addiction are great rarities. Mother Culture says it's because the Leavers are just too primitive to have these things, but remember that the Leavers, too, are enacting a story. The Bushmen of Africa, the Alawa of Australia, the Kreen-Akrore of Brazil, and the Navajo of the United States are all enacting one basic story. It isn't the tale you tell that counts, it's the way you actually live. The story the Takers have been enacting is fundamentally unhealthy and unsatisfying. It's a megalomaniac's fantasy and enacting it has given the Takers a culture riddled with greed, cruelty, mental illness, crime and drug addiction.

The story the Leavers have been enacting here for the past three million years isn't a story of conquest and rule. Enacting it gives them lives that are satisfying and meaningful to them simply because they're enacting a story that works well for people.

The Agricultural Revolution that began around twelve thousand years ago has never ended and continues to spread. It remains the foundation of our vast civilization today in exactly the same way that it was the foundation of the very first farming village. It's why we tell our children the story about the meaning of the world, about divine interventions in the world, and about how the destiny of man is of such profound importance to the people of our culture. It's the manifesto of the revolution on which our culture is based. It's the repository of all our revolutionary doctrine and the definitive expression of our revolutionary spirit. It explains why the revolution was necessary and why it must be carried forward at any cost whatever.

A few thousand years ago, an event of exquisite irony occurred within the Taker culture: the Takers adopted a story as their own that had originated among the Leavers many centuries before. The irony is that it was a story that had been told among Leavers about the origins of the Takers and about the special knowledge one must have if you're going to

rule the world. The Takers imagine they possess this knowledge, of course, and they're very, very proud of it. This is the most fundamental knowledge of all, and it's absolutely indispensable to those who would rule the world. When the Takers go among the Leavers, they discover that the Leavers do not have this knowledge. The only others who would have this knowledge, besides the Takers, are the gods.

At first, the gods bickered among themselves about the garden they had created. They groaned that they had created a place of terror, that all who lived in it hated them as tyrants and criminals, and that was appropriate because by action or inaction, the gods sent the inhabitants of the garden good one day and evil the next because the gods did not know what they should do. Eventually, one of the gods remembered that they had created a tree whose fruit is the knowledge of good and evil. The gods found the tree, ate the fruit, and their eyes were opened. They knew that they finally had the knowledge they needed to tend the garden without becoming criminals and earning the curses of all who lived in the garden. They had acquired the proper knowledge of the gods: *the knowledge of who shall live and who shall die.*

When the gods saw that Adam was awakening, they discussed what span of life and destiny they should give him. They considered making the quest for the Tree of Life the occupation of Adam's adolescence. In this way, he'll discover for himself how he may have life for the lifetime of this planet; however, they worried that after a few thousand years of searching, he might despair of finding the Tree of Life and would be tempted to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, even though this tree could only nourish the gods. They knew the danger was not that Adam would acquire this knowledge (he couldn't); the danger was that Adam might imagine that he'd gained it. He might say, I have eaten at the gods' own tree of knowledge and know as well how to rule the world. He might believe he knew how to rule the world. Because they knew this could be a problem, they forbid Adam from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil because they knew on the day he ate of that tree, he would certainly die.

The Takers have never been able to understand why the knowledge of good and evil should be forbidden to Man because to them, this is the very best knowledge of all. It is the knowledge that rulers must have because everything they do is good for some but evil for others. Twelve thousand years ago, the people of our culture took into their own hands the power of life and death over the world, and on the day they did so, their doom was assured.

We can tell that the Taker story of creation originated with the Leavers because if it had been written from the Taker point of view, the knowledge of good and evil would not

have been forbidden to Adam, it would have been *thrust* upon him. If the Takers had authored the story, eating the fruit of the forbidden tree wouldn't be called the Fall; it would have been called the Ascent. Takers will never give up their tyranny of the world because they've always believed that what they were doing was *right*, which is demonstrated by the Taker practice of forcing everyone in the world to do what *they* do, to live the way *they* live. The Leavers were never obsessed by the delusion that what they were doing was *right*. They just know they do what they do because it's the way they *prefer*.

It would be hard as hell for the Takers to give up their way of living because it would mean that they'd been wrong, that they'd never known how to rule the world. It would mean relinquishing their pretensions to godhood.

According to the authors of the "story of Adam and Eve," one of the creation stories in the book of *Genesis*, the people living between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers had eaten at the gods' own tree of knowledge. Among the people known as the Hebrews, this was already an ancient story—and a mysterious story. The Hebrews stepped into history as Takers—and wanted nothing more than to be like their Taker neighbors.

The ancient ancestors of the Hebrews were the Semites. The land of the Fall lay within the Fertile Crescent and was surrounded by nonagriculturalists. Early Takers, the founders of your culture, were unknown, isolated, and unimportant. The Semites were not eyewitnesses to the events described in chapter three of *Genesis*, but in 4500 B.C., the Semites were eyewitness to an event in their own front yard: the expansion of the Takers.

The Semites were Leavers but were no longer hunter-gatherers. They were pastoralists, herders, and along the border between the Semites and the Hebrews, Takers were killing the Leavers, i.e. the tillers of the soil were watering their fields with the blood of Semite herders: Cain was killing Abel. This was what always happened along the borders of Taker expansion. The Leavers were being killed off so that more land could be put under cultivation—the story was authored not by the Takers but by the Leavers as a piece of Semitic war propaganda. For those who were confused as to why God accepted Abel and his offspring and rejected Cain and his offspring, it can now be understood that the Semites are using this story to tell their children, "God is on our side." If Takers read the story as written by their ancestors, it is incomprehensible. It only begins to make sense when one realizes that it originated among the *enemies* of our cultural ancestors.

Where did the Semites get the idea that the people of the Fertile Crescent had eaten at the gods' own tree of knowledge? They looked at the people they were fighting and said, "My god, how did they *get* this way?" They could tell that what was going on was wholly new. These weren't people drawing a line and baring their teeth at the Semites to make sure the

Semites knew the Takers were there. The Semites realized the Takers fully intended to kill them, to exterminate them. The Semites knew the Takers were saying that Abel has to be wiped out. This allowed the Semites to determine that the Takers were acting as if they were the gods themselves, like they had eaten from the gods' tree of knowledge, that they believed they were as wise as the gods and could send life and death wherever they pleased.

According to the Semite's story, when the gods found out what the Takers had done, the gods said, "Okay, you wretched people, that's it for you! We're not taking care of you anymore. You're out. We banish you from the garden. From now on, instead of living on our bounty, you can wrest your food from the ground by the sweat of your brows," which the Semites used to explain how the accursed tillers of the soil, the Takers, came to be hunting them down and watering their fields with Semite blood. One of the clearest indications that these two stories were not authored by our cultural ancestors is the fact that agriculture is not portrayed as a desirable choice, freely made, but rather as a curse. In the Taker culture, the adoption of agriculture is a prelude to ascent. In the Genesis stories, agriculture is the lot of the fallen. As the Semites perceived it, the Fall divided the human race of man into two—into bad guys and good guys, into tillers of the soil and herders, the former bent on murdering the latter.

How does Eve figure in all of this? Her name means *life*. Adam's temptation wasn't sex or lust or uxoriousness. Adam was tempted by *life*. In terms of population expansion, men and women have markedly different roles that are by no means equal. In the frame of mind of a nonagricultural people, population control is always a critical problem. A band of herders that consists of fifty men and one woman is in no danger of experiencing a population explosion, but a band that consists of one man and fifty women is in big trouble.

Why were the Takers to the north pushing south into Semite territory? They were increasing food production to support an expanded population. What the Semites observed in their Taker brothers to the north was that population expansion didn't matter to them. Adam and Eve had spent three million years in the garden, living on the bounty of the gods, and their growth was very modest; in the Leaver life-style this is the way it *has* to be. The Semites had no need to exercise the gods' prerogative of deciding who shall live and who shall die. But when Eve presented Adam with this knowledge, he said, "Yes, I see. With this we no longer have to depend on the bounty of the gods. With the matter of who shall live and who shall die in our own hands, we can create a bounty that will exist for us alone, and this means we can say yes to *Life* and grow without limit."

When Adam ate of the tree, he succumbed to the temptation to live without limit—so the person who offered him that fruit is named, *Life*.

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