

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Among the characters that distinguish our species is a special fascination with story telling. Stories of how all things began are present in most, if not all, cultural traditions. They are so important that in many cases they are considered sacred and even magical. Part of the reason for the importance of these stories relates to what they tell us about our own significance in the universe: what is our origin, what is the meaning of our existence, and what is the aim of all things. These questions have many answers. We do not know which answer is the best or even whether these questions are ultimately meaningful. One is tempted to conclude, being loyal to the post-modern era in which we live, that they all share a part of the truth. And indeed this may be in some sense correct.

This project started as an attempt to show students in my upper-level course on *Evolutionary Psychology*, at Texas Christian University, that the human species is a story-telling species and that one of the stories that we like the most is the one that talks about our own nature. Thus, I invited experts from four fundamental fields of inquiry, philosophy, science, religion, and art, to tell us about their view. The idea grew into a collection of papers. In the process, we lost some of the original contributors, but new ones joined.

The title, “*Nurturing Human Nature*,” comes from Seneca’s plea “*colomus humanitatem*,” a

Latin phrase that may be loosely translated as “let’s celebrate our humanity.” The opening paper develops this theme in detail. The rest of the issue could be divided into two sets, each involving three articles. The first trio includes contributions that take us into a transition area from a treatment of the philosophical life (Blake Hestir) to the role of art in our life (Mirta Toledo) and our perception of the celestial realm (Tim Hubbard). The second trio involves contributions grounded on scientific inquiry, including the developmental origin of deviant behavior (David Cross & Karyn Purvis), the way in which nature and nurture intersect in the brain (Dan Levine), and the implications of human neuroscience for our understanding of human nature (John Skoyles).

Together, these articles highlight the complexity of the issue of human nature and bring a perspective that stays away from simple reductionisms, being they social, cultural, evolutionary, or physical. It is the complexity of the task that requires our constant examination of human nature. And it is this scrutiny that nurtures our changing views of human existence.

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