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## Human Nature and Literary Meaning

### *A Theoretical Model Illustrated with a Critique of Pride and Prejudice*

#### **The Challenge to a Darwinian Literary Criticism**

The common notion of what Darwinian literary criticism could or should do is that Darwinian critics should first look into evolutionary psychology in order to identify universal, basic forms of human behavior—human universals—and that they should then examine this or that literary text in order to demonstrate that the characters in that text behave in precisely the way that evolutionary psychologists predict people will behave. The method involved in this common notion is naïve and vulnerable to obvious objections. People in reality do not simply exemplify common, universal patterns of behavior. They have individuality that is distinguished by the peculiarities of their individual temperaments, their cultural conditioning, and their individual experiences. Cultures vary widely in the ways that they organize the common elements of the human motivational and cognitive system, and even within any given culture many people deviate drastically both from the behavioral norms that characterize that culture and from the deeper underlying commonalities of human nature. Moreover, characters in literary representations are not real, living people. They are fictive fabrications that reflect the notions and beliefs and purposes of individual authors, and individual authors are themselves constrained by their larger cultural context and by the traditions and conventions of literary representation that are available to them. To treat characters as if they were actual people is to ignore the whole concept of “meaning” in literature, and to ignore meaning in literature is something like ignoring the concept of “energy” in physics or the concept of “life” in biology. It is simply to miss the point.

The deficiencies in the common notion of Darwinian literary study can easily be corrected. There is no necessity that Darwinian literary critics muddle along doing a bad job with a naïve methodology simply because they have no notion of how to do a good job. The concepts necessary for integrating Darwinian psychology and literary criticism are neither hard to understand nor difficult to use. What I propose here is to lay out a necessary minimum of

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analytic concepts—five in all—that must enter into any reasonably competent literary analysis informed by a Darwinian understanding of human nature. The basic concepts are these: (a) human nature as a structured hierarchy of motives (within which the motive of constructing imaginative representations holds a prominent place); (b) “point of view,” or the location of meaning within three distinct centers of consciousness—that of the author, the characters, and the implied or projected audience; (c) the use of human universals as a common frame of reference in relation to which authors identify their own individual identities and their own distinct structures of meaning; (d) a set of categories for analyzing individual differences in identity; and (e) the distribution of specifically literary meaning into three chief dimensions: (i) theme (conceptual content), (ii) tone (emotional coloring), and (iii) formal organization (a concept that ranges all the way from macrostructures like plot and narrative sequencing to microstructures like phrasing, word choice, and sequences of sounds).

In the course of laying out these concepts and explaining their relations, I shall also make arguments that should be of some interest to Darwinian social scientists, whether or not they care much about literature and the other arts. I shall argue that Darwinian psychology is on the verge of achieving a paradigm—that is, a consensus about the necessary minimum of conceptual elements that enter into an understanding of “human nature.” This emerging paradigm does not consist merely of a list of common basic motives or “universals.” It consists both of universals, the common human elements, and of the variations among those elements that we describe as “individual differences.” And the paradigm also includes an understanding of how the specifically human pattern of life history—birth, development, reproduction, and death—responds with flexible but integrated strategies to the wide range of physical and cultural conditions in which it is possible for people to subsist. Among Darwinian psychologists, there is still disagreement in all these areas, and the currently dominant school of Darwinian psychology, the school most readily identified as “evolutionary psychology,” has committed itself to dead ends and fallacies in its deprecation of both individual differences and domain-general intelligence. But Darwinian social science as a whole has a diverse array of intellectually independent investigators, from many convergent disciplines—paleoanthropology, life history analysis, behavioral ecology, behavioral genetics, personality theory, and the study of intelligence, among others. Given this array of investigators eager to make advances in their own fields and to integrate those fields within the larger logic of evolutionary theory, claims that are motivated by ideology and that lack both empirical support and internal consistency are not likely to survive for long. The necessary elements for a paradigm in Darwinian psychology are already virtually in place, and I am fairly confident that the energy of active research will in the near fu-

ture sweep away the obstructions that have temporarily arisen from the premature consolidation of certain orthodox doctrines.

In order to make an argument about the structure of Darwinian literary criticism, then, I shall first need to make an argument about the current condition and future prospects of Darwinian psychology. I shall sketch out what I take to be the emerging paradigm for human nature, and I shall introduce one concept—the concept of a “cognitive behavioral system”—that is relatively unfamiliar but that is, I shall argue, indispensable to the formation of an adequate paradigm both in psychology and in literary study. Most evolutionary psychologists have paid slight attention to literature and the other arts, and some have argued that the arts have no adaptive function central to human life history goals. (See Miller, 2000; Pinker, 1997b, 2002.) Invoking the logic of the emerging paradigm in Darwinian psychology, I shall argue that literature and the other arts do indeed have an adaptive function and that understanding this adaptive function is a prerequisite to understanding our specifically *human* nature. The effort to construct a paradigm for Darwinian literary criticism and the effort to construct a paradigm for the broader field of Darwinian psychology are thus interdependent. They need each other. Fortunately, they are both within reach, and by reaching the one, we shall also reach the other.

The central challenge for a specifically Darwinian form of literary criticism is to connect the highest levels in the organization of human nature with the most detailed and subtle aspects of literary meaning. Can we connect the basic life history goals—survival, growth, and reproduction—with the finest nuances of theme, tone, and style in the organization of literary meaning in specific works? The answer to this question will determine the success or failure of Darwinian literary criticism, and the answer is “yes, we can.” The elementary principles of life history analysis enter into the organization of all literary representations, and the manner in which any given author manages those principles is a defining feature in the character and quality of that author’s work. In order to give a practical illustration of these claims, in the final section of this article, I shall offer a Darwinian critical commentary on a single novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. I have selected this novel because it is one of the most familiar of all novels; it is relatively short and simple; and it is so finely realized, as an artistic construct, that it offers a good test case for the challenge of demonstrating the integral relation between life history analysis and the finest components of literary meaning.

Let me emphasize that this choice of an illustrative text is in one sense arbitrary. Any work of literature, from any period or genre, could be chosen for illustrative purposes. Darwinists have written critiques of folktales, myths, plays, poems, romance novels, realist fiction, science fiction, operas, ballets, and movies. They have written interpretive studies of, among other writers, Homer, Shakespeare, Swift, Wordsworth, Pushkin, Tchaikovsky, Walter Scott,

Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Hans Christian Andersen, Willa Cather, Walter Pater, Zamyatin, and Dr. Seuss. There is no work of literature written anywhere in the world, at any time, by any author, that is outside the scope of a Darwinian analysis. In order to be susceptible to a Darwinian analysis, an author does not have to be a Darwinian. An author can be a pagan Greek, a Christian, a Moslem, or a Zen Buddhist. He or she can be a Brazilian tribesman, a European lady, a medieval Japanese warrior, or a Tibetan monk. He or she can be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or celibate. He or she need not be average or typical, and he or she need not himself or herself embrace beliefs and attitudes that are similar to those of Darwinian psychologists or Darwinian literary critics. If Darwinism gives a true account of the human mind, and if the human mind produces all literary texts, all literary texts are susceptible to a Darwinian analysis. They are susceptible, that is, to an analysis of the constraining psychological structures that regulate the production of all imaginative artifacts.

Geneticists have often found fruit flies a convenient species for their experiments. But they do not believe or suggest that genetics applies only to fruit flies. I have written on *Pride and Prejudice* in various places, using it for various illustrative purposes. I want to be clear, then, that I do not consider *Pride and Prejudice* a particularly or specifically Darwinian text. I consider it the literary equivalent of a fruit fly. Various of my colleagues in Darwinian literary study are working on the literary equivalents of mice or nematode worms, but whatever the local subject of study, we are all contributing to the same larger field.

### The Emerging Paradigm in Darwinian Psychology

The argument I shall make for what Darwinian literary critics can and should do will turn on the questions of individual differences and “domain-general” intelligence. The two main orthodox tenets of evolutionary psychology that have so far impeded the full development of a paradigm for Darwinian psychology are the repudiation or deprecation of the significance attaching to domain-general cognitive abilities and individual differences in personality and intelligence. “Evolutionary psychology” as a distinct school—and not just as a general term covering the whole field of Darwinian psychology—gives overwhelming, preponderating weight to “human universals,” and it envisions the mind as consisting almost exclusively of “domain-specific” cognitive mechanisms, that is, “cognitive modules” that have evolved specifically for the purpose of solving adaptive problems within a Paleolithic environment. And that ancient environment is itself conceived as a set of statistically stable physical and social conditions, the “environment of evolutionary adaptedness” (EEA). The central tenets of evolutionary psychology as a distinct school, then, are these: (a) everyone has pretty much the same sort of mind and personality, not only in basic structures but in force or quality; (b) this one universal mind, the

mind that is common to all people on earth, is “designed” (= adapted) exclusively to deal with a statistically stable environment that lasted for perhaps two million years but that in good part no longer subsists; and (c) all the significant adaptive features of that mind are “cognitive modules” designed to solve adaptive problems specific to the statistical regularities of this ancient environment; domain-general intelligence is not one of these adaptive cognitive features.

This characterization of evolutionary psychology is stark, stripped of qualifications and equivocations, and it is thus far a “caricature,” but the merit of a caricature is that it brings into sharp relief the signal, defining features of a physiognomy. The oddly misshapen countenance that emerges from these three starkly defined tenets is in its main outlines a true portrait. (See Cosmides and Tooby, 1994; Pinker, 1994, 1995, 1997b, 2002; Symons, 1992; Tooby and Cosmides, 1992. Also see the textbooks by Barrett, Dunbar, and Lycett, 2002; Bridgeman, 2003; Buss, 1999; Gaulin and McBurney, 2001; Palmer and Palmer, 2002; Rossano, 2003.)

There are two reasons, I would suggest, that evolutionary psychologists have propounded this peculiarly distorted version of human cognitive evolution. The first reason is that they have been preoccupied with opposing the Standard Social Science Model (SSSM) of the mind as a blank slate or general, all-purpose computer in which all content is produced by external (social and cultural) influences (Tooby and Cosmides, “Psychological Foundation”). Domain specificity offers an alternative to domain generality. The second reason is that they have been frightened by the association of Darwinian psychology with social Darwinism, eugenics, and the exploration of individual and group differences in behavior (the field known as “behavioral genetics”), and especially differences in intelligence. The radical environmentalism or blank-slate model that dominated the social sciences in the twentieth century was itself largely motivated by the fear or rejection of social Darwinism, eugenics, and racial theory. By emphasizing universals and domain-specific mechanisms the evolutionary psychologists have sought to effect a compromise between Darwinism and the SSSM. They have reintroduced the notion of adaptive cognitive structure into psychology, but have done so without violating the ideological taboos against acknowledging the significance of individual and group differences.

The appeal of these two advantages has been so strong that it has, since the early 1990s, blinded many Darwinian psychologists to the fundamental disadvantages of the concepts that enable the compromise. The disadvantages are that this whole complex of ideas runs counter to gross and obvious features of common experience—to the vital importance both of individual differences and of general intelligence in everyday life—and that it runs counter also to the elementary logic in the theory of natural selection. In that theory, “selection” can only work on variation, that is, “individual differences.” No variation,

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no selection. No selection, no adaptation, and thus no evolution “by means of natural selection” (Darwin, 2003).

Since the late 1990s, evolutionary psychology has achieved sufficient substance and stability to provide a big market for popular expositions and for textbooks—for summary expositions of common findings. In about the same period—in just the past few years—the psychological ideas that so quickly congealed into a premature orthodoxy have been under increasing pressure from new and genuinely innovative research into the single most important event in human evolutionary history—the “cultural revolution” that took place some 60,000 to 30,000 years ago and that produced the first evidence of complex technology, complex forms of socioeconomic organization, and sophisticated symbolic and artistic activity. This whole research area is fraught with controversy, but there is enough agreement about some basic facts so that a compelling new vision of human evolution has been emerging—a vision that contrasts sharply with the orthodox tenets of evolutionary psychology. In this new vision, the most distinctive feature of the specifically human mind—the feature that distinguishes it most from that of its primate cousins—is the emergence of a flexible general intelligence that enables humans to adapt to variations within an environment that is itself complex and unstable. (See Chiappe, 2000; Chiappe and MacDonald, 2003; Crawford, 1998; Foley, 1996; Geary 1998; Geary and Huffman, 2002; Irons, 1998; MacDonald, 1990, 1995b, 1997, 1998a, 1998b; Mithen, 1996, 2001; Potts, 1998; Richerson and Boyd, 2000; D. S. Wilson, 1999, in press; E. O. Wilson, 1998.)

It is a simple fact available to common observation that humans have evolved a truly extraordinary capacity to adapt to new and different environments—and to effect these adaptations while undergoing relatively little or no actual change in their anatomical or physiological characteristics. Humans can live everywhere from polar regions to deserts to tropical rain forests; they can organize themselves socially in groups that extend from small hunter-gatherer bands to tribes, hordes, nation-states, empires, and new world orders; and they can adapt to socioeconomic ecologies that stretch from hunting and gathering to agriculture, market economies, industrial cities, and vast metropolitan regions linked digitally to a total world culture. The one crucial feature of human nature that underwrites this adaptability is domain-general intelligence, and that intelligence, along with all the distinctive features of human temperament and personal character, varies from person to person and group to group. (See Bailey, 1997, 1998; Barash, 1997; Bouchard, 1994, 1997; Buss, 1990, 1995; Eaves, Eysenck and Martin, 1989; Eysenck, 1979, 1980, 1995; Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; Jensen, 1998; MacDonald, 1990, 1995b, 1997, 1998a; Rushton, 1995; Segal, 1997, 1999; Segal and MacDonald, 1998; Seligman, 1992; D. S. Wilson, 1994; 1999.)

In the new, emerging vision of human evolution and human nature, the idea of cognitive domains has not been discarded. It has been assimilated and

integrated into the larger general structure of human cognition. Cognitive domains have their place and function; they subserve cognitive activities that track constant features of the environment. The eyesight that tracks the spatio-physical world is a prime example; and language aptitude that tracks the human physical and social environment is another. But these domain-specific aptitudes are only a part of the total human cognitive repertory. Another part is general intelligence, and general intelligence subserves the basic adaptive needs of human beings. The new vision does not fall back to the old blank-slate model. It does not assume that all human motives are simply fabricated by arbitrary cultural conventions. It identifies a distinct structure of human motives and cognitive dispositions that derives from the larger logic of inclusive fitness—the logic that regulates the adaptive structure of all life on earth. The distinct structure of human motives and cognitive dispositions is that which is appropriate to a primate species that is highly social and mildly polygynous, that displays concealed ovulation, continuous female receptivity, and postmenopausal life expectancy corresponding to a uniquely extended period of childhood development, that has extraordinary aptitudes for technology, that has developed language and the capacity for peering into the minds of its conspecifics, and that displays a unique disposition for fabricating and consuming aesthetic and imaginative artifacts. So long as we bear all this in mind, we need have no fear of falling back into the structural vacuum of the blank slate—a vacuum in which the mind evolved, the mind produced culture, and culture gave all content and structure to the mind.

In the 1990s, the most important theoretical conflict within Darwinian psychology itself was the conflict between “sociobiology” on the one side and “evolutionary psychology” on the other. In its simplest terms, this conflict turned on differing views of the human motivational system. Sociobiologists tended to regard humans as “fitness maximizers.” As Irons formulates the idea, “Human beings tend to behave in such a way as to maximize their genetic representation in future generations” (1979, p. 257). In its most extreme form, as in the arguments produced by Betzig, fitness maximization is conceived simply in numerical terms as a matter of leaving the greatest possible number of progeny. Evolutionary psychologists, in contrast, committed themselves to the view that humans do not care particularly about reproductive success. In their view, humans are not “fitness maximizers” but rather “adaptation executors” (Tooby and Cosmides, 1992, p. 54). That is, humans are motivated exclusively by “proximal” motives like the desire for sex. In the EEA, such motives operated reliably to maximize fitness but did not, supposedly, require that reproductive success be an active motive in its own right. In the modern world, the argument goes, birth control neatly severs the link between the proximal motive of sexual desire and the “ultimate” regulative principle of inclusive fitness. People are designed only to push the pleasure buttons in their proximal motives, not to worry about the ultimate evolutionary or adaptive rationale that

produced those buttons. (See Alexander, 1979, 1987, 1990; Barkow, 1990; Betzig, 1986, 1998; Chagnon, 1979; Chagnon and Irons, 1979; Irons, 1990, 1998; MacDonald, 1995a; Symons, 1989, 1992; Turke, 1990.)

In the currently orthodox version of evolutionary psychology, the idea of humans as adaptation executors has gained a decisive victory. In so far as this concept is set in contrast to the notion of counting offspring as a monolithic human motive, the victory has been legitimate, but the idea of pushing pleasure buttons is not in itself a satisfactory account of the human motivational system. We can formulate a better, more comprehensive account of the human motivational system by integrating two concepts: (a) the concept of human life history as a cycle organized around the distribution of effort between “somatic” and “reproductive” activities, and (b) the concept of “behavioral systems.”

The central categories of life history analysis are birth, growth, death, and reproduction. The organisms of all species engage in two fundamental forms of effort—the acquisition of resources (somatic effort) and the expenditure of resources in reproduction. Birth, growth, and death are somatic activities. Mating and parenting are reproductive activities. (Not all individuals of all species engage in reproductive activity, but if reproductive effort were not part of the suite of characteristics in a species, that species would become extinct within a single generation.) All the main activities in the life history of an organism are integrated and interdependent. “What an organism spends in one endeavor cannot be spent in another. Life histories, the patterns of birth, growth, and death that we see, are thus the outcome of competing costs and benefits of different activities at any point in the life cycle” (Low, 1998, p. 131). Life history analysis compares the different ways in which the logic of inclusive fitness—the maximization of reproductive success—has regulated the interplay of these large-scale principles in different species. The organization of life history traits—of size, growth rate, life span, mating behavior, number and pacing of offspring, sex ratios of offspring, and parenting strategies—enters into every aspect of a species’ characteristics: into its physiology, its anatomy, and its behavior. Life history theory can thus be regarded as the overarching theory for both a macroeconomics and a microeconomics of biology. (See Alexander, 1979, p. 25, 1987, pp. 40–41; Geary, 1998, pp. 11, 199; MacDonald, 1997, p. 328; McGuire and Troisi, 1998, pp. 58–59; Low, 1998, pp. 138–40, 2000, p. 92; Ridley, 1999, pp. 12, 127–128; Trivers 1972, pp. 168–174, 1985, pp. 311–314.)

The human species has a distinct form for the organization of its life history, and the logic of this organization enters into every facet of the human behavioral and cognitive order. Humans are highly social animals with pair-bonded, semi-monogamous mating systems and extraordinarily high levels of parental investment. They have upright posture, narrowed birth canals, and large brains. As a result, their reproductive economy necessarily involves motivational systems geared toward male-female pair-bonding, sustained family

structures, extended kinship systems, and complex social organization. Their large brains entail long development as children so that they can acquire the information and skills necessary for successful life effort. Their long childhood requires intense child-parent attachment, male-female cooperative parenting, and extended kin networks. Their large brains present them with unique adaptive opportunities, both technological and social, and also with challenges and problems other species do not face.

The idea of “behavioral systems” has been formulated as a concept in Darwinian psychiatry, and it has emerged also, implicitly, half-consciously, as an organizing principle in orthodox versions of evolutionary psychology. In *Darwinian Psychiatry*, McGuire and Troisi define behavioral systems as coordinated suites of behavior subserving specific life goals. “The term *behavior system* refers to *functionally and causally related behavior patterns and the systems responsible for them*” (1998, p. 60). McGuire and Troisi themselves identify four specific systems: survival, reproduction, kin assistance, and reciprocation—with reciprocation serving as a generalized term for social interaction beyond the kin group. In the now numerous textbooks devoted to evolutionary psychology, very similar terms typically serve as the chapter titles for the whole sequence of chapters. For instance, in the first of the textbooks (1999), after introductory chapters on the history, theory, and methodology of evolutionary psychology, Buss has this sequence of main sections: “Problems of Survival,” “Challenges of Sex and Mating,” “Challenges of Parenting and Kinship,” “Problems of Group Living.” The organization of topics in Buss’s textbook set the pattern for the subsequent textbooks, and the pattern itself tacitly underwrites the theory of behavioral systems. (Buss himself is alert to the importance of personality theory and to individual differences, and in a final section of his textbook he discusses this topic but also acknowledges that orthodox evolutionary psychologists have concentrated almost exclusively on human universals.)

By combining the idea of life history analysis with the idea of behavioral systems, we can formulate an alternative to the opposing notions of fitness maximization and adaptation execution. Despite the evidence of a few great sultans, humans are not typically motivated, in any very direct or active way, to maximize the number of their progeny. But neither are they merely puppets adequately fulfilled by the pushing of their pleasure buttons. People are neither fitness maximizers nor adaptation executors. They are highly integrated sets of behavioral systems that have been organized and directed by the logic of the human life history cycle. Human nature is organized in structured sets of behavioral systems, and these systems subserve the goals that are distributed into the basic functions of somatic and reproductive life effort. Fitness maximization is not itself an active motive, but the fundamental somatic impulses (surviving and acquiring resources, both physical and social) and the fundamental reproductive impulses (acquiring mates, having sex, producing and tending children, helping kin) are in fact direct and active motives.

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The behavioral systems identified by McGuire and Troisi and by the textbook writers—survival, mating, parenting, kin relations, and social interaction—are built into the human organism. They are mediated by innate structures in the genetically conditioned features of anatomy, physiology, hormones, and neurochemistry. All of these mediating forces manifest themselves psychologically as emotions—the “basic” emotions identified by Ekman and others as universal motivating forces in human psychology (joy, sadness, fear, anger, contempt, disgust, surprise). (See Damasio, 1994; Ekman, 2003; Ekman and Davidson, 1994; Ledoux, 1996; Lewis and Haviland, 2000; MacDonald, 1995b; Panksepp, 1998.) The main behavioral systems that subserve the largest life history goals are sensitive to the appropriate stimuli, but they are latent in all conditions of life. Male sexual desire, for example, is activated by the sight of nubile females, but even a male raised in total isolation by machines would presumably have stirrings of confused sexual interest or sensation—a sense of vague, frustrated longing, accompanied by spontaneous erections and emissions, and I think it safe to predict that the first time any such hypothetically deprived male saw a nubile female, he would have a sudden and instantaneous conviction that THAT was what he had been wanting, had he only known. A woman raised in similar isolation would presumably not think to herself, “I wish to be inseminated, grow an embryo in my uterus, and produce a child, which I shall then suckle and nurture,” but whatever her thoughts or longings might be, she would still grow breasts and undergo a menstrual cycle, and if she were inseminated by machines in her sleep, the growth and birth of a child, however terrifying to her ignorance, would have in it a certain natural, physical logic, and the effects would carry with them instinctive impulses and sensations. Language is an instinct (Bickerton, 1990; Pinker, 1994), but feral children can never gain fluency in speech. Maternity is an instinct, but female monkeys raised in isolation perform badly as mothers. Normal human development requires socialization, but socialization itself is channeled by innate dispositions. The behavior of a female raised in isolation is disorganized and dysfunctional, but it is not simply blank.

The total anatomical and hormonal organization of women is geared toward the bearing and raising of children. Even the massively conditioned women in Huxley’s *Brave New World* feel a vague longing that can be satisfied only by a full course of hormonally mediated “pregnancy substitute.” In the actual modern world, a world in which people can choose whether or not to reproduce, the overwhelming majority do choose to reproduce. Many couples who for physical reasons cannot have children go to astonishing lengths, in expense and effort, to adopt children. Evolutionary psychologists emphasizing the activation of proximal mechanisms point to the fact that not everybody wants to have children. True enough, but most people are equipped by nature with the physical and psychological attributes that are necessary to the bearing and raising of children, and the majority of people feel at some point a power-

ful need to activate those attributes and to fulfill the behavioral capacities they feel latent within them. If this were not the case, we would have a hard time explaining adoption and the nearly universal human practice of treating pet animals as surrogate children. (See Alcock, 2001, pp. 35–40.)

Childbearing and child-rearing are only an instance, though an important one. The larger principle is that in most cases people accede to the psychological force of the total set of motivational systems that have been implanted in them by the logic of human life history. More often than not, people have a compelling need to give full and integrated play to the whole suite of their behavioral systems. Exceptions and special cases abound, but it is a broad general truth about human nature that people have a need to activate the latent capacities of the behavioral systems that have shaped the largest features of their bodies and their minds. For most people, achieving satisfaction in life depends on the fulfillment of the emotional needs built into those systems.

### **The Cognitive Behavioral System**

The textbook versions of evolutionary psychology are a little uncertain about what, if anything, to make of the various specifically cognitive aspects of human nature. Language can usually be inserted somewhere in the sections on social interaction, but it is less clear where one is to locate aptitudes for tool use, cognitive biases for the acquisition of organized information about plants and animals, and the production of cultural artifacts of no apparent utility, especially if these artifacts do not push simple pleasure buttons in the way that pornography does for many people. If we combine the idea of behavioral systems with a recognition of the peculiarly human attribute of domain-general intelligence, we can solve this puzzle. The human mind is an extraordinary, complex organ. It is both highly structured and flexibly responsive to contingent inputs. It solves an immense array of adaptive problems. Some of its processes develop in predictably universal ways, as in the acquisition of language, of colors, or of botanical and zoological categories. (See Atran, 1990; Brown, 1991; Cosmides and Tooby, 1994; Geary, 1998; Pinker, 1994, 1995, 1997b, 2002; Tooby and Cosmides, 1992.) Other processes develop with the combinatorial fluidity that we designate as “creative” or “inventive,” as in the invention of new technologies and new arts, but all new inventions and discoveries work by extending and combining the elemental cognitive components that develop spontaneously and universally in human minds, as the product of an adaptive evolutionary history, and all cultural artifacts, no matter how complex or seemingly arbitrary, are constrained by the limitations of physical nature and are both prompted and constrained by an evolved human psychology. (See Barrow, 1996; Carroll, 1995; Chiappe, 2000; Chiappe and MacDonald, 2003; Darwin, 1871; Geary, 1998; Mithen, 1996; Geary and Huffman, 2002; D. S. Wilson, in press; E. O. Wilson, 1998; and in this vol., see part 1, chapter 6; part 2, chapter 1.)

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The mind is a complex and integrated feature of human nature—sufficiently complex, structured, and integrated in its operations so that it answers to the criteria for what McGuire and Troisi identify as a “behavioral system.” If we identify the mind in this way, we are adding it, as a specifically human characteristic, to the set of human behavioral systems. We identify it as having characteristic innate constraints and distinctive latent capacities elicited by appropriate releasers. The mate selection system arouses desire and fulfills it in successful coupling. The parenting system arouses concern for children and achieves fulfillment in the successful rearing of children. The social interaction system arouses desire for forming coalitions and finding a place within a status hierarchy, and achieving those goals offers pleasure and provides a sensation of satisfaction. The cognitive behavioral system arouses a need for conceptual and imaginative order, and that need fulfills itself and provides satisfaction to the mind through the formulation of concepts, the construction of religious, philosophical, or ideological beliefs, the development of scientific knowledge, and the fabrication of aesthetic and imaginative artifacts.

I have already argued that domain-general intelligence has an adaptive function; it facilitates a flexible response to a variable environment. That flexibility gives humans an advantage other animals do not have, and it presents them also with challenges and difficulties unique to the human species. Other species operate mainly by means of instinct, that is, by means of stereotyped behaviors that leave little room for conscious choice. Humans create elaborate mental models of the world and make decisions on the basis of alternative scenarios that present themselves within those models. (See E. O. Wilson, 1998; and in this vol., see part 1, chapter 7.) The materials available to the mind and imagination are vast, and the combination of those materials virtually infinite. The possibility for error, uncertainty, and confusion is an ever-present fact of human mental life. Because they have an irrepressibly active and unstable mental life, humans have a special need to fabricate mental maps or models that make sense of the world and provide behavioral directives that can take the place of instinctive behavioral patterns. For these mental maps or models to be effective in providing behavioral directives, they must be emotionally saturated, imaginatively vivid. Art and cultural artifacts like religion and ideology meet this demand. They fulfill a necessary adaptive function, that of regulating the human cognitive behavioral system. The arts provide emotionally saturated images and aesthetic constructs that produce a sense of total cognitive order and that help regulate the other behavioral systems. The arts make sense of human needs and motives. They simulate subjective experience, map out social relations, evoke sexual and social interactions, depict the intimate relations of kin, and locate the whole complex and interactive array of human behavioral systems within models of the total world order. Humans have a universal and irrepressible need to fabricate this sort of order, and satisfying that need provides a distinct form of pleasure and fulfillment. (See Boyd, 1998,

2001; Brown, 1991; Carroll, 1995; Cooke, 1999c, 2002; Dissanayake, 1995b, 2000, in press; Fromm, 2003a, 2003b; Love, 2003; Storey, 1993, 1996; Sugiyama, 2001b; E. O. Wilson, 1998.)

### A Diagram of Human Nature

In order to clarify the hierarchical motivational structure of human nature I have been describing here, I shall construct a diagram, with inclusive fitness at the top, as the ultimate regulative principle (but not as an active and direct motive). Active and direct motive begins at the next level down, with the organization of life effort into somatic and reproductive effort. Through this hierarchical structure, I am suggesting that over and above their specific goals and motives, many people have a generalized but distinct desire to acquire resources and also to achieve successful reproduction. Not all people have an active desire for reproductive success, but such a desire is nonetheless, I would argue, a characteristic of the species as a whole. Young men do not think only, "I want to buy a red convertible so I can attract that girl there and have sex with her." They also often think, "I'd like to become prosperous, and I'd like to get married and have a family." And young women do not think only, "I'm impressed by that guy with the red convertible. I want to arouse his sexual interest and attach him to me." They also think, "I'd like to find a prosperous, reliable man, marry him, have children, and raise a family." It is these latter, generalized inclinations that I am identifying as the somatic and reproductive motives in their own right.

Below the level of generalized desire to acquire resources and succeed in sexual reproduction, I shall place the various behavioral systems that subserve both those general motive dispositions. The specific subordinate systems identified here are systems dedicated to survival, technology, mating, parenting, kin relations, social relations, and cognitive activity. Between the somatic and reproductive levels on the one hand and these specific behavioral systems on the other, I shall place the term "development" to indicate that these various systems are activated and distributed according to the developmental program appropriate to the human species. (The mating and parenting systems operate only at specific times in the life history of a human organism, and social dispositions vary in the course of the life cycle.)

In a box under each behavioral system, I have placed a few motivational goals or directives characteristic of that system. Thus, under "Survival," there is a directive "avoid predators." Under "Mating," there is a directive "avoid incest." Under "Social," a directive "build coalitions," and so on.

In the interest of completeness, I include one behavioral system—that of "technology"—that is not mentioned in the accounts by McGuire and Troisi and the textbook writers. The disposition to construct stone tools is one of the most ancient hominid adaptations, and our modern technology is continuous with the construction of complex, multipart tools that constitutes one of the distinguishing features of the "human revolution" from perhaps 100,000 to

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30,000 years ago. In one of the most elaborate efforts so far to mediate between evolutionary psychology and the idea of a domain-general intelligence, Mithen (1996) identifies technology as an integrated area of cognitive activity. He calls it a cognitive domain, but the concept as he describes it is on a structural level equivalent to what I have been calling a behavioral system.

Specific cognitive modules would be activated within the relevant behavioral systems. For instance, the cognitive modules for vision—edge and motion detection, color, depth, etc.—would be activated within the technological behavioral system and the survival system. Kin-recognition modules would be activated within the kinship system. “Face recognition” modules would be activated within all interpersonal behavioral systems (mating, parenting, kin, social interaction). Modules for regulating social exchange or cheater detection would be activated in the mating system and in the social system, and so on. If, as seems likely, the brain has specific modules geared to the construction of narratives and the recognition of aesthetically pleasing verbal patterns, those would be activated within the cognitive behavioral system. (For lists of domain-specific cognitive modules, see Carey and Spelke, 1994, p. 171; Cosmides and Tooby, 1994, p. 103; Mithen, 1996; Pinker, 1994, p. 420, 1995, p. 236, 1997b, pp. 128, 315; Sperber, 1994, p. 42; Tooby and Cosmides, 1992, p. 113. For suggestions about cognitive predispositions to certain kinds of aesthetic order, see Barrow, 1995; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989; Frederick Turner, 1992; M. Turner, 1996.)

One final feature of the diagram is that the box in the diagram containing behavioral systems has a list of Ekman’s basic emotions at the bottom of the box, thus signifying that all behavioral systems are activated and mediated by emotion.

### Meaning and Point of View in Literary Representations

Literary representation is first and foremost the representation of human behavior within some surrounding world. Creating such representations is itself a fundamental motive of human nature, and human nature is the fundamental subject of the representations. The “meaning” of a representation does not reside in the represented events. Meaning resides in the *interpretation* of events. And interpretation is always, necessarily, dependent on “point of view.” “Point of view” in literary narrative is not just another technical feature in a catalog of formal literary devices. In its broadest sense, point of view is a term signifying “the locus of consciousness or experience within which any meaning takes place.” Point of view is thus the term we use to designate the primary components in the social interactions constituted in and by a literary representation. There are three components in the social interactions of a literary representation: the author, the represented characters, and the audience. (See Abrams, 1986.) The primary locus of meaning for all literary works is the mind of the author. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the author provides whatever

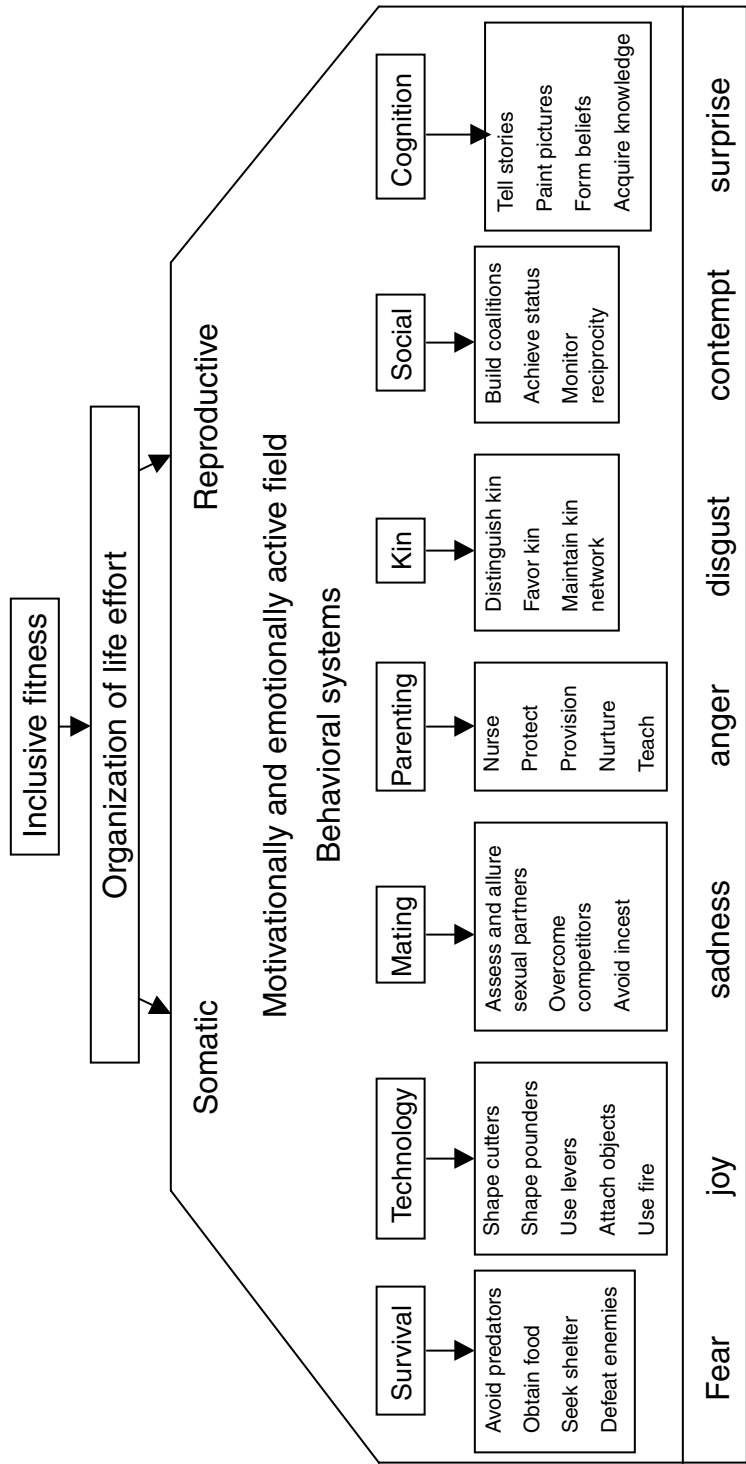


Fig. 1 A Diagram of Human Nature

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determinate meaning resides in a work, but the author also negotiates among the competing points of view within the characters in the work, and negotiates further with the point of view he or she attributes to an audience.

Authors are people talking to people about people. Most stories are about people seeking resources and reproductive success—fortune and love. But they are also about people seeking to perceive meaning in or impose meaning on the events of their own lives and the lives of every person they know. All authors seek to dominate the meaning of the story they tell, and all the characters in a story have their own version of what happens. As a rule, these versions partially overlap both with one another and with the version presented by the author, but they also often conflict. The author has final say among his or her own characters, but to control the interpretation of the story as it will be registered by the audience, the author can only persuade, manipulate, cajole, wheedle, intimidate, solicit, insult, flatter, bully, harangue, coax, shame, or otherwise appeal to or provoke the readers. (See Booth, 1996; Leaska, 1996, Sugiyama, 1996; and in this vol., see part 2, chapters 3 and 5.)

It is important to grasp the foundational significance of this set of simple axioms about point of view. These axioms provide a distinct, finite, and manageable set of analytic categories for the analysis of meaning in a literary representation. There are *three specific components* in the social interactions of a literary representation. There are *always* three components. There are *only* three components. The members of each of these three categories organize the meaning of represented events in some distinct way. One of the chief analytic procedures a critic needs to perform in assessing any literary representation is to assess the relations between the author's point of view, the point of view of the characters, and the point of view in the audience that is implied or projected by the author. At the highest possible level, the meaning of a literary representation consists in the interaction among the points of view of author, characters, and implied audience. That interaction is largely controlled by one of those three distinct sets, the author.

It might be objected that in this exposition I am thinking only of narrative, not of theatrical representation, and it might be argued that in theatrical representations there is no author but only a transparent and unmediated action taking place on stage. The absence of an author from the stage in a theatrical representation is, I think, altogether an illusion. A play sets into motion an array of forces—of human passions and motives, desires and fears. There is a mind that governs and organizes this array of forces—the mind of the author. The author's mind is the one mind that is most nearly adequate to understanding the full array of forces within the play. A leading character can sometimes approximate to the level of an author's own adequacy of comprehension—as in Hamlet's soliloquies—but it is not possible for an author to depict a character whose comprehension of the total set of forces at work in a representation exceeds the comprehension of the author. Any level of comprehension the au-

thor can depict is, by definition, within the scope of the author's own understanding.

### **Human Nature, Human Universals, Culture, and Individual Differences**

Almost all authors explicitly invoke "human nature" as their ultimate referent and the source of their authority. The term "human nature" signifies a set of elemental motives and dispositions—what MacDonald (1990) calls "evolved motive dispositions." The diagram of human nature sketched out above suggests the sorts of motives that are usually contained in the common conception of human nature—motives like self-preservation, sexual desire, jealousy, maternal love, and the desire for social status—and these substantive motives are elaborated by the ideas that enter into the folk understanding of ego psychology: the primacy of self-interest and the prevalence of self-serving delusion, manipulative deceit, vanity, and hypocrisy. Authors understand that each elemental disposition varies in quality and degree from person to person; they know, for instance, that some people are more fearful of death, more sexually passionate, more maternal, or more ambitious than their neighbors. And they understand further that each of these dispositions, variable in itself, can be combined in different ways with the other dispositions so as to produce the distinct configurations of individual identity. A woman might be both terrified of death and intensely protective of her children, but have little sexual desire and little social ambition—or be exactly the reverse, bold and fearless, coldly indifferent to her offspring, sexually ardent, and passionately determined to achieve high social rank. And yet again, she might be fairly bold, typically maternal, moderately amorous, and modestly ambitious.

Human universals or species-typical norms of behavior are merely behavioral patterns so firmly grounded in the logic of human life history that they are characteristic features of all known cultures. For instance, all cultures have marriage, rites of passage, social roles defined by age and sex, religious beliefs, public ceremonies, kin relations, sex taboos, medical practices, criminal codes, storytelling, jokes, and so on. (See Brown, 1991, 2000; and in this vol., see part 2, chapter 2.) Universals are made up of motive dispositions that combine in relatively stable and consistent ways. The same motive dispositions can also be elaborated and organized, at higher levels of cultural complexity, in ways that vary widely from culture to culture. For instance, all cultures have marriage, but some cultures are polygynous and some monogamous; some allow divorce, and some do not. All cultures have games, but not all cultures play whist or football. All cultures have language, but not all cultures are literate; not all literate cultures have produced highly developed forms of prose fiction; and not all cultures with highly developed forms of prose fiction have produced stream-of-consciousness narrative styles.

No culture can deviate from human universals (by definition), but many individual people can and do deviate from species-typical norms of behavior.

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They murder their children, commit incest, fail to develop language, or otherwise behave in anomalous or dysfunctional ways. The behavior that is depicted in literary texts does not necessarily exemplify universal or species-typical behavioral patterns, but species-typical patterns form an indispensable frame of reference for the communication of meaning in literary representations. By appealing to this substratum of common human motives, authors activate a vein of common understanding in their readers. Consider maternal care and incest. Maternal care of infants is a “universal” feature of human nature, but all cultures make some provision for population control, and in cultures that do not have access to birth control and abortion, population control necessarily involves infanticide. (See Daly and Wilson, 1988; Low, 2000; Symons, 1979.) Literary authors can nonetheless depend on readers to feel the weight and value of maternal care. This is part of the common frame of reference, not just for any particular culture but for all cultures. Medea murders her own children, and Euripides can safely anticipate that the audience will react with instinctive shock and horror to the murder. So also, incest avoidance is a human universal. Different cultures define the details of incest in different ways, but certain kinds of incest are universally prohibited. No culture permits mother-son incest, and Sophocles can safely anticipate that his audience will instinctively sympathize with the revulsion of feeling that leads Oedipus to gouge out his own eyes. (See Daly and Wilson, 1990; Low, 2000; Sugiyama, 2001c.)

In the same way that each author has a unique fingerprint, he or she has also some unique configuration of identity—some individual variation of personality and experiential conditioning—and that identity defines itself in relation both to the cultural norms within which the author lives and also to the common elements of human nature. Individual identity is the basis for an author’s point of view, and more often than not an author presents his or her own distinct point of view as a normative standard—as an ideal against which to judge other identities, other points of view. By appealing to “human nature,” literary authors can ground their own values within what they take to be elemental realities. Sometimes, but not always, they contrast these elemental realities with the conventions of their own culture, suggesting that the conventions are shallow, perverse, artificial, unhealthy, or otherwise undesirable. (See Carroll, 1995; Jobling, 2001a, 2001b; Nesse, 1995; Nordlund, 2002; Sugiyama, *in press*; and in this vol., see part 2, chapter 3.)

Some distinctions of individual difference are obvious and available to untutored common sense—for instance, distinctions of age, sex, health, attractiveness, social affiliation, social status, vocational occupation, intelligence, and honesty. (The now pat triad of class, gender, and race—the standard topics of politicized literary criticism—is an arbitrary subset of these useful categories.) Such terms, available to common sense, are also necessary to a life history analysis of the human species. The common understanding operates as an intuitive or “folk” version of life history analysis. In addition to the distinc-

tions from this range of analysis, all critics have access to the common vocabulary for assessing temperament and personality. Differences in personality are part of the adaptive environment among which individual humans make the choices that enable them to succeed in meeting the needs of their evolved motive dispositions. In traditional, belle-lettristic or impressionistic literary criticism, differences in the quality of critical perceptions depend in good part on the acuity any given critic displays in accessing this common vocabulary. Modern personality theory has now distilled, codified, and elaborated the common vocabulary of temperament and personality, and it is very much in a literary critic's interest to become familiar with this body of empirical research. At present, the best available theory is that of the five-factor system (extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and imaginative and intellectual "openness"). Since this system was drawn, in the first place, from the common lexicon, it is not surprising that its categories correlate well, as a first approximation, to the depiction of characters in fiction. In order to identify the relations of authors to their own characters, the use of this common vocabulary provides an invaluable tool for a shared and delimited analytic vocabulary. (See Bouchard, 1994; 1997; Buss, 1990, 1995; Costa and Widiger, 1994; Digman, 1990; Eysenck and Eysenck, 1985; McCrae, 1992; MacDonald, 1995b, 1998b; Pervin, 1990, 2003; Pervin and John, 1999; Segal and MacDonald, 1998; Wiggins, 1996.)

The fifth factor in the five-factor personality system—imaginative or intellectual openness to experience—is the factor most closely associated with domain-general intelligence, and it is itself roughly concordant with the cognitive behavioral system. MacDonald explains, "The Openness to Experience factor taps variation in intelligence and what one might term optimal Piagetian learning—intrinsically motivated curiosity and interest in intellectual and aesthetic experience combined with imagination and creativity in these areas" (1998b, p. 126). In virtually all literature, distinctions of wit or intelligence or imaginative vitality form a central distinguishing point of reference in the discrimination among characters and in the formation of a normative or dominant authorial point of view. Authors by nature have strong cognitive behavioral systems—they would be positioned at the far end of the right tail of the bell curve distribution measuring the fifth factor—and they tend strongly to value this same quality in their characters. They tend also to invite their audiences to share in their own normative approbation of this quality.

The primary purpose of literary criticism, as an objective pursuit of true knowledge about its subject, is to identify the specific configuration of meaning in any given text or set of texts. In order to make that identification, it is necessary for the critic to have three conceptual models or templates at his or her disposal: (a) a concept of human nature (like that in the diagram earlier); (b) a concept of the cultural ecology within which any given text has been constructed; and (c) a set of categories for analyzing individual differences. In

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order to make analytic use of these three templates, the critic must also assess the author's own understanding of human nature, identify the author's own stance toward the cultural context, and identify the distinctive characteristics of the author's individual identity

**Life History Analysis and Cognitive Style in *Pride and Prejudice***

Before commenting on the relation of style to life history analysis in *Pride and Prejudice*, I shall take a moment to summarize the novel, as concisely as possible, for the benefit of any reader who has not read it, or who has not read it recently. The protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, is twenty years old and the second of five daughters. Her father is a gentleman who married somewhat beneath his own social class and chose a wife for her physical charm. His wife's foolishness and vulgarity have alienated him, and he habitually engages in whimsical mockery of her. His estate is entailed to a cousin, a clergyman named Mr. Collins. When Mr. Bennet dies, Mr. Collins will inherit his estate, and Mr. Bennet's wife and five daughters will be left destitute. His wife is thus quite desperate to find rich husbands for her daughters. A wealthy and unmarried young man, Mr. Bingley, rents an estate in the Bennets' neighborhood, and his entourage includes two sisters and a friend, Mr. Darcy, who is also single and even more wealthy than Bingley. In short order, Bingley falls in love with Elizabeth Bennet's older sister, Jane, but Darcy discourages the match and persuades Bingley to leave the neighborhood. Darcy disapproves of the vulgarity of Elizabeth's mother and of her younger sisters, but he is himself nonetheless attracted to Elizabeth, whose wit and vivacity arouse his admiration. Mr. Collins, a monstrously foolish man, proposes to Elizabeth, and when she rejects him, he marries Elizabeth's best friend, Charlotte Lucas, who has little value on the marriage market and seeks only a comfortable establishment. Mr. Collins lives close to a wealthy, arrogant woman, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who appointed him to his clerical living. Lady Catherine also happens to be Darcy's aunt, and when Elizabeth goes for an extended visit at Charlotte's new home, she again meets Darcy. He proposes to her, but does so in an insulting way, expressing his vivid sense of her social inferiority, and she angrily rejects him. In explaining her rejection, she accuses him of interfering in her sister's marriage prospects, and accuses him also of failing to meet his obligation to provide support for the son of his father's steward, Mr. Wickham, a man who grew up with Darcy. Wickham had recently been stationed with his regiment near Elizabeth's home, had become friendly with her, and had divulged his supposed mistreatment at Darcy's hands. In order to vindicate himself, Darcy writes a letter in which he explains that his own conduct to Wickham has been honorable and that Wickham is in fact a scoundrel and a prevaricator. His evidence is compelling, and Elizabeth realizes she has misjudged him. Her aunt and uncle invite her to accompany them on a vacation tour that leads them

into the vicinity of Darcy's estate. They meet Darcy by accident, and his manners undergo a major change. He ceases being haughty and reserved and seeks to ingratiate himself with Elizabeth and her relatives. Elizabeth's views have also changed, and she is receptive to his address, but then she gets a letter from her sister Jane telling her that a younger sister, Lydia, has run off with Wickham, thus bringing disgrace on the whole family. Elizabeth returns home, and unbeknownst to her, Darcy finds Wickham and Lydia and bribes Wickham to marry Lydia. Elizabeth discovers this secret, and is duly grateful. When Bingley and Darcy return to Elizabeth's neighborhood, Bingley proposes to Jane and Darcy proposes, again, to Elizabeth. Both women accept the proposals, and the epilogue informs us that these two main couples live happily ever after.

*Pride and Prejudice* is universally recognized as a classic, and specifically as a classic distinguished by the economy of its narrative and the elegance of its style. That economy and elegance depend in large part on one central tension in the narrator's own point of view, a tension between two poles: at one pole, the tough-minded recognition of the fundamental realities of human life history, the primacy of resource acquisition and reproductive activity; and at the other pole, the determination to value individual qualities of mind and character. Austen herself grasps with a singular acuity the governing power of the somatic and reproductive foundation of human action, but virtually every character in the novel is assessed also on the basis of the quality of his or her mind. If you will refer again to the diagram of human nature, you can envision the novel as working itself out through a tension between the highest level of conscious human organization—the recognition of the primary need to acquire resources and to mate successfully—and the cognitive behavioral system. Everyone wants to marry well within the terms that are common knowledge among evolutionary sexual theorists—the women want wealth and status in their men, and the men want youth and beauty in their women. But the single most important criterion for registering personal quality in the novel is the degree to which both men and women rise above this basic standard and require also qualities of excellence in character and in mind.

The realization of character—and especially of conscientiousness—is best seen in action, in what the characters actually do. But the realization of mind is best revealed in their style—in what they say, and even more importantly, in how they say it. Austen's own style is "elegant" not in the sense of betraying effeminate delicacy or softness. It is elegant in the sense of being supple, sharp, quick, and crystal clear. It has less the quality of a brush held by a lady's gentle touch than of a finely tempered blade wielded by a hand that is strong, deft, and aggressive. The two chief characters, Elizabeth and Darcy, come to admire and love each other in good part because they share Austen's cognitive and stylistic powers. They select themselves out from the babble of folly, nonsense, and polite fatuities that make up the stylistic world of their associates, and they come to admire one another for qualities of wit and judgment that unfold

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themselves in sharp and serious dialogue on subjects of character, tone, and point of view. Darcy first offends Elizabeth, when they meet, by uttering some arrogant and defensive rationalizations for his own stiff behavior at a ball. (He is introverted and not very likable, but he is ultra-high on conscientiousness. Wickham, his chief rival for Elizabeth's romantic interest, is extraverted and charming but deceitful and utterly unreliable. As in many novels, one main plot line involves the long-term discrimination among superficially attractive qualities and the qualities that will wear well—a difference relevant to the basic distinction between short-term and long-term mating strategies.) Darcy first fundamentally changes Elizabeth's view of him in the letter he writes to her, after she rejects his proposal, explaining his conduct with respect to her sister's marriage prospects and his treatment of Wickham. Given the fact that he is an introvert and an intellectual, it is not surprising that he should present himself better in a letter than in a personal interview. The letter, which Austen transcribes in full, is the longest utterance he or anyone makes in the course of the novel, and if it does not display Austen's own humor—the subjects are somber, and Darcy is in no joking mood—it does display all of the precision, incisiveness, and acuity of her style. This style is itself a constant norm for the reader, and that same norm serves for all the main protagonistic characters as a measure of quality.

To take just one more of many possible examples for the signal importance of style as a measure of personal quality, Mr. Collins first introduces himself to the Bennet household in a letter that Mr. Bennet reads aloud to his family. The letter is an absolute marvel of fatuity and of pompous self-importance, and the way in which the individual family members respond to the letter reveals the quality of their own minds. Mary, the dull, plain younger sister who tries to build a niche for herself by diligent but uninspired study, thinks Mr. Collins's style rather good. Mrs. Bennet is as always simply indifferent to any quality of character or style and responds to all occasions solely on the basis of opportunistic interests. Elizabeth and her father alone register that the letter is a work of clownish absurdity. "Can he be a sensible man, sir?" "No, my dear; I think not." (vol. 1, chapter 13) In that exchange, Austen reveals the foundation of the singular affinity that Elizabeth and her father feel for one another, and the reason that they have formed an inner circle of companionship separated from all the rest of the family. Elizabeth is fond of her older sister Jane, and Jane is not vulgar, but she is so excessively sweet-tempered, so almost pathologically high on the scale of likableness, that she is incapable of any negative judgment, and thus fails to see at least half of what passes in front of her. She is, for instance, merely puzzled by the nonsense in Mr. Collins's letter, but inclined to give him full credit for good intentions.

Elizabeth and her father form an inner circle of wit and judgment, and the central figure within that circle is Austen herself. She fashions the point of view as a field of intelligence, and within this field she creates a topography in which

she locates all the characters and her audience. To get a sense for how this process works, consider the famous opening sentence of the novel: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." There has been considerable difference of opinion over whether that sentence is meant to be taken ironically. The issue can be resolved by reference to the modifying effect of the sentence that follows the first sentence: "However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighborhood; this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters." The first sentence is a good-humored affirmation of the rules of the game. Austen identifies the basic elements that are in play in social interactions (property and mating), and she acknowledges that the configuration of elements implied in her remarks constitutes a universal pattern of human behavior: men seek to acquire resources and to use them to acquire mates, and women seek mates who are in possession of resources. But the second sentence establishes a distance between the narrator and the common view she describes. She admits of anomalies, of individual differences. The "surrounding families" operate only on the basis of generalities, and they operate without regard to the inner lives of other people. They regard the man moving into the neighborhood not as a center of consciousness—a point of view—in his own right, but rather as their own property. This is a simple and elementary failure in "theory of mind"—a failure to recognize that other people have inner lives of their own. Failures of this nature inform much of Austen's satire, and indeed of all satire. It is one of the central principles of satire. People are preoccupied with their own needs, and they treat other people as props or furniture in the self-absorbed narratives they construct about themselves. (Mrs. Bennet and Darcy's aunt, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, are signal cases in point, and chief targets of the satire.)

As it happens, in this case, the common view holds good. Bingley is in fact in want of a wife. It is nonetheless the case that in the space of two sentences Austen has established a fundamental tension between her own perspective—a perspective that takes account both of point of view and of individual differences—and the common perspective of the neighborhood. That common perspective is also the perspective of the common world outside the novel. In the course of the novel, an inner core of protagonists, civilized, cultivated, and capable of making stylistic distinctions, will ultimately constitute a small in-group that distinguishes itself from the common world of their own community. Elizabeth's aunt and uncle Gardiner belong to this inner group, and it is one of the triumphs for the ethos advanced by the novel that their cultivation and gentility of manner take precedence over their lower socioeconomic status (Mr. Gardiner is "in trade"). Austen's own point of view defines and dominates this inner group—she is its normative mind—and she tacitly invites receptive readers also to join this group. The criterion that permits a reader to join the

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group is the ability to read and judge the letters and conversational style of Darcy, Mr. Collins, Lady Catherine, and all the rest. Readers who pass this test of literacy succeed in segregating themselves from the common world that operates exclusively at the level of the lowest common denominators of life history analysis—the reduction of other people to general cases—and the identification of people exclusively in terms of “property.”

Note that what has happened in the course of two sentences is that the author has established a set of relations among three points of view: her own, that of her characters, and that of her audience. This set of relations is not peripheral to the “meaning” of the story. By creating these relations, Austen creates an active field of communicative interaction. That is what hooks the reader, brings the reader in, rivets the reader’s attention. All this happens before a single event has transpired, and before a single specific character has been introduced. To notice this is to realize that we cannot reduce the “meaning” of a story to the represented events. And even the very content of the two sentences admonishes us that if we reduce the events of the story to an exemplification of “human universals” or “species-typical behaviors,” we shall have missed at least half the story. We shall in fact be on precisely the same level as the “surrounding families” personified for us, in the subsequent scene, by Mrs. Bennet. We shall be among the dullards and vulgarians who operate only on general rules and neglect to notice that every single character has a distinct center of consciousness.

Mrs. Bennet has access to a big chunk of the truth. Resources and mating do in fact form elementary building blocks in the human relations that provide the basis for stories. But in grasping this elemental reality, Mrs. Bennet neglects all other considerations of mind and character. She neglects the minds of other people, and she thus demonstrates the poverty of her own mind. The successful protagonists fully acknowledge the hard and sometimes harsh logic in the human reproductive economy, but they do so without neglecting the significance of the human mind and individual differences in identity.

Mate selection is the central behavioral system activated in this novel. That is a distinguishing, defining feature of the literary genre it exemplifies, the genre of “romantic comedy.” (This genre probably provides at least half the literary biomass for the sum total of narratives in the world.) In its simplest designation, a romantic comedy is a love story that concludes in a happy marriage. Usually such stories are light in tone or enlivened with humor. But as it applies to Austen, the connotation of the words “romantic” and “comedy” could be a little misleading. There are many comical scenes, but the humor of the novel is often harsh, and the mating game is fierce and determined. Mr. Bingley’s sister wants Darcy for herself and snipes incessantly, cattily, ineffectually at Elizabeth, denigrating her appearance, her temperament, her mind, and most of all her family and her social status. Miss Bingley also wants Darcy’s younger sister, Georgiana, for her own brother—a liaison that would

enhance her own social standing—and she thus conspires with Darcy to detach Bingley from Jane Bennet. She at first expresses the warmest friendship to Jane, activating Jane's own affectionate disposition, and then coldly cuts her. Lady Catherine wants Darcy to marry her own daughter, his cousin, but her daughter is sickly and peevish, and no one but her own mother and her governess pays her any regard at all. Austen's treatment of this girl betrays a certain streak of brutality. She sacrifices Miss de Bourgh on the altar of a ruthless principle of fitness, and the only sensation Elizabeth or Austen herself express toward this poor sick girl is that of vindictive contempt; there is no hint of pity. (To get an even better feel for this streak of brutality, one should read Austen's "juvenilia," the stories she wrote as a teenager. The stories consist of a rapid series of violent and grotesque events, many of them involving characters of certifiably psychopathic disposition.) Elizabeth's own chances of successful mating are seriously endangered when her sister Lydia runs off with Wickham, thus lowering the social standing of the whole family even further. There is a real possibility that by an inevitable progression Lydia would eventually be abandoned by Wickham and would "come on the town," living as a prostitute and in all likelihood dying early of disease and abuse. This doesn't happen because Darcy is determined in his choice of Elizabeth as a mate, and he exploits for his own purposes the opportunity Lydia's folly presents to him. By bribing Wickham to marry Lydia, Darcy does Elizabeth the greatest and most intimate service he could possibly do for her, and at the same time he decisively demonstrates the firmness of his commitment to her. He demonstrates that his preference for her outweighs even the disgrace of a marital association with a sluttish sister married to a reprobate of inferior birth.

The very nature of Wickham's disrepute signals the way in which resources and reproduction constitute the fundamental categories of human behavior in the novel—as they do in actual life. Wickham's evil-doing consists in two main forms of malfeasance: he leaves unpaid debts behind him, and he engages in illicit sexual liaisons with the daughters of the tradesmen and farmers in the neighborhoods he frequents. Before arriving in Elizabeth's neighborhood, he had even had the audacity to try running off with Darcy's sister. If he had succeeded, he would have damaged Darcy in his family pride and in his tenderest family feeling. He would have gained a fortune, advanced in status, and triumphed over a rival male. Darcy has good reason to resent Wickham, and this resentment renders his act of conciliation with Wickham all the more signal an instance of the self-sacrificing chivalry he displays in his commitment to Elizabeth.

Property and rank for men, and youth and beauty for women, count for much. They count almost more than anything, but within the normative perspective of the novel, they must at every point along the way be weighed in the balance of the total set of values that can be integrated within a well-proportioned economy of human life—the kind of economy that leads to the

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“rational” sort of happiness that Austen and Elizabeth both identify as their own central criterion of value. The total set of values that have to be given their due proportions to bring about rational happiness is not amorphous and unbounded. Sex and property, family or kin relations, parenting, social relations, and cognitive power—those are the central concerns of the book.

Next to sex and property, fidelity to kin presents itself as an urgent motivational force. Within the normative structure of values constituted by Austen’s own point of view, even when family members are disgraceful and ridiculous, remaining loyal to them is a fundamental criterion of personal merit. Mr. Collins’s baseness displays itself when he advises Mr. Bennet to abandon Lydia altogether after she runs off with Wickham, and Elizabeth displays her strength of character, in the epilogue, by effecting a rapprochement between Darcy and the alienated Lady Catherine, despite the insults Lady Catherine has heaped on Elizabeth herself.

The issue of parenting bulks large in the concerns of the book. The main background marriages—the marriages that serve as models or as warnings for the protagonists—are bad, either in their personal relations (as with Mr. and Mrs. Bennet) or in their parenting functions—as with both Darcy’s and Elizabeth’s parents. Elizabeth’s mother is coarse, stupid, and frivolous, and her father is remote and detached. The situation of the family is bad, not just because of the entail but because he made a bad marriage, neglected to make the economies necessary to provide for his family after his death, neglected the discipline and education of his daughters, and failed to maintain the decorum of marital civility. (Jane and Elizabeth have educated themselves, but one chief attraction that Darcy holds for Elizabeth is that he is himself educated and holds out the promise for her of helping her to continue cultivating her own mind. Much is made of the magnificent library in his possession at his family estate.) Darcy’s own parents, he says, were excellent people, but they neglected to form his temper, and they get the blame for the arrogance that first offends Elizabeth and that comes close to spoiling Darcy’s ability to attract her to him, despite his wealth and rank. Mr. Collins is an oddity in part because he is a fool, a man of weak understanding, but the other half of the causal explanation is that he was raised by “an illiterate and miserly father” (vol. 1, chapter 15).

All the most intimate relations of sex, marriage, and family embed themselves within a larger social context. For this novel, one central plot question is whether Elizabeth will be accepted into the dominant social group. Her rivals hope she will not. Austen herself disparages their brittle snobbery (they laugh witlessly over the fact that she has an uncle in trade and another uncle who is a country attorney), but she also wishes for Elizabeth to gain access to the highest social level. She defines that level not only by wealth and status but by dignity and authority. One can be born into wealth and rank, but dignity and authority have to be earned by personal merit. Lady Catherine offers a self-parody of upper-class authority. Darcy is the real thing. When Elizabeth first

sees Darcy's great estate, and hears his housekeeper praise his integrity and beneficence, she thinks to herself, "What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant? As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how many people's happiness were in his guardianship!—How much of pleasure or pain it was in his power to bestow!—How much of good or evil must be done by him!" (vol. 3, chapter 1). Austen mocks false status—rank and wealth unsupported by education, wit, manners, and character—but she ultimately affirms the authority of legitimate social status as that is represented by the normative couple, Elizabeth and Darcy.

The chief social dynamic in the novel, the underlying social narrative, is that of a process in which dominant males marry down, selecting women of lower social rank but of superior personal quality. Conversely, women of high quality from a lower rank marry up into the higher gentry and thus integrate the standard of personal quality with the values of wealth and rank. Even Mr. Bennet, unhappily married though he is, has contributed to this process. He married a beautiful though silly woman from a social rank lower than his own. Two of his daughters are both beautiful and intelligent, and one (Elizabeth) is genuinely clever. And the two beautiful, intelligent girls both marry well, extremely well. Even Mrs. Bennet must be gratified with the results, though she understands so little of the process that produces those results.

And finally, again, in all the behavioral systems that have to be balanced in the economy of values in the novel, the cognitive system holds a place of predominating value. Mrs. Bennet contributes some heritable physical attractiveness, a matter not negligible in the total mix, but she contributes nothing of wit, and she is left almost wholly outside the scope of the inner social circle that constitutes the normative group at the end of the novel. "I wish I could say, for the sake of her family, that the accomplishment of her earnest desire in the establishment of so many of her children, produced so happy an effect as to make her a sensible, amiable, well-informed woman for the rest of her life; though perhaps it was lucky for her husband, who might not have relished domestic felicity in so unusual a form, that she was still occasionally nervous and invariably silly."

### **The Value of a Darwinian Literary Criticism**

Previous criticism of Austen can be divided roughly into two bodies of work: (a) the traditional, common-language criticism that dominated academic literary study until the middle of the 1970s, and (b) the various forms of theory-driven criticism that emerged under the umbrella of postmodernism in the past three decades or so. The traditional criticism operates at the level of Austen's own lexicon. At its best, it makes alert observations about theme, tone, and formal organization, but its insights are impressionistic, opportunistic, and adventitious; it seeks no systematic reduction to simple principles that have large general validity. (See Bradley, 1929; C. L. Johnson, 1988; Lewes,

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1859; Litz, 1965; Tanner, 1986; Van Ghent, 1953; Woolf, 1953.) At less than its best, traditional criticism consists only in otiose summary and formalistic elaboration punctuated by the occasional exercise in cranky emotional posturing. (See Butler, 1975; Duckworth, 1971; Halliday, 1960; Harding, 1940; Langland, 1984; Morgan, 1980; Mudrick, 1952; Phelan, 1989.) The positive rationale behind the revolution in theory-driven criticism is the recognition that all narratives have a surface-depth structure. Beneath the surface of local incident and occasional commentary in a narrative, there is a simpler, more basic structure of elemental motives and organizing principles. These motives and principles are the skeletal structure of the work. The business of interpretive criticism is to probe beneath the surface of common-language exposition and to find the skeletal structure. Theory-driven interpretation seeks to cut literary meaning at its joints.

The turn to theory-driven criticism answered to a manifest need, but the theoretical models that have been used, up to now, have been painfully inadequate. Deconstruction, Marxism, Freudianism, and Foucauldian political criticism have all presupposed ideas about human nature that conflict sharply with the Darwinian conception. The other main school, feminism, is less a single, coherent theory than a preoccupation about a specific subject matter—the condition of women—but the notions that cluster around this preoccupation often entail false ideas about human nature, and most feminist critics over the past thirty years have affiliated themselves with one or another of the dominant theoretical schools. All of the schools, as subsidiaries of postmodern theory, have fundamentally repudiated the idea of an innate, biologically constrained structure in the human motivational and cognitive system. Postmodern critics have sought the elemental forces of human experience in terms such as “semiosis,” “textuality,” “class struggle,” “the Phallus,” “bourgeois ideology,” “desire,” “discourse,” “power,” “gender,” “dialogism,” “heterosexism,” “the Other,” and “patriarchy,” and they have contended that such terms reveal the underlying, governing forces in all literary production. In the degree to which they have succeeded in avoiding the passively reflexive character of traditional criticism, theory-driven criticism has offered distorted, skewed, and strained accounts of the elemental motives and governing principles in literary texts.

Literary criticism is both analytical and evaluative. Literary critics commit themselves to distinct concepts and to definite values. The values that animate postmodern theoretical criticism are emphatically radical, and the political critics incline either to disparage authors for their putative complicity with oppressive epistemes or, more frequently, to invest authors with their own characteristic attitudes of resentment, ideological indignation, and subversive animosity. Both the conceptual content and the political attitudes of the radical criticism are deeply alien to Austen. The conceptual content is alien to the elemental simplicity of her good sense, and the political attitudes are alien to the conservative temper of her wisdom. Many of the postmodern critics have

nonetheless made some effort to assimilate Austen to an ethos of epistemological indeterminacy and political radicalism. They have sought to identify various “gaps” or “contradictions” between her overt meanings and this or that supposedly subversive implication in her style or tone. In Austen’s case, particularly, these routine invocations of deconstructive formulas often appear half-hearted. The more sensitive postmodern critics evidently feel a certain queasy diffidence about pressing a case that can be made only by fabricating interpretive theses that run so clearly counter to Austen’s own determinate meanings. Despite the obligatory invocation of deconstructive formulas, the bulk of commentary in the postmodern critiques blends insensibly into the thematic, tonal, and formal analyses of the traditional criticism. (See Ahearn, 1987; I. Armstrong, 1990; N. Armstrong, 1981, 1987; Auerbach, 1978; Belsey, 2002; Brownstein, 1988; Fraiman, 1989; Handler and Segal, 1990; Litvak, 1992; Newman, 1983; Newton, 1981; Poovey, 1981; Smith, 1993, 2000; Wylie, 2000.)

Darwinian literary criticism is grounded in the large facts of human evolution and human biology, facts much larger and more robust than the conceptions that characterize the various branches of postmodern theory. (See Boyd, 1998; Carroll, 1995; Dissanayake, 1995b; Storey, 1993, 1996.) Darwinian psychology provides a scientifically grounded and systematic account of human nature. This is the first time in our intellectual history that we have had such a theory, but the subject of this theory—human nature itself—is the very same nature that has always animated writers and readers. Most writers historically have not had access to the evolutionary explanation for how human nature came to be what it is, but they have nonetheless had a deep intuitive understanding of human motives and human feelings. What a Darwinian social science can now do for literary criticism is to give us conscious theoretical access to the elemental forces that have impelled all human beings throughout time and that have fundamentally informed the observations and reflections of all writers and all readers. Darwinian criticism can lift us above the superficial paraphrases of traditional criticism without forcing us into the often false reductions in the postmodern conceptions of human nature. It can help us to understand the source and subject of all literary representation, and it can help us to identify the sources of exceptional power in great literary works like *Pride and Prejudice*.

### The Whole Story

More could be said, in detail, about *Pride and Prejudice*—much more. I hope I have said enough to give some indication of what I have in mind by insisting that to construct an even minimally adequate account of any literary representation, we have to set up a polar tension between the highest level of reduction in life history analysis—the level of the somatic and reproductive organization of life effort—and the most fine-grained analysis of formal organization: of theme, tone, and style. I hope to have convinced you that point of view is the

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central locus of literary meaning because it is the dimension within which people have mental experiences. The only people who can be involved in a literary social interaction are the author, the characters, and the audience, and those three sets of people *are* involved—all three sets—always. Delineating the dynamics of that specific set of social interactions—dynamics that vary from author to author and book to book—is a fundamental and indispensable procedure in literary criticism. Darwinian literary critics who ignore this dimension of analysis might be Darwinians, but they are not literary critics, and even as Darwinians, they are missing a major part of the story.

Many Darwinian psychologists and anthropologists have been missing a major part of the larger human story—that whole part of the story that concerns itself with the evolution of the cognitive behavioral system: the fifth personality factor, “g,” domain-general intelligence. They have told us a good deal about life in a supposedly stable and homogeneous EEA, but they have neglected to tell us much about the evolution and adaptive functions of the distinctively human mind. A number of Darwinian anthropologists and psychologists are now correcting that signal omission, and Darwinian literary critics should rejoice that the development of the whole field is now producing a model of human nature that converges with their needs and interests as literary critics. The benefits can be reciprocal. Darwinian psychologists and Darwinian anthropologists take human nature as their field of study. Literature can provide important information on that topic, and Darwinian literary critics can help them to gain access to that information. Practitioners on both sides will need to make some allowances for differences of idiom and method. If they make these allowances, they will benefit not just in the gain of needful information but also in a closer acquaintance with the skills and cognitive habits that constitute the characteristic strengths in each discipline.