

In*Humane Desire

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Abstract

This paper examines human nature through scientific, spiritual, philosophical, and modern empirically proven perspectives to evaluate whether modern systems reflect moral progress, or the scaled expression of inherent human biology. Utilizing human evolution and biology, the analysis argues that human behavior is fundamentally shaped by self-interest, competition, and conditional cooperation rather than altruism. Religious and philosophical traditions reinforce this view, describing humanity as inherently prone to immorality, self-deception, and greed. Modern political and economic systems are evaluated in this context as extensions of those very traits, with empirically backed data showing the concentration of power among social and economic elites and the limited influence of the general population. The Epstein case is used as a fulcrum in which it illustrates how institutional accountability operates when applied to individuals embedded within powerful social, economic, and political networks. The findings suggest that modern systems do not correct human nature, rather they amplify it, producing persistent patterns of inequality and exploitation. Ultimately, all analysis concludes that the trajectory of human development is not constrained by a lack of knowledge and intuition, but the structural limitations imposed by human biological nature, inevitably preventing a large-scale reform.

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The dominant nature of the modern age is one of progress. One of technological acceleration, rising life expectancies, and the abolition of all systems of exploitation. These have produced widespread confidence that humanity is improving. However, that rests on a narrow, and often mistreated definition of progress that exudes the externalized costs. As Harari argues, the story of homo sapiens is not one of moral advancement, but of constantly expanding power applied with increasing scale with consequences that consistently exceed the system designed to control them (Harari, 2015).

The disasters now converging onto humanity are not isolated disruptions in order, rather systemic outcomes given the current system. Ecologic collapse, elite-driven governance, the fragmentation of democratic accountability all reflects a deeper continuity in human behavior. Economic elites exert a disproportional influence over policy outcomes, while average citizens have little independent effect. The implication is not that systems will occasionally fail, instead that they will function according to underlying human incentives. The optimistic view as represented by Pinker holds that violence has declined and cooperation has increased over time. While this argument is supported by selected data, it fails to empirically account for structural harm. “Violence has declined over long stretches of time, and today we may be living in the most peaceable era in our species' existence.” (Pinker, 2011). While Pinker's data demonstrates a measurable decline directly related to interpersonal violence, it does not account for forms of harm that are delayed or embedded within the structure of our society. Industrialized economies have reduced visible violence within their borders, that is a given and can be empirically proven in large parts of the United States, Germany, England, etc. However, these fail to account for the exportation of such violence, more so, violence indirectly to humans. Environmental

degradation, labor exploitation, and resource extraction from regions of which cannot defend themselves, whether that be militarily or economically from western society. Additionally, the absolute scale of modern risk, particularly in climate collapse operates outside of the statistical framing Pinker used. A system can appear less violent within a short period of time, while still producing conditions that can generate far greater long-term harm. In this sense, that is to say Pinker's opposing view, the reduction of violence is not evidence of moral progress, but rather harm being displaced not just across society, but across our time of existence as well. Therefore, the decline of violence does not constitute our systemic destruction. A civilization capable of sustaining order while degrading the systems that sustain it has not solved violence; it has simply made it a problem for another day.

Evolutionary Self Interest

In the scientific foundations of human nature, natural selection does not produce moral creatures. It produces effective creatures. “We are survival machines-robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes. This is a truth which still fills me with astonishment. Though I have known it for years, I never seem to get fully used to it. One of my hopes is that I may have some success in astonishing others.” (Dawkins, 1976). Dawkins clearly reframes human behavior: cooperation, empathy, and morality are not inherent goods, they are strategies that emerge under specific conditions humans and other creatures may find themselves under. Dominance, competition, and aggression are biologically embedded systems within humanity, just as they are within every other creature (Sapolsky, 2017). The modern economic system mirrors this logic. Capital accumulation, extreme market competition, resource monopolization, all these are not simply deviations in human nature, they are direct extensions of it. Corporations function similarly to genes in that they exclusively prioritize growth, replication,

and survival within competitive environments with no due regard to outside cost. Individuals who operate within these systems are incentivized to behave in ways that align with evolutionary success; maximize advantage, secure dominance, eliminate threats. What appears as simple economic behavior, in reality, is a biological strategy expressed through institution.

Conditional Cooperation

Cooperation exists, yes. Cooperation only exists, however, under conditions that sustain it. "...altruistic behavior. Consider three possibilities: (1) the altruists dispense their altruism randomly throughout the population; (2) they dispense it non-randomly by regarding their degree of genetic relationship with possible recipients; or (3) they dispense it non-randomly by regarding the altruistic tendencies of possible recipients" (Trivers, 1971). In these conditions, an altruist would indeed perform actions as normal, contributing to the cooperative nature of his/her society. However, these cooperative systems break down under the exact conditions that define our modern civilization. Large-scale societies eliminate the need for personal interaction for the sake of survival and reduce personal accountability. Anonymity weakens reputational enforcement, allowing individuals to defect without consequence. Economic inequality creates differing incentives, where those who have greater resource expendability do not inherently benefit from cooperation, instead gaining more from exploitation. Digital mediation further distances human interaction, severing any and all emotional bonds and feedback loops biologically engineered to sustain empathy. As a result, cooperation becomes not just fragile and temporary, but near impossible under an unusual number of circumstances, due to a modern inherent ability to be overridden by self-interest, and surprisingly more at scale. The result is a species optimized not for balance, but for advantage. This is because modern civilization systematically removes the conditions in which cooperation historically and evolutionarily came

to be. The human brain evolved for small groups and immediate threats. When expanded, problems like climate change, nuclear risks, global government, and international tension, require long term and abstract thoughts of the facts in constructing a rich image on the basis of scraps of evidence.

As I described earlier, System 1 is not prone to doubt. It suppresses ambiguity and spontaneously constructs stories that are as coherent as possible. Unless the message is immediately negated, the associations that it evokes will spread as if the message were true. System 2 is capable of doubt, because it can maintain incompatible possibilities at the same time. However, sustaining doubt is harder work than sliding into certainty. The law of small numbers is a manifestation of a general bias that favors certainty over doubt, which will turn up in many guises in following chapters. The strong bias toward believing that small samples closely resemble the population from which they are drawn is also part of a larger story: we are prone to exaggerate the consistency and coherence of what we see. The exaggerated faith of researchers in what can be learned from a few observations is closely related to the halo effect, the sense we often get that we know and understand a person about whom we actually know very little. System 1 runs ahead of the facts in constructing a rich image on the basis of scraps of evidence. A machine for jumping to conclusions will act as if it believed in the law of small numbers. More generally, it will produce a representation of reality that makes too much sense.

(Kahneman, 2011).

Climate change represents the clearest example of this mismatch. The insurmountable threat unfolds gradually, lacks the immediate sensory feedback humans look for, and requires collective action across many generations. Conditions under which critical human thought occur

very rarely. Political systems respond to short term incentives: technologies, economic growth, public perception, global affairs, all biased against long term sacrifice. Even with overwhelming scientific consensus, the architecture of institutions favors delay, denial, or outright immobilization of solutions. The result then is not ignorance, but a systematic lack of action driven by the limits of human perception. A species, no matter how advanced, that cannot perceive a slow-moving catastrophe, will never prevent it.

Religious Interpretation and the Inherent Human Flaw

Human nature is inherently self-deceptive and sinful, driven by pride. “But in truth it was wholly I, and mine impiety had divided me against myself: and that sin was the more incurable, whereby I did not judge myself a sinner; and execrable iniquity it was” (Augustine, 112). The behavior Augustine describes is directly observable within modern elites. Individuals holding positions of power routinely justify decisions that produce widespread harm while maintaining their own internalized conceptions of morality. Corporate executives overseeing environmentally destructive policies frame their actions as necessary for growth, political leaders justify policies that worsen inequality as mere inconvenience and statistics to be brushed aside. This need for self-justification is not one off, it is the mechanism that allows individuals to participate in systems of exploitation without experiencing themselves internally as immortal beings. This, however, is not limited to the views of Christian faith. The pattern can be observed across theology. The Qur’an, similarly, describes human beings as inherently prone to arrogance, moral denial, and rejection of guidance when power is threatened. The recurring nature of this theme across religion suggests that it reflects a consistent observation of human behavior instead of a simple cultural belief. The failure of a moral system, therefore, is not accidental. It was a structural fault.

A calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience) (Foucault, 138).

This extends across many institutional domains. Religious organizations prioritize reputation over accountability, governments prioritize stability over justice, and corporations prioritize profit over ethical ideals. Within each case, the institution's own survival is consistently its primary objective, displacing the principles they were designed to enforce. The similarity of these patterns across three fundamentally different institutions indicates the cause is not simply 'just' and institutional design, instead it is the very biological incentives embedded within humans. Religious texts constantly describe the collapse of global society as a result of concentrated power and moral failure. "And all those who live on the earth will worship the beast" (Relevation 13:8), "And these towns—We destroyed them when they committed injustices, and We set for their destruction an appointed time." (Qur'an 7:59). These, in essence, are not predictions by the books, more so they are pattern recognition in regard to human behavior.

A Philosophically Powered View.

Humans have and always will exist in constant competition. “No Artists, no Letters, no Society, and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death, and the life of man.

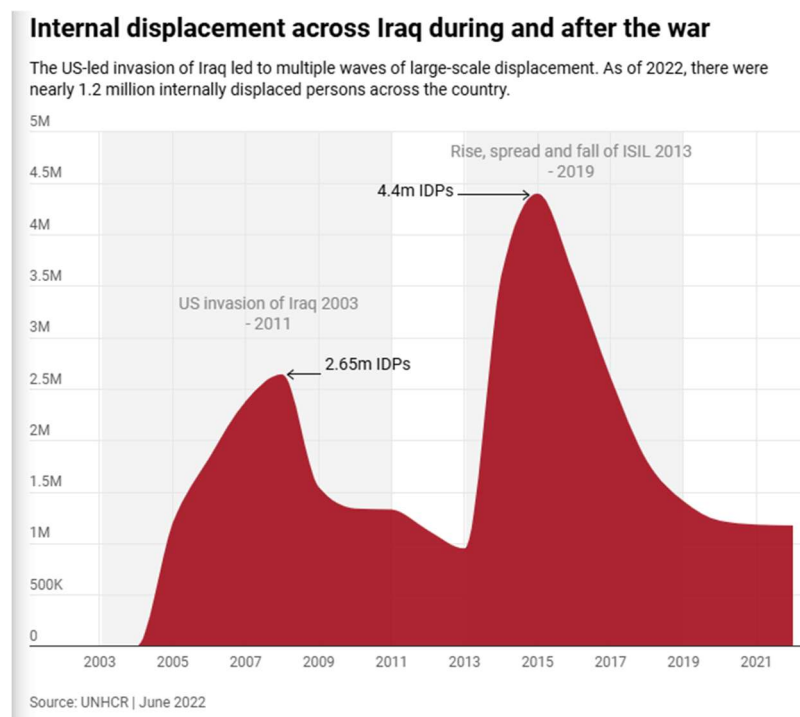
Solitary, poore, nasty, brutal and short.” (Hobbes, 19). Modern systems were designed to stop this, to keep people secure, yet now have been overtaken by the ‘evils’ of life. The capture of ‘Leviathan’ occurs when the institutions meant to regulate the competition become subject to the very same competitive pressure it was designed to contain. Regulatory agencies are influenced by the very institutions they oversee, legislators depend on financial contributions from powerful figures, and thus enforcement mechanisms become selectively applied rather than universally.

Instead of standing above the system as a means to control it, the state is integrated into it, recreating the urge for competition and self-interests it was designed to suppress interests.

During the Iraq war for instance, official narratives regarded the need to spread democracy and eliminate the threat of Iraqi held weapons of mass destruction, despite later being repThere is no such thing as moral phenomena,

but only a moral interpretation of phenomena.” (Nietzche, 1886).

Contemporary political and economic discourse clearly reflects this process. Military interventions framed as the promotion of new national freedoms and liberty. Democracy manifests, as they call it.



Democracy, which now masks the underlying geopolitical and economic interests which originally led to said intervention. “The US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq lasted until 2011 and led to multiple waves of large-scale displacement. The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) rose from zero registered in 2003 to 2.6 million in 2007. By the time the US announced an end to its combat operations in December 2011, the number of Iraqi IDPs stood at 1.3 million. However, with the rise, advance and fall of ISIL from 2013 to 2019, the number of IDPs increased again, reaching a peak of 4.4 million in 2015. As of 2022, there were nearly 1.2 million internally displaced people across the country“ (Al-Jazeera, 2023). Similar to the disastrous nature of Iraq, the war in Afghanistan was framed as a justified response to terrorism and a mission to establish international stability, yet its effects persist far beyond the original stated objectives (Al-Jazeera, 2024). In each case, moral language operated as a framework to legitimize actions, those nationally transforming actions driven by none other than power, security interests, and geopolitical positioning into what was perceived to be ethical necessity. This dynamic extends far beyond foreign policy, as it spreads into internal economic discourse in addition to the external issues brought on. As argued in Kabouche (2025), systems of governance frequently reflect the structural dominance of capital, on which policy outcomes align more closely with the interests of the elite rather than those of the general population. The convergent nature of these patterns across domains shows that moral and ideological language is not truly neutral, rather being instrumental to shaping perception in ways that enforce already existing power structures, whilst also shielding them from meaningful challenges. As a consequence, “economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence.” (Gilens, 2014), In their influential article entitled

“Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page use statistical analysis to adjudicate between four ideal-type theories of American politics (Gilens and Page, 2014). Their main findings are that “economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence.” These findings provide support for theories called economic-elite domination and biased pluralism. According to several journalistic accounts but not Gilens and Page themselves, the findings show that the American system of government is best understood as “oligarchy.”¹ Extensive press coverage of the article has successfully drawn attention to one of the most important questions in the study of contemporary American politics: to what extent do the wealthy dominate average citizens in the formulation of government policy? In pursuit of an answer, Gilens and his team of researchers gathered data over a long period, tracking 1923 instances between 1981 and 2002 in which national surveys asked favor/ oppose questions about proposed policy changes” (Bashir, 2015). The findings of Gilens and Page align precisely with the argument which is advanced within Kabouche (2025), which demonstrates that democratic institutions function less as mechanisms of representation and more as systems of elite controlled legitimacy. Public participation provides the *appearance* of influence, while the substantive decision making remains concentrated among not just political elites, but economic elites as well. This overlap between a theoretical analysis and reality-backed empirical data reinforces the conclusion that systems do not distribute power among a society, rather they act as a formal method of concentrating it.

Contemporary Evidence. The Epstein case represents one of the most extensively documented modern examples of the intersection of wealth, institutional power, and systemic

exploitation. Unlike many cases of elite misconduct, the Epstein investigation produces a large, even borderline insurmountable evidentiary record spanning decades, jurisdictions, and institutional responses. Its significance does not only lie in the criminal acts committed, but in the behavior documented within the systems tasked with managing them. At the very center of the case comes the 2008 non-prosecution agreement negotiated by federal prosecutors in Florida. According to the US DOJ of the Inspector General “In the decade following his release from incarceration, Epstein reportedly continued to settle multiple civil suits brought by many, but not all, of his victims. Epstein was otherwise able to resume his lavish lifestyle, largely avoiding the interest of the press. On November 28, 2018, however, the Miami Herald published an extensive investigative report about state and federal criminal investigations initiated more than 12 years earlier into allegations that Epstein had coerced girls into engaging in sexual activity with him at his Palm Beach estate. ³ The Miami Herald reported that in 2007, Acosta entered into an “extraordinary” deal with Epstein in the form of the NPA, which permitted Epstein to avoid federal prosecution and a potentially lengthy prison sentence by pleading guilty in state court to “two prostitution charges.” According to the Miami Herald, the government also immunized Epstein’s co-conspirators from prosecutors and concealed from Epstein’s victims the terms of the NPA. Through its reporting, which included interviews of eight victims and information from publicly available documents, the newspaper painted a portrait of federal and state prosecutors who had ignored serious criminal conduct by a wealthy man with powerful and politically connected friends by granting him a “deal of a lifetime” that allowed him both to escape significant punishment for his past conduct and to continue his abuse of minors. The Miami Herald report led to public outrage and media scrutiny of the government’s actions” (U.S. DOJ, 2020), this agreement effectively shielded Epstein and his associates from meaningful

accountability “granted immunity to Epstein’s co-conspirators (PBS, 2026). This clause alone represents a structural anomaly. In standard criminal proceedings, co-conspirators are targets of investigation and major prosecution. In this case, they were preemptively protected. The deviation is not simply due to nuance; it is evidence that enforcement mechanisms can be altered when applied to individuals embedded within modern influential networks. The I.G. further concluded that prosecutors exercised unusually broad discretion in resolving the case. These all demonstrate that the issue was not that of a simple abomination of decisions, rather an extreme come to reality due to a broader structural influence. Relationships between political figures, financiers, and elites create overlapping systems of influence that generate powerful incentives to curb investigation, exposure, and public accountability. The network does not need to coordinate the wrongdoing in order for it to function as intended, rather the structure in which that wrongdoing may reside allows a lack of effect and consequence. “Soon after he was incarcerated, Epstein applied for the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s work release program, and the Sheriff approved his application. In October 2008, Epstein began spending 12 hours a day purportedly working at the “Florida Science Foundation,” an entity Epstein had recently incorporated that was co-located at the West Palm Beach office of one of Epstein’s attorneys. Although the NPA specified a term of incarceration of 18 months, Epstein received “gain time,” that is, time off for good behavior, and he actually served less than 13 months of incarceration. On July 22, 2009, Epstein was released from custody to a one-year term of home detention as a condition of community control, and he registered as a sexual offender with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. After victims and news media filed suit in Florida courts for release of the copy of the NPA that had been filed under seal in the state court file, a state judge in September 2009 ordered it to be made public” (U.S DOJ, 2020). The work release privileges

allotted to Epstein, allowing him to leave jail highlights the existence of parallel enforcement, one for ordinary individuals, and another for those with sufficient resources and connections. The law on paper remains universal, however its application in real world cases has proved dependent. Beyond legal processes, investigative reporting has documented the prolonged nature of Epstein's activities and the repeated failure of a multitude of institutions to intervene. "Miami Herald investigative journalist Julie K. Brown helped federal investigators' sex-trafficking case against Jeffrey Epstein through a series of interviews she had with women who claimed that they were part of a sex ring run by the financier when they were girls. In announcing new charges against Epstein on Monday, New York prosecutor Geoffrey Berman said his team was "assisted by excellent investigative journalism," according to the Associated Press. The Herald was not cited by name, but it is believed to be a reference to Brown, who wrote the series "Perversion of Justice" about Epstein last November, in which she reported on 60 women who said they were sexually abused by the financier between 2001 and 2005. Eight of the women agreed to be interviewed for the story, which Brown spent 18 months working on with Emily Michot, a visual journalist at The Herald. Epstein was arrested on Saturday and charged on Monday with sex trafficking and conspiracy. In the indictment, prosecutors allege that Epstein molested girls as young as 14 in a sex-trafficking operation that ran from at least 2002 to 2005, with dozens of girls victimized. Epstein has pleaded not guilty." (Business Insider, 2026). The key issue is not simply because the crimes occurred, but that they persisted across time despite having multiple occasions in which intervention was possible. This persistence suggests a breakdown across not just one, but many national and international systemic institutions. The Epstein case reveals the mechanisms of accountability truly operate differently depending on the social and economic standing of the individual within their given power structure. Legal processes that are predictable

and set in stone for ordinary individuals become flexible, negotiable, and inexplicably opaque when regarding elites. “2,000 CEOs and boards making decisions directly impacting the lives of a billion people. On a planet where, of the six billion people on the planet, four billion of them have fairly lousy jobs, fairly lousy earning potential, the bottom three billion living on less than \$2 a day. So, there are only a couple of billion people on the planet that are particularly well employed. And half of them work for those 2,000 largest companies.” (Rathkopf, 2008). Within such a system, accountability becomes increasingly difficult to enforce. This is due mostly in part to the fact because those who can be subject to it, often when needed, have the ability to shape its conditions. The Epstein case demonstrates the dynamic concretely: individuals embedded within large scale networks of influence are not only less vulnerable, but borderline unaffected by the mechanisms designed to constrain them. The significance of the Epstein case then lies not in the exceptional nature, but in its clarity. The majority of elite misconduct do not produce the level of documentation or clarity presented within the Epstein case. It functions as a rare point in which the internal operations power typically resides in becoming an observable event in which the layman may look on. What is revealed then is consistent with the predictions of the theoretical framework developed previously within this paper.

From a Hobbesian perspective, failure reflects the natural instability of the Leviathan to stand outside the system in which it governs. From a Nietzschean perspective, the mechanism of justice and legal process operates as a structure in which it may be legitimized and hide underlying power connections. The combination of these interpretations leads to one conclusion: the Epstein case is not an anomaly requiring explanation, but a confirmation of an underlying pattern in which contemporary society resides.

Real World Realization, and its Systemic Prevention. “[P]ower is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And "power," insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and is self-reproducing” (Foucault, 1976). Foucault's interpretation can be explained simply as: systems will always fail to self-correct. This is due to the mechanisms required for correction being controlled by the same forces that become benefactors from their continued use and effectiveness. Effective reform would require widespread recognition of structural problems, large coordinated collective action, and redistribution of power away from entrenched elites (Kabouche, 2025), with each of these conditions being systematically overpowered. Information becomes filtered through media cycles influenced by corporate interest controlled by those very same elites, collective action becomes fragmented by engrained social division tied with economic worry, and power distribution meets resistance when those who possess the greatest capacity to shape political outcomes feel threatened. When societal awareness exists, the structural barriers to a change of meaningful capacity prevent it from translating into real world action. As a result, systems persist not because they are optimal and conducive to society, but because the prerequisite conditions to change them are systemically suppressed. This suppression is not always overt; however, more often than not it is embedded within the everyday function of institutions themselves. The structure of modern life depends entirely on continuous participation within those systems that require reform, leaving the individual with limited time, energy, and security to challenge them. Economic risk discourages the necessary leap of faith required, thus ensuring that those most affected by systemic inequality are also those who are least able to resist. At the same time, the scale and complexity of a global system obscure real points of intervention, diffusing the ability and responsibility across billions globally, not just a small sect of people within a nation or two.

In such a situation, even well-informed individuals become ineffective, as the total cost of opposition outweighs the potential benefits in the short term.

Further, the normalization of these conditions reinforces their persistence. Practices that would be unacceptable given a small community become tolerated at scale. Their institutionalization frames those said practices as a necessary tradeoff for the prosperity of society. This normalization is backed by cultural reinforcement, modern policy, and generational upbringing, thus creating a feedback loop in which the distinction between functionality and instability becomes blurred, leading to what is now a passive acceptance of conditions that would otherwise become provocation for resistance. In this sense, the failure of the system to self-correct itself is not merely a consequence of flawed design, rather it is an inherent reflection of the underlying human tendencies in which they were shaped. The same impulse that drove humans' self-preservation and competition in the days of hunting and gathering drive behavior at an institutional scale, ensuring that any attempt at reform encounters the same force it seeks to overcome. The result of this is a self-reinforcing structure in which awareness simply cannot produce change, instead becoming another piece of a system that operates according to a logic most refuse to try to understand.

Denouement

The historical persistence of this future suggests that the limitation is not due to a lack of information, but a structural inhibition. The systems humanity has constructed reflect their underlying behavioral tendencies, and those very systems end up reinforcing our tendencies, no matter how detrimental it may be to our society. Breaking this cycle would require a level of coordinated, sustained, and immediate transformation that conflicts with every known characteristic that defines human behavior at a global scale. In essence, humanity, no matter

what lens observed under (whether that be Spiritually, Philosophically, Biologically, or Socially), will always become what it has strived to escape. Sin, immoral, survival of the fittest, or simply a societal reject. Whatever it may be through the lens described, unless changed for the better, through force or through peace, humanity's 'end' looms, ever nearer. Only then can we realize what it is: There is a man. In the back of this place. He's the one that's doing it, we can see him through the walls, and we must end him, before he ends us.

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