

Speaking of Hands, and Adaptations, and ...

By Jeff Huggins

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A great poem to read is Dylan Thomas' "The Hand that Signed the Paper". Even better to listen to it: There's a great recording of Dylan Thomas himself presenting it.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Yes, we humans are bundles of lots of things that are adaptations or, depending on how one slices and dices, bundles of things that are themselves bundles of adaptations, or bundles of things that, taken together, each serve as an adaptation.

Our hearts (biologically speaking). Our eyes and visual systems. Our ears and hearing systems. Our hands. Our etc. etc. etc. The basic faculties that enable our social-moral behaviors. Our digestive systems. Our brains. Our noses and "smelling" systems. Some systems that are largely "below the belt". And so forth.

In any case, the effective "ultimate" function of adaptations tells us a lot about ourselves.

As some of you have seen, in my recent message, ""The Bridge: A-QED"", "A" for Adaptation plays an important role.

The vital relationship between what "A" tells us and what "Q-E-D" tells us (please see the earlier message, and my materials) sheds light on the bridge. Or, one might say, it forms the bridge, or is the bridge, or represents it. It's the matter of the bridge.

That said—and bringing us back to Dylan Thomas—I was talking to a bright person some months back (in London, actually, not all that far from where Thomas used to hang out sometimes) who does work at the intersection of science and philosophy. When we were talking about our social-moral faculties, and such things as proximate roles and "ultimate" roles, and were all in agreement about the basic ultimate function of adaptations, he had an

understandable question: Why does it help to note, explicitly, that our social-moral faculties (in a biological sense) are adaptations, and to keep in mind the “ultimate” function of adaptations, rather than to focus only on their specific proximate role(s), when all sorts of other things are also adaptations (or bundles of adaptations)? Our hearts, for example, and our hands.

Well, there are a number of very real, and important, answers to that question. Some of my materials cover them. But for now, one can understand one of the important answers, in a fun way, using poetry, by considering Thomas’ poem, “The Hand that Signed the Paper”. Hence, my recommendation.

Also, I mention “The Hand that Signed the Paper” in one of the short papers I’ve written, “The Morality of Sustainability: A DIY Exploration”. It’s a do-it-yourself exploration of the matter, and (I hope) thought-provoking and fun, and can be found on my website.

So again, I’d encourage people to read my most recent message, ““The Bridge: A-QED””, as well as the other messages and materials listed in that message.

And do listen, please, to “The Hand that Signed the Paper”. I think you’d enjoy it.

Be Well, and Cheers for Now,

Jeff Huggins

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