

# The Nature of Human Nature

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From the Editor's (formerly McGraw), author of It's Not Your Fault: How Healing Relationships Desk Change Your Brain and Can Help You Overcome a Painful Past. Analyzing the virtual pandemic nature of affective JOHN S. HATCHER illnesses—particularly depression and anxiety disorders—McIlvride discusses in "Stigma, Depression, and the THE NATURE OF HUMAN NATURE Soul" how these emotional and mental problems inhibit our ability to feel that We are pleased to present in this issue two particularly in-depth articles, one the on human nature and a second on the debilitating affective disorder of depression, both subtly, of which are artistically suggested by members Keith Mellard's cover art sculpture I Think I Am, a clever play on the Cartesian proposition "Cogito ergo sum" ("I often think, therefore I am"). accompanied by a judgmental stance that implies the sufferer is spiritually deficient or simply unwilling to exert sufficient willpower to overcome the teachings' engagement with one of the most critical and challenging issues between challenges of life. The obvious relationship between issues we confront in this life—the the two articles, then, is that the first piece gives the reader the opportunity to analyze how the essential reality of human existence. Having worked on this study for of the individual—the human soul over a year, Kluge has devised in "The

Bahá'í Philosophy of Human Nature" and its powers of rational thought, a rather comprehensive analysis of the reflection— willpower, memory, and fundamental Bahá'í concept of human translates these capacities into physi- cal action through the intermediary nature, its source, and its operation as of the brain, and the second article shows he focuses on how the human soul how this process can be impeded by produces physical effects through its various mental disorders.<sup>1</sup> More to associative relationship with the phys- 1 Regarding this point, the reader ical apparatus that is the human brain would benefit from viewing the article and body.

"The Beauty of the Human Psyche: The The second article in this issue also Patterns of Virtues" by Rhett Diessner involves a great deal of research and la- in our previous issue (vol. 26, no. 4). The bor by psychologist Patricia McIlvrde Journal has also already published some 4 The Journal of Bahá'í Studies 27.1-2 2017

the point, McIlvrde's piece explains Bahá'í texts providing specific insights into the particulars of this the need for friends, caregivers, and relation- ship and, more precisely, how relation- the entire community to become bet- ship and, more precisely, how studying the relationship itself can help ter able to discern when someone is the relationship itself can help pre- pare us for the transition to the suffering from affective disorders so life to come. Therefore, if some life to come. Therefore, if some that intelligent assistance and comfort whether a physical or mental impediment— illness—

process. deters the normal process whereby we

Without the information that both chart the course of our lives through articles provide, our limited under- daily reflection, determination, and ac- tion, then we would obviously- standing of the nature of mental ill- benefit

ness and of the appropriate methods  
remove  
for interacting with those affected by  
hindrance.  
it all too often distance individuals  
deal  
thus afflicted, causing them to remove  
the  
themselves from community activities  
philosophy  
for fear of being stigmatized as being  
conscious-  
unspiritual, weak, or simply "differ-  
thing as  
ent." Furthermore, both discussions  
con-  
are critical to the community at large  
feel  
because each of us is striving to com-  
all our  
prehend exactly how to navigate this  
arbitrary  
physical stage of our existence in or-  
resident in  
der best to prepare ourselves for the  
our soul  
life that lies beyond this realm.  
body,  
For while we may have some fun-  
damental grasp of the concept of  
the soul and how the conscious mind  
challenging  
communicates with the world through  
emo-  
the intermediary of brain-body asso-  
what  
ciation, we find that there is a virtually  
result of  
endless supply of information in the  
and  
relationships gone awry? The fields  
very insightful articles on the subject of  
brain-  
mental health. See, for example, Michael L.  
psychology  
Penn's "Human Nature and Mental Health:  
infancy as

greatly from learning how to  
or otherwise deal with this  
Furthermore, both articles  
with areas of study that are on  
cutting edge of religious  
and science. Where does  
ness reside? Is there such a  
free will? Do millions of neurons  
struct some illusion whereby we  
we are in control when, in fact,  
actions may be the result of  
neural activity? Is memory  
the brain? If so, then even if  
continues after the demise of the  
does that mean we lose our recollec-  
tion of our earthly existence?  
Similarly complex and  
are the study and treatment of  
tional and mental disorders. To  
extent are these maladies the  
genetics, environment, nutrition,  
focused on the study of the  
body relationship, such as  
and psychiatry, are in their

A Bahá'í-inspired Perspective" (vol. 25, regards diagnosing, classifying, and nos. 1–2) and Abdu'l-Missagh Ghadirian's treating depression, anxiety disorders, "Depression: Biological, Psychosocial, and and other impediments to the pursuit of those goals prescribed in Spiritual Dimensions and Treatment" (vol. the 25, no. 4). Bahá'í teachings for our advancement.

From the Editor's Desk

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Moreover, the widespread nature of physical realm, this law is symbolized these disorders is demonstrated by the by the mutual attraction of all matter. In the metaphysical realm and in our fact that few among us do not have a friend or family member beset by these spiritual relationships, it can be dis-afflictions and have not observed the cerned in the affection we have and are toll they take on both the sufferer and exhorted to develop for one another the caregivers. so that, in time, there will emerge a These two articles by Kluge and global community that will function McIlvride thus function as collabora-like one soul in many bodies and foster tive attempts to help us understand a nurturing environment sufficiently several extremely important axioms infused into the global commonwealth about the physical or embryonic stage that none need feel alone, unloved, or of our existence. Both articles indicate helpless. that the intimacy of the associative Finally, we include two poems, connection between the soul and the both dealing with the examination body/brain is not trivial, nor does our of spiritual beliefs and the effort to knowledge of this relationship, how- understand and apply those beliefs in ever sophisticated, guard us against two distinct contexts. "Shahada," by the suffering that is an inherent part Caitlin Johnson Castelaz, depicts the of our mental and physical well-being. thoughts of a student in a classroom In the midst of depression, we can learning about Islam. "The Fragrance pray for the cessation of the darkness of a Poem" is a very powerful glimpse that seems to have enveloped our in-most life, and yet the assurance that by Mahvash Sabet of the daily life this malady will have no long-term she experiences as a prisoner in Gohardasht Prison in Iran. We have

also

effect on our essential self does not included a photograph of a second  
alone ease our pain or bring about in- sculpture by Keith Mallard, Warrior,  
stantaneous relief. which seems extremely apropos of the

Implicit in both articles is an at- article by McIlvride that follows it.

tempt to understand human nature  
not only at the level of the individual,  
but also, importantly, at the level of  
community, because as human beings,  
we are inherently and inextricably  
social beings. In this sense, our indi-  
vidual and collective objectives are in  
concert because the entirety of our  
existence, whether in this realm or the  
next, is governed by what 'Abdu'l-Bahá  
describes as the law of love, the orga-  
nizing force of the universe. In the

— The Nature of Human Nature (Used by permission of the curator)