

The Human Condition: A Pathway to Peace and Fulfillment

Bob Yari

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The Human Condition is an encouraging self-help text that suggests harnessing happiness by modifying one's mindset.

Bob Yari's philosophical self-help book *The Human Condition* encourages shifts in thinking and behavior that can lead toward living a richer life.

The book contends that many of human beings' instinctual traits, including the drive to eat as much as possible and to move toward violent action or flight when angered or threatened, served their ancestors well, but tend to hinder human happiness in the modern world. Likewise, the book says, more complex but still common characteristics, like the need for acceptance and the predisposition to hold onto the beliefs instilled in one's childhood without examining them in-depth, can erode people's emotional satisfaction and ability to make meaningful connections with others. Thus, with the belief that human beings have the capacity to control their harmful instincts and live happier lives, the book encourages the development of deep appreciation for what's good around people, every day.

The book's brevity adds to its appeal: it presents its concepts in a tight, focused manner, and builds on its ideas in a mutually supportive way. Its text is active and engaging, with pointed questions used to command attention ahead of its proposed answers. Sentence fragments are employed in a purposeful way—both for ease of understanding, and to add emphasis to the book's key points. Smart layout choices, including the inclusion of full, blank pages at the end of each chapter, result in uncomplicated sensibilities.

Still, this treatise devotes too much space to discussing organized religion's role in erecting artificial barriers between groups and individuals. Such detours distract from its primary thesis: that, despite some detrimental hard wiring, people have the power to change their thinking in ways that can help them to be happier. And even that organizing principle is familiar. This text is, at its best, a practical overview of ideas about human nature, with brief entries devoted to principles like attitude, gratitude, and balance that are well defined.

While the book ably asserts that adjusting one's attitude, developing proper perspective, and focusing on positives will lead to better balance across the board—in thought, action, and in the expenditure of one's valuable time—it is absent detailed directions and specific exercises for achieving these aims. Instead, it points toward several potential pathways to greater fulfillment, making its insights and advice accessible and applicable to a wide audience.

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CHARLENE OLDHAM (August 3, 2021)

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