

Aristotle

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Before I begin, I wish to clarify that I am no man of passion: since my youth I have been known for my uncommonly logical disposition. Rest assured, your outcome shall not be the vain product of emotional folly; it would be understandably frustrating were that to be the case. The atrocious actions that I undertake tonight have been carefully deliberated, and the conclusion arrived at by a self-evident series of propositions fitting of Aristotle himself.

Of that, you can be reassured.

— All men are mortal. —

It is strange that all men know of their mortality, but none act with the knowledge of it. This holds for intellects more calm and logical than my own, and those more excitable and easy to disturb. I shall elaborate with an example.

I enjoy the occasional indulgence of strolling through forest trails. The backdrop of trees and ferns — mottled sometimes with impenetrable blacks, sometimes with rays of white — produces an ever-changing foliage that one can never come to trust. This quality is most soothing, but also invigorating for the natural instincts of man that are sedated in the city air. Along these walks, I have come across lone travellers. They tend to offer cordial salutations. The innocent doe-eyes upon their dumb faces tell me the complete story — that they have barely given thought to the myriad of ways in which I could end them.

The human body is both a delicate construction, and a vulgar tool. By utilizing concepts of pivots and leverage, there are a dozen positions from which one brute can break a man. And from each of these dozen positions, there is a repertoire of options to choke, or to snap, or to crank, or to smash, or to smother, or to crush. Then there are the additional God-given resources that expand the range of possibilities — sharp rocks and heavy branches; cliff-sides and unsteady footing; offerings of curious mushrooms and unfamiliar berries. On top of these, there are the various ingenuities of Man — bows and spears; guns and daggers; trust, and the capacity to betray that trust.

— Socrates is a man. —

As a child I had a natural inclination for puzzles, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of such toys as jigsaws, play-doh, and mazes. With these I spent most of my time, and all other drivel failed to interest me in the least. I never outgrew these games but, day by day, I grew weary of the objects themselves — limited as they were by their plain materiality. A jigsaw, once assembled, posed little challenge; and play-doh always eventually turned into a uniform shade of grey feces.

The toy that captured me longest was a Rubik's cube I was given during a Christmas. It had not been inordinately difficult to solve, but for a time I was amused by the unspoken method of peeling the cube apart and replacing the colors in their starting positions. Even after this act came to bore me, I was entertained for still some time by stitching the colors together in unintended patterns. A trivia: toying with the cube like such, one could produce configurations for which the cube could never return to its original design, no matter how one twisted the pieces. By rearranging a construction, one could create something entirely unfixable.

In the beginning, my interest in these toys soured gradually, but one day, all at once, my mood was significantly altered and the toys were made to feel the full brunt of my changed disposition. I tore up all the cards and all the mazes, stuffed them into all the dough-like and malleable things, then smeared the mess over everything else. At once I was driven to haunt the streets in search of more novel puzzles to reassemble.

— Therefore, Socrates is a mortal. —

At the time when I grew up, the use of idioms was in fashion; one in particular struck me as a lie, although this did not prevent my daft Father from using it. — They were like two peas in a pod — he used to say. I frequently questioned whether he had ever truly looked at two peas before his eyesight gave way to cataracts — certainly Mother provided ample opportunity for this during dinnertimes. While I never took to the flavor of peas, I was endlessly entertained by picking them apart. Two peas may look alike, only if you were blind as a bat.

When you inspect two peas closely, you begin to notice the differences. The different sizes, the different bumps along the surface, the different patterns drawn on their skin. After you have exhausted the minutest details of their exteriors, you can turn your attention towards their deeper qualities. When you peel them apart; when you saw through raw flesh with dull blade; when you smash bone with hammer and stone; when you feel, first with your hands, their innards, their beating hearts, their eyes still staring at you; then you will know for sure that all two peas are different. And the sounds they make! The rich cadences in their helpless mewling! How could one ever mistake one such soul-rending soprano for another! But there was the mess to deal with, of course. — Don't play with your food — Mother used to say. Father would side with her and eye me sternly. Taking apart the peas was an easy matter — it simply required an appropriate set of dining tools; reassembling them proved the greater challenge. Sometimes I managed to recreate a sculpture that bore a passing semblance to the original construction. More often, the result was merely perverse. But whether or not I succeeded, a pea was useless after it had been played with. The most expedient option — the one that ensured Mother would cease her nagging and bring out dessert — was to eat the peas. Peas were fine to eat because they were often cooked. Sometimes Mother served raw broccoli or lettuce, and these were cold and rotten things. This was how I developed an appreciation for the application of heat in the preparation of vegetables. It made them easier to go down.

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Now that our syllogism is complete, we have come to the part in which you play a role of grave importance. Any child who has played with a toy knows that they are good fun for awhile; but as he derives pleasure from the novelty of the devices, once this quality of originality runs dry, he must search for new contraptions that are bigger, with ever more moving parts, and with ever more shiny buttons; and he cannot rely on his parents for his entertainment — not indefinitely; he has to bear this responsibility upon himself. Eventually, he must also learn to possess the mark of an adult, which involves the understanding that the best playthings necessitate patience — more resources and detailed planning to procure, and more appetite for the tedium of cleaning up. But — and this you must understand — it is always worth the pains!