

**William F. Campbell**  
**Secretary, The Philadelphia Society**

***The Permanent Things***  
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**Introductory Remarks for the Human Nature and the Permanent Things  
Panel in Atlanta**

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Since T.S. Eliot only used the phrase the “permanent things” once, perhaps it is more appropriate to introduce our final panel with a motto that Eliot adapted from Mary, Queen of Scots, “In my end is my beginning.” It is the final phrase of his poem “East Coker”, second of the *Four Quartets*.

Logically, it might appear that we should have placed “Human Nature” at the beginning rather than at the end of the meeting. It surely is the most fundamental question. If human nature is not one of the permanent things, then we are adrift. If the future is plastic or if we are simply blank slates, then Etch a Sketch is the technology for us. Once you get tired of something, just shake it up America.

One of our speakers, Larry Arnhart, from Northern Illinois University, recently was a speaker at a Mont Pelerin Meeting in the Galapagos Islands on precisely the subjects of this panel. A defender of evolution and evolutionary psychology, he has written extensively on the subject.

He is a political philosopher with such titles as *Political Questions: Political Philosophy from Plato to Rawls*. He may not know it, but his 1998 book, *Darwinian Natural Right: The Biological Ethics of Human Nature* is available on Amazon for \$11,795.78 from Wisepenny Books, shipping \$3.95, in 2005 he published, *Darwinian Conservatism*.

For easy access you can take a look at his "Darwinian Conservatism Versus Metaphysical Conservatism" *The Intercollegiate Review*, Fall, 2010.

He is on record as saying, “The Left has traditionally assumed that human nature is so malleable, so perfectible, that it can be shaped in almost any direction. By contrast, a Darwinian science of human nature supports traditionalist conservatives and classical liberals in their realist view of human imperfectibility, and in their commitment to ordered liberty as rooted in natural desires, cultural traditions, and prudential judgments.”

One would gather that he would be happy with the economist Deepak Lal’s summary of the recent Mont Pelerin Society meeting: “The general conclusion I drew, about what we now know about human nature from the meeting, was that the genial Scot, David Hume, sitting in his study contemplating his fellow creatures had got it right. Contemporary

neuroscience and evolutionary psychology is validating the conjectures of his *A Treatise of Human Nature*.”

I would amend this assessment by stating that Hume was genial not when he was sitting alone in his study, but when he was involved in the literary and culinary feasts with his good friend, Adam Smith, that most “clubbable man.”

Alfred Marshall once said that it’s all in Adam Smith. Presumably he meant good economics derived from Adam Smith’s *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. “Natura non facit saltum” (Nature does not make Leaps) is the epigraph of Alfred Marshall’s *Principles of Economics*. An admirer of Herbert Spencer, Marshall intended the epigraph to proclaim his adherence to evolutionary thought.

But now “It’s all in Adam Smith” could refer to his first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

What can we learn from evolutionary biology, evolutionary psychology, and other related scientific fronts about the permanence of human nature?

We are having to prove with hard scientific data, the obvious proposition with which Adam Smith begins *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: “How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it.”

That human nature is under attack can be seen in the title of a recent book by Nicholas Agar, *Humanity’s End: Why We Should Reject Radical Enhancement*.

The radical enhancers will allow us to escape from human biology, develop anti-aging therapies that will produce “longevity escape velocity,” make us all smart, peace loving, and cooperative creatures.

We should pay heed to Adam Smith’s favorite tombstone on which was inscribed, “I was well, I wished to be better, here I am.”

Adam Smith’s principle of sympathy is being grounded in hard scientific terms. “Mirror Neurons” in monkeys, and, ultimately humans are being discussed in such journals as *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

In my humble opinion, it all sounds like Adam Smith on steroids.

Peter Augustine Lawler is Dana Professor of Government at Berry College. Although he teaches courses in political philosophy and American politics, he was also appointed to to President Bush’s Council on Bioethics, dissolved by President Obama in 2009.

He is executive editor of the quarterly journal, *Perspectives on Political Science* and has been chair of the politics and literature section of the American Political Science Association. He also serves on the editorial board of the new bilingual critical edition of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Lawler also serves on the editorial boards of several journals. In 2007 he received the Richard Weaver Prize in Scholarly Letters.

He has written or edited fifteen books. His newest book from ISI is *Modern and American Dignity* for which he was named a Georgia Author of the Year. His books--*Postmodernism Rightly Understood*, *Aliens in America*, *Stuck with Virtue*, and *Homeless and at Home in America*--have been widely and positively reviewed.

In more than 250 articles he has written often on such diverse topics as biotechnology, Walker Percy, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Whit Stillman. In his blog *Rightly Understood*, Peter has had several discussions of Larry Arnhart, most recently on September 24, he posted, "Darwin vs. Christianity and Transhumanism?"

Our third speaker is Brendan P. Foht, Assistant Editor of *The New Atlantis*. He has bachelor's degrees in political science from the University of Calgary and in biology from the University of Alberta. He is a frequent contributor to *National Review Online*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *The New Atlantis*.

Of all the publications *The New Atlantis* consistently has provocative, fresh articles on the subjects of biotechnology and science. He has recently written on the claim about Obama to be our "Scientist-in-Chief."

Utopian hopes are generated by Obama's BRAIN initiative. The government website states, "The Human Genome Project demonstrates the potential impact that ambitious research programs like the BRAIN initiative can have. From 1988-2003, the Federal Government invested \$3.8 billion in the Human Genome Project, which has generated an economic output of \$796 billion—a return of \$141 for every \$1 invested." Wow! Now there's an economic multiplier worth thinking about—"if he only had a brain."

Brendan recognizes that we need not only brains, but hearts and courage. Policy must be grounded in ethics and an understanding of human nature.

Our final speaker, Sarah Beth Vosburg will shed light on the rosy futures described by the radical enhancers. She is a Ph.D. student under Ellis Sandoz at Louisiana State University. Her dissertation will draw on the works of Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, and C.S. Lewis.

Today she will link the works of C.S. Lewis, particularly his novel, *That Hideous Strength*, to Russell Kirk's *Permanent Things*. The Enlightenment Project of "conquering nature" has come perilously close to conquering human nature. We have already seen in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the totalitarian temptation of producing a new type of

human being, the new Soviet man. For the Nazis it was the superior “Aryan” or Germanic master race.

It remains to be seen what the “Scientist-in-Chief” will cook up for us.