

# Changing Human Nature

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The twentieth century saw many attempts to refashion the nature of human beings: Communism, eugenics, social Darwinism and others. Each resulted in catastrophe and tragedy. Much of the literature of totalitarianism — *1984*, *Brave New World*, *Darkness at Noon* — chronicles the horror of “perfecting” people or society.

There is a belief system that holds that it is impossible to fundamentally remake human beings. It is called religion. Judaism believes that human beings are in the image of God and therefore, have a certain consistency to their nature. You cannot annul Yom Kippur because we will never be sinless. You cannot eliminate Shabbat because we will never be built so as thrive working each day, all day.

The idea that human beings have a fundamental nature may seem pessimistic, but actually in history it has proved humane. The state, or the powers that be, cannot tamper with your essence, because you are who you are. Judaism instead seeks to modify, regulate, elevate, and aid people to be a little better than they would otherwise be. We are not in the angel making business. As Cervantes (who may have been of Jewish origin) told us in *Don Quixote*: “Everyone is as God made him, and often much worse.”